

## **SYLLABUS -- BIBM 640.J1 (January 7-11, 2007)**

### **THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY IN TIMES OF CRISIS**

**VIRGIL FRY, D.Min.**

#### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is designed to address some of the issues involved with crisis intervention by church leaders--including needs assessment skills, assets of and boundaries within relationships, and personal theological reflection regarding helpful interventions within one's sense of being called by God. The course will meet on the ACU campus from 8:00a.m. – 5:00p.m, January 7-11, 2007. Didactic times will be enhanced with a tour (including hospital, hospice, funeral home, and/or other crisis centers). Class experiences will build upon daily readings, student presentations, and resources such as videos and music. Additionally, guest speakers who have encountered severe crisis will be invited to share their stories. Therefore, daily attendance and participation is extremely important. A final project paper will be due April 1, 2007.

#### **RATIONALE**

Human existence seeks to find a sense of equilibrium in times of threatening experiences. The Christian values of reverence for life center upon a trust level with a personal, merciful God whose history is one of intense interest in all the experiences of his children. The Old and New Testaments are filled with the theme of hospitality -- responding to others' needs as we would have others respond to us.

There are specific skills which church leaders are called to develop in order to respond to the crises of others with effective and caring intervention. Such crisis can be in the area of health, death, grieving and mourning, family disputes and dysfunctions, financial, congregational body life, abusive violence, natural disasters, faith and spiritual, life transitional passages, etc.

Sometimes the "heat" of these problems causes church leaders to avoid delving into the mire of brokenness and despair. Sometimes the priesthood of all believers is preached more than it is practiced. Sometimes the faith community believes it is better to emphasize positive emotions rather than negative ones, so suffering is regarded with the label of weakness if one unveils painful inner struggles. This course will delve into the impact of crisis in one's faith journey, and the importance of healthy community support.

#### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

1. To explore various biblical narratives which personify crisis, including how various persons responded to the crisis and the role of God in it.

2. To familiarize oneself with available resources in the pastoral field, and to learn appropriate assessment tools for better interventions.
3. To discern specific gifts which are motivated by a heart of compassion and which can be enhanced for responsible caring.
4. To recognize personal boundaries and cues to referrals in crisis situations.
5. To reflect theologically upon one's call to minister in crisis situations, blending scholastic theory with practical theology and personal integrity.

## TEXTS

Fry, Virgil M. Disrupted: Finding God in Illness and Loss. Leafwood, 2007.

Fry, Virgil M. Rekindled: Warmed by Fires of Hope. Leafwood, 2007.

Switzer, David K. Pastoral Care Emergencies. Fortress Press, 2000.

Yancey, Philip. Disappointment With God: Three Questions No One Asks Aloud. Zondervan reprint, 1997.

**IMPORTANT: these pages should be read before the first day of class**  
**Yancey, pp 1-53; Switzer, pp. 1-48**

## METHODOLOGY AND REQUIREMENTS

This seminar will investigate the topic through readings, analysis of and devotionals from biblical narratives, class discussions, case studies, tour, book and article reviews, consideration of cultural values portrayed in media, guest presenters who are surviving crisis, and a project/research paper.

Each student will provide three oral/written reports to the class: a case study involving a pastoral crisis experience, a devotional reflection of a biblical narrative dealing with crisis, and a review of a book from the selected bibliography.

**CASE STUDY:** a written personal experience involving a request for pastoral support or intervention. This report is to be no more than one or two pages, and is to include the context of the request for support, the response the student chose to make, and the outcome of the intervention. Also included will be theological reflection: biblical foundation for intervention, personal inner turmoil with the request, review of strengths and weaknesses with your response, and lessons gleaned from the encounter. Case studies will be provided in printed form to all class participants, so confidentiality is

urged in matters of revealing names of individuals or congregations. **Case studies will be due the second day of class.**

**DEVOTIONAL:** An oral reflection based on a selected biblical narrative. This presentation may utilize any appropriate communication style, including worship, class participation, homily, role play, etc. The devotional is to be followed by question and answer time with the class participants. Devotional time should not exceed fifteen minutes, and fifteen minutes will be allowed for discussion. Sign-up times will be provided at the first class meeting.

**BOOK AND ARTICLE REVIEWS:** Written and oral presentations of one book from the selected bibliography. Those wishing to begin reading before class are asked to check with Dr. Fry via email or phone, providing the name of the book you wish to review. Both oral and written reviews are to be presented at the same time. Sign-up times will be provided. The oral presentation including discussion should be about 20-30 minutes in duration.

Form for the book and article reviews are as follows: Maximum length of book reviews should be three to four typewritten pages single spaced. The written reports will consist of three parts:

- a) Full publication data (author, title, place of publication, company, date, # of pages, ISBN #).
- b) Contents. Devote approximately 2/3 of your report to summarize the contents of the book. What is the central idea or thesis? Try to include the most possible information in the least possible words. Write as if you were communicating to another student in the class.
- c) Appraisal. Respond personally, giving your estimate of the reading. Include strengths, weaknesses, author's biases, and theological relevancy.

## **PROJECT/RESEARCH PAPER**

Each student will complete a research paper based on a project shaped by the student's interest. The project is to be a hands-on experience in a selected crisis field, and it can take the form of an implemented program and/or a personal survey. The project proposal will be developed in the second week of the seminar, and input will be sought from class peers and Dr. Fry.

A research paper of 15-20 pages will then be completed and postmarked by **April 1, 2006**. The paper will be an integration of the project's components, academic research, and theological reflections. Personal reflections are encouraged, but this paper is to be written observing academic criteria (including footnotes). A minimum of ten resources will be included in the bibliography. This paper will comprise the majority of your grade.

Papers should be mailed or emailed to me at the following address.

Dr. Virgil Fry  
 Lifeline Chaplaincy  
 1415 Southmore Blvd.  
 Houston, TX 77004  
 713.524.1055 virgfry@aol.com

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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