Reformed Theological Seminar: **Course 6PT516: Pastoral Counseling**

**Course purpose/description:**

This course is an introduction to the counseling process with an emphasis on counseling from a Christian perspective in a pastoral context. The course will include discussions regarding: the nature of people and problems, the nature of change, definitions of health and maturity, various models and modes of counseling, the phases of counseling, and the role of client and counselor. In addition, material concerning marital counseling, family counseling, and lay counseling in the context of the local church or para-church ministry will be presented. Finally, specific content regarding counseling individuals struggling with anxiety, depression, sexual brokenness and addictions, trauma and betrayal, and suicidal urges will be included. Primary skills addressed in the course include; approaching Scripture to find a framework for understanding and helping people, self-examination, listening, assessment, feedback and processing. Participants should find that they understand their own theology of relationships and change better, and should feel exposed to at least one model of Christian or “Biblical” counseling. These gains should allow a participant to more adequately function as a lay counselor and as a referral agent in the ministry.

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Suggested additional reading:**


Course will meet on Monday’s from 7-10pm at the RTS Tyson’s office beginning Feb 1, ending May 9 (no class on March 14).

Attendance will be kept. One final paper will be expected on a research topic of your choice. A case discussion will be graded and a personal reflection paper will be required. Grades will be determined by:

Attendance and participation 20%
Personal reflection paper 10%
Paper on “Integrating counseling into the local church” 10%
Case discussion 20%
Final research project 40%

Tentative schedule:

Rough schedule:

1. 2/1/16
   a. The goal of counseling
   b. Models of counseling and change
   c. Therapy and theology
2. 2/8/16
   a. Basic dimensions of human nature
   b. The role of our environment and development (our “story”) in the change/growth process
3. 2/15/16
   a. The impact of trauma, loss, betrayal and neglect in the formation of personality, relational style and life strategy
   b. Defense mechanisms and protective strategies
4. 2/22/16
   a. Case presentations, film clips, personal reflection guidelines (look at your story)
   b. LCI counseling model; 4 stage model
5. 2/29/16
   a. Phase one; assessment, organization and empathy
   b. Listening theory and skills
6. 3/7/16
   a. Phase two; “tinkering,” experimenting, processing, homework
   b. Advanced empathy
   c. “Problems of the moment,”
7. 3/21/16  
   a. Gender theology  
   b. Gender identity and attachment theory  
   c. Marriage and family model(s) (with counseling implications)  
   d. Sexual development  
8. 3/28/16  
   a. Sexual brokenness  
   b. Sexual addiction (with counseling implications)  
9. 4/4/16  
   a. Exposure, conflict, resistance and repentance (with counseling implications)  
   b. Discussion of research paper  
10. 4/11/16  
    a. Turning points, "holy encounters," major changes in the Scriptures  
    b. Phase three: major change, turning points, conversions and callings (with counseling implications)  
11. 4/18/16  
    a. Grieving, endings, termination of relationships  
    b. Phase four: termination of counseling, celebration  
12. 4/25/16  
    a. Model summary with implications  
    b. Marriage and family counseling: a brief look  
13. 5/2/16  
    a. Revisit: Comparison of this model with other models or approaches  
    b. Discussing the implications for the church, ministry models, pastoral counseling  
    c. Consideration of recovery programs, lay counseling, small groups, referrals, etc.  
14. 5/9/16  
    a. Case presentations and personal reflection  
    b. The church, the pulpit and counseling ministries  
    c. Wrap up and Q&A  
15. 5/16/16  
    a. Make up date