



NORTH PARK
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

MNST 5108 – Ministry Identity and Practice Syllabus

North Park Theological Seminary
Fall 2025

Meeting Times: September 22-26,
2025

8:30 am – 5:00 pm Pacific Time
3 credit hours

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Rev. Dr. Bret M. Widman, Director of Contextual and Lifelong Learning & Associate Professor of Ministry
bmwidman@northpark.edu | Nyvall 319 | 773-244-5294

Office hours: Monday and Wednesday

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Participants in this course will explore a variety of ministries of the church with a view to developing a practical vision to guide their own work and to equip others for theirs. Practices such as pastoral care, leadership, worship and the arts, Christian education and formation, evangelism, compassion and justice, and missions will be introduced with an emphasis on developing communication skills appropriate to each.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

MNST 5108 will challenge students:

1. To *understand* oneself as a person shaped by culture therefore approaching cultural difference with humility.
2. To *recognize* metaphor as a tool for self and others in both pastoral and lay identity.
3. To *analyze* self-understanding in terms of both Word and Sacraments both individually and collectively.
4. To *apply* ministerial identity both in spoken and written mode in a way that is anchored biblically and theologically.
5. To *analyze* transactional relationships within ministry contexts as idolatrous.
6. To *evaluate* power structures within ministry contexts.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Arthur Riley, Cole, *This Here Flesh. Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us* (New York: Convergent Books, 2022) [ISBN 9780593239773]

Chittister, Joan D., *Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003) [ISBN 9780802829740]

Edwards, Gene, *A Tale of Three Kings* (Newnan: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1992) [ISBN 9780842369084]

Khang, Kathy K., *Raise Your Voice. Why We Stay Silent and How To Speak Up* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018) [ISBN 9780830845408]



Westerhoff, Caroline, A., *Calling. A Song for the Baptized* (New York: Seabury Books, 2005) [ISBN 9781596280090]

Whitehead, Andrew L., *American Idolatry. How Christian Nationalism Betrays the Gospel and Threatens the Church* (.....Brazos Press, 2023) [ISBN 978-1587435768]

ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING SCALE

- Prepare for each class session by reading the assigned texts.
- The Arthur Riley book is to be read by **September 21, 2025** along with a five page reflection which will serve as your means of introduction to the instructor as well as your classmates. This will be uploaded to canvas on September 22nd by 11:59 p.m. pacific time. (see Abstract rubric)
- The Andrew Whitehead book is to be read by **September 21, 2025** along with a five page reflection which will serve as further introduction to the instructor as well as your classmates. This will be uploaded to canvas on September 22nd by 11:59 p.m. pacific time. (see Abstract rubric)
- Prepare a 5-minute presentation on a specific manifestation of idolatry that you have assessed has affected the USA church. **September 24th**
- Final Paper: Identify the metaphor for ministry that you are considering for your final paper. A 5 – 10 minute presentation outlining the key ideas for your final paper. **Presentations will be on the 25th and 26th of September in class.**

Write a 10 page (double-spaced, Times New Roman 12) paper outlining a metaphor for ministry which provides a biblical and theological basis for your ministry. The paper should integrate material **from the course presentations and readings. A minimum of 10 references from a variety of the required texts cited correctly is required. (Due on December 5, 2025 at 11:59 p.m. central time zone)**

Instructions for Pre-Class Book Reviews:

Read Arthur Riley book and write a five-page reflection paper how you, personally engaged with this text. Write about yourself as it pertains to contemplative rhythms, racial reconciliation, and interior examination using what you read in Riley's book. *Please note*, this is a class and we may know some in the class, we do not know everyone in the class. In other words, trust has not been built. This is not the place to share deeply personal, private, and sensitive narratives. What part of Riley's book had the most impact on you regarding why you are taking seminary classes and in your current ministry context (if one). Paper submitted to canvas **Due 9/22/25** by 11:59 p.m. central time zone

Read the book by Andrew Whitehead and write a five-page reflection paper how you experienced Whitehead's book naming idolatry within the USA church. What parts were helpful? What parts were new thinking? What parts did you disagree with? Paper submitted to canvas. **Due 9/22/25** by 11:59 p.m. central time zone.

GRADING

- 5% Idolatry presentation
- 10% Metaphor oral presentation
- 40% Book Reviews (20% each for the Arthur Riley and Andrew Whitehead)
- 40% Final Paper
- 5% Class participation and attendance.

GRADING SCALE



A	95–100
A-	93–94
B+	91–92
B	88–90
B-	86–87
C+	84–85
C	80–83
C-	78–79
D+	76–77
D	72–75
D-	70–71
F	69 and below. This grade, while indicating the student has completed a course, is to be understood as reflecting below average work. To receive credit in the subject, the course must be repeated.

ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES

1. Attendance & participation. Because this course is only 5 days in the classroom, all days are required to be in attendance. There will be exceptions but only in case of emergency and with proper communication with instructor.

2. Assessment submission

- Submit all work through Canvas as Word files, including your last name in the document title.
- All assessments are due 11:59pm on the date indicated. Work submitted late without prior arrangement will receive a 1/3 grade reduction each day (e.g., an A grade would receive A- after one day late, B+ after two, etc.). Work submitted over two weeks late will not receive credit.

3. Communication. I encourage you to email me with any questions and concerns, and I will respond within 24 hours M–F. Before emailing a question, be sure the answer isn't contained in the course syllabus or assessment guidelines (Canvas).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another's work as one's own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another's answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one's answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.
5. Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.

For additional information, see the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#), pp. 25–26.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established

your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

TITLE IX

Students who believe they may have experienced sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773) 244-5664 or TitleIX@northpark.edu to learn more about reporting options, resources, and support services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty members are private resources meaning we are legally obligated to share information about the behavior reported above with the University's Title IX coordinator. If you are unsure whether you want your concerns disclosed to the Title IX Coordinator, we encourage you to contact Counseling Support Services at (773) 244-4897 or counseling@northpark.edu.

Please refer to North Park's [Safe Community](#) site for reporting, contact information, and further details.

INSTRUCTOR COMMITMENTS & STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

I will...

- Return graded assessments within one week (provided they are submitted on time);
- Post all grades to Canvas gradebook in a timely manner so you can monitor your progress;
- Gladly be available for one-on-one conversation by phone or video chat. Please do not hesitate to reach out for clarification on course content, expectations, etc.
- Respond to all email inquiries within 24 hours M–F, for items not already covered in the course syllabus or weekly announcement (do please check these first).

You are responsible for...

- All information provided in the course syllabus and class emails sent to your northpark.edu email address. This includes all assessment deadlines and course policies (grading, assessment submission, late penalties, etc.).
- Remaining up to date regarding your course progress, tracking grades in the Canvas gradebook and being apprised of seminary drop deadlines. NPTS policy extends incompletes in exceptional circumstances only and require requisite paperwork on file prior to the final day of the semester.
- Weekly and week-to-week time management. The rule of thumb for graduate education is that each hour of classroom time entails an average of 2–3 hours of weekly work outside the classroom. This means that you should expect to devote a minimum of six to nine hours to course work each week on average outside of class sessions. It also means you should not regularly be spending more than nine hours each week on this course. Please communicate with instructor if you find yourself doing so. Metrics for weekly reading (page numbers) and lectures (minutes) are provided in syllabus to assist your planning. Note that some weeks are heavier and others lighter in terms of reading, lecture, and written submissions.
- Communicating with instructor in a timely manner as questions and/or difficulties arise. Be sure to take initiative to email questions or schedule a conversation, recognizing that it may be 24–48 hours before a mutually feasible meeting time is available.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as "I" until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of "I" will automatically be changed to "F." For the full policy, see page 15 of the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Course Pre-work DUE	*Read the books by Arthur Riley (9/22/25) and Whitehead (9/22/25), submit reflection papers and read the papers of your classmates. *Review Cheryl Takabayashi's paper as an example of a ministry metaphor (see Canvas)
Day #1	*Class Introduction *Discussion on Arthur Riley (Incarnation/Embodied Identity) and Andrew Whitehead (idolatry) *Ministry Metaphors and the power to teach
Day #2	*Baptism in the Gospels/Identity *Communion as remembering WHO God is and WHO we are *Idolatry as a co-dependent, transactional relationship
Day #3	* DUE: Oral Reports on Idolatry
Day #4	*Reflective/Empowering Leadership *Conflict: Organizational Health and Mess *Oral Presentations on Metaphors for Ministry
Day #5	* DUE: Oral Presentations on Metaphors for Ministry
	Please submit all of your assignments through CANVAS
12/5/25	DUE: Final Paper: Ministry Metaphor