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## CO 520 A Syllabus and General Guide for Narrative Pastoral Counseling

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**Asbury Theological Seminary**

**CO-520**

**A Syllabus and General Guide for  
Narrative Pastoral Counseling**

**July 7-11, 2008**

**Burrell D. Dinkins, Th.D.**

(Notice: This is a semi-final copy of the syllabus. The textbooks will remain the same, but the class schedule and subjects may change. A final syllabus will be distributed on the first day of class.)

I. Course Description:

This course is designed as an examination of the theory and practice of a postmodern approach to counseling from the perspective of narrative. The process of authoring and reauthoring lives through stories will be examined from the disciplines of literature, psychology, Bible, theology, psychotherapy and spiritual direction.

II. General Goals: The goals of this course are to help students:

1. Develop a basic understanding of the issues of postmodern theory and techniques of counseling.
2. Integrate narrative theory with the practice of narrative counseling.
3. Bridge the gap between exegesis and diagnosis in Bible studies.
4. Examine the importance of asking timely, well-formulated questions.
5. Explore how lives are authored and create conversations to reauthor personal life stories.
6. Discover the potential of a solution orientation to human concerns,

IV. Time: The class will meet Monday – Thursday, 8:00 - 12:00 and 1:00 - 4:30 ; Friday, 8:00 - 12:00.

V. Course Requirements

A. Course Reading: A minimum of 1200 pages of reading in textbooks and research projects will be required.

B. Research Projects: Students will select a topic related to narrative studies for research and write a 10-12 page comprehensive summary of key information and learning experiences through taking this course

C. Practice Sessions: Students will be asked to practice narrative counseling skills in class sessions.

VI. Evaluation System : The following percentages will determine the numerical and the letter grade.

20%: Team role-play and class discussion

20% Reading report

50%: Final comprehensive paper

VII. Texts:

Brandt, Kevin M. (1997) Story As A Way Of Knowing, Kansas City: Sheed & Ward

Dinkins, Burrell D. (2005) Narrative Pastoral Counseling, Xulon Press. (You can purchase this book from the Cokesbury Bookstore, Amazon.com, or from Burrell Dinkins.

Gretz, Stanley J. (1996) A Primer On Postmodernism Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Monk, Winslade, Crocket and Epston: (1997) Narrative Therapy in Practice: The Archeology of Hope, San Francisco, California: Jossey Bass.

White, Michael and David Epston. (1990) Narrative Means To Therapeutic Ends,  
New York: W.W. Norton & company.

## **Class Schedule**

### **Monday**

#### **A. Introduction To Narrative Pastoral Counseling**

**Goals:** At the completion of this class session you should:

1. Understand the syllabus and class assignments
2. Become a member of a sharing, study and research group
3. Share some aspect of your life story
4. Develop a deeper appreciation of the influence of stories in everyday life

Read: *Story As A Way of Knowing*  
*A Primer of Postmodernism*

#### **B. Philosophical Assumptions and Aims of Modernist and Postmodern Counseling**

**Goals:** At the completion of this class session you should:

1. Have a basic understanding of the influence of philosophical assumptions on counseling theories and practices
2. Discuss and critique key issues in modernity and postmodernity
3. Discuss theological concerns with postmodernity

Read: *Story As A Way of Knowing*, Part II, pp. 63-117  
*Narrative Therapy In Practice*, Chapter 2. pp. 32-50

### **Tuesday,**

#### **A. Assumptions and Practice of Narrative Counseling**

**Goals:** At the completion of this class session you should:

1. Examine your assumptions about counseling and how they influence your practice
2. Critique the assumptions of the instructor
3. Share stories of assumptions influencing behavior

Read: *Narrative Means To Therapeutic Ends*, Chapter 1, pp.1-37

#### **B. Hosting a Narrative Conversation**

**Goals:** At the completion of this class session you should:

1. Understand the importance of metaphors in counseling
2. Practice hosting a narrative “authoring and reauthoring” conversation
3. Develop a sense of curiosity, wonder and awe in the creation of conversational realities
4. Use externalizing techniques in narrative conversations

Read: *Narrative Therapy In Practice*, Chapters 3-7, pp. 53-213

### **C. Asking Good Questions**

**Goals:** At the completion of this session you should:

1. Understand the difference between questions based in modernity and postmodern questions
2. Learn to use circular questions to deconstruct and enrich stories
3. Practice the use of narrative questions

**Wednesday,**

#### **A. Faith Conversations**

**Goals:** At the completion of this class you should:

1. Feel confident in facilitating a faith conversation
2. Understand the role of pain and suffering in faith conversations
3. Develop of theory about the appropriateness and timing of faith conversations

#### **B. The Healing Power of Stories**

The class will view and discuss the film: “Big Fish.”

**Goals:** At the completion of this class session you should:

1. Understand how narrative pastoral counseling relates to the Christian story of redemption
2. Use miracle questions to help counselees discover redemptive stories
3. Discover the importance of hope in healing conversations

**Thursday,**

#### **A. Writing Narrative Letters to Counselees**

**Goals:** At the completion of this class you should:

1. Understand both the theory and methodology of follow-up notes and letters after a narrative conversation
2. Practice writing a narrative letter  
Read: *Narrative Means To Therapeutic Ends*, Chapters 3&4, pp.77-117

#### **B. Cross-cultural Narrative Counseling**

View the film “Amistad” in class.

**Goals:** At the completion of this session you should

1. Discuss the power of films to give voice to under privileged people and their stories
2. Learn how to discover forgotten stories in pastoral counseling
3. Share stories of repressed people
4. Develop a working knowledge of cross-cultural issues in counseling

**Friday,**

### **A. Narrative Conversations in Times of Crises**

**Goals:** At the completion of this class you should:

1. Be able to engage persons in crises in a narrative conversation
2. Formulate a theoretical understanding of growth potential in times of crises
3. Discover both your fears and your potential in crisis conversations

### **B. The Art of Biblical Narrative and Narrative Theology**

**Goals:** At the completion of this class you should:

1. Have an appreciation for the narrative structure of the Bible
2. Articulate your critique of postmodern assumptions from a biblical and theological perspective
3. Formulate your use of biblical/theological material in your counseling

Read: *Story As A way of Knowing*, Part 3, pp. 121-240

## **VIII. Bibliography: (for additional reading and research papers)**

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- 26) Keillor, Garrison. We Are Still Married: Stories & Letters. NY: Viking Penguin, 1989.
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- 28) Lee, D. John. Storying Ourselves: A Narrative Perspective on Christians in Psychology. MI: Baker Books, 1993.
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