

PT5250-A1 PASTORAL MINISTRY SYLLABUS

***REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
ATLANTA***



Fall 2026

Dr. Ed Dunnington
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Visiting Lecturers

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Syllabus for PT5250-A1 Pastoral Ministry

REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY - ATLANTA

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ED DUNNINGTON, STEPHEN ESTOCK

VISITING LECTURERS

COURSE DESCRIPTION: A study of the principles and practices of pastoral ministry in the local church, including general pastoral care, biblical and professional standards of ministerial conduct, etiquette, interpersonal relationships, typical problem areas, and possible pitfalls for those in pastoral ministry.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. The student will learn Biblical principles and practices of a fruitful pastoral ministry.
2. The student will be exposed to the calling, character, qualifications and demands required for the pastoral ministry.
3. The student will learn some important principles and practices with regard to being a candidate for a ministry position.
4. The course will examine various aspects of a pastor's personal life, along with ideas for developing a plan for maintaining balance in one's personal life when in ministry.
5. The student will learn how to plan for and conduct special services (e.g., wedding and funeral).
6. The course will consider key principles of a shepherding ministry and mindset, including the importance of a servant-leader paradigm for pastoral ministry.
7. The course will examine the various requirements/opportunities of pastoral ministry with the hope that the student will gain greater motivation to serve God's people with humility, sacrifice, integrity, and care.



Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: PT5250-A1 Pastoral Ministry
Professor: Drs. Ed Dunnington and Stephen Estock
Campus: Atlanta
Date: Fall 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<i>In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None	
Articulation (oral & written)	Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes	Strong	Biblical study of pastoral responsibilities is addressed at length.

	ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm.		
Scripture	Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.)	Moderate	Class devotions examine biblical texts that inform learners' understanding of the principles that shape pastoral ministry.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	The soteriology and ecclesiology of the Westminster Standards will be explained and applied.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	The class will build on the premise that a healthy ministry is based on a spiritually healthy minister.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Minimal	The practice of pastoral ministry flows out of a desire to glorify and enjoy God.
Winsomely Reformed	Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.)	Moderate	The course will consider the fruit of common grace and the practice of other denominations in understanding principles of ministry.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading, and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Xns.	Strong	The course will examine the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for fruitful pastoral ministry.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS: (1044 pages)

1. Burns, Bob, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie. *The Politics of Ministry: Navigating Power Dynamics and Negotiating Interests*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2019. Read pages 5-192 [188 pages].
2. Burns, Bob, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie. *Resilient Ministry: What Pastors Told Us About Surviving and Thriving*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013. Read pages 7-264 [258 pages].
3. Helopoulos, Jason. *The New Pastor's Handbook: Help and Encouragement for the First Years of Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2015. Read pages 19-203 [185 pages].
4. Senkbeil, Harold L. *The Care of Souls: Cultivating a Pastor's Heart*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2019. Read pages 1-282 [272 pages].
5. Witmer, Timothy Z., ed. *The Shepherd's Toolbox: Advancing Your Church's Shepherding Ministry*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2023. Read pages 1-141 [141 pages].

Recommended Reading:

1. Baxter, Richard. *The Reformed Pastor*. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974.
2. Chapell, Bryan. *The Hardest Sermons You'll Ever Have to Preach: Help from Trusted Preachers for Tragic Times*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
3. Curles, Patrick. *Book of Common Worship PCA*. Montgomery, AL: Createspace, 2008.
4. Douglass, Phillip D. *What Is Your Church's Personality? Discovering and Developing the Ministry Style of Your Church*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008.
5. Lencioni, Patrick M. *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012.
6. Lencioni, Patrick M. *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
7. Presbyterian Church in America (PCA). *The Book of Church Order of the PCA*. Lawrenceville, GA: Office of the Stated Clerk of the PCA, 2019.
8. Presbyterian Church in the USA (PCUSA). *The Book of Common Worship*. Philadelphia, PA: The Board of Christian Education of the UPCUS, 1946.
9. Reeder, Harry L., III. *3D Leadership: Defining, Developing, and Deploying Christian Leaders Who Can Change the World*. London: Christian Focus Publications, 2018.
10. Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Church: A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
11. Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015.
12. Sittema, John R. *With a Shepherd's Heart: Reclaiming the Pastoral Office of Elder*. Grandville, MI: Reformed Fellowship, Inc., 2010.

REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION:

Your grade in the course is based on the following elements and percentages:

Attendance/Participation 10%

There are 9 class sessions of 3 hours each. Your physical presence at every session is important. At the same time, you are also expected to demonstrate interest in the course lectures and participate in discussion by asking questions and responding to others in class. Physical presence and participation results in 2 points for this assignment.

Course Reading 20%

There are 1044 pages of reading for this course. Your grade is based on the percentage of the reading you have completed. This is on the honor system, as you will report the percentage that you have completed on Canvas by **December 7, 2026**. For example, if you have completed 850 of the 1044 pages required (81%), your reading grade is 81%.

Project 1 (Philosophy of Ministry Paper) [Due: September 28, 2026]25%

- Primarily a reflection paper of 5-10 double-spaced pages describing your personal philosophy of pastoral ministry.
- Research and include footnotes to show sources and/or quotes that significantly impact or summarize your convictions.
- Write the paper with a view toward submitting it to a search team looking for a pastor.
- The paper must include the following elements:
 - The Biblical basis for your pastoral ministry, including the verse(s) that shape the principles and practices of your ministry.
 - Your view of the authority and work of the pastoral office, including your view of the relationship between the types of elder and the office of elder and deacon.
 - Your view on work/rest balance in the pastoral ministry.
 - Your view of how to define “success” in the pastoral ministry.

Excellent work	97-100% A 94-96% A-	Paper is within page limits. All 4 elements are included. Paper demonstrates interaction with Scripture, personal convictions, and course material.
Above average work	91-93% B+ 88-90% B 86-87% B-	Paper is within page limits. At least 3 of the 4 elements are included. Paper demonstrates interaction with course material.
Average work	83-85% C+ 80-82% C 78-79% C-	Paper is outside the page limits. At least 2 of the 4 elements are included.
Below average work	75-77% D+ 72-74% D 70-71% D-	Project is submitted, but it fails to meet the average standards. Below 70% results in a Failure (F).

Project 2 (Formats for Special Services) [Due: November 2, 2026]20%

- A practical paper of 3-5 pages outlining 3 things: 1) a plan for pre-marital counseling, 2) a wedding service, and 3) a funeral service.
- Research and include footnotes to show sources that significantly shaped the services you design.
- This project is designed to be something you use when you are asked to officiate at a wedding or a funeral.
- The paper must include the following elements:
 - The counseling plan describes how many sessions you will meet with the couple and the general content of each session.
 - The outlines of the wedding and funeral services include a definite beginning (e.g., call to worship), sermon/homily, and end (e.g., benediction).
 - The flow of each service is clear, indicating the order of the various elements.
 - Biblical verses are cited with a short explanation (1-2 sentences) of why that verse was chosen (e.g., What does the verse say? Why is that message important?).

Excellent work	97-100% A 94-96% A-	Paper is within page limits. All 4 elements are included. Paper demonstrates interaction with Scripture, personal convictions, and course material.
Above average work	91-93% B+ 88-90% B 86-87% B-	Paper is within page limits. At least 3 of the 4 elements are included. Paper demonstrates interaction with course material.
Average work	83-85% C+	Paper is outside the page limits. At least 2 of the 4 elements are included.

Average work	80-82% C 78-79% C-	
Below average work	75-77% D+ 72-74% D 70-71% D-	Project is submitted, but it fails to meet the average standards. Below 70% results in a Failure (F).

Project 3 (Philosophy of Shepherding Ministry Paper) [Due: November 16, 2026]25%

- Primarily a reflection paper of 5-10 double-spaced pages describing your personal philosophy of and plan for a shepherding ministry.
- Research and include footnotes to show sources and/or quotes that significantly impact or summarize your convictions.
- Write the paper with a view toward submitting it to a Session for consideration.
- The paper must include the following elements:
 - The Biblical basis for a shepherding ministry in the local church, including the verse(s) that shape the principles and practices of the ministry.
 - Your view of the role of elders, deacons, and laypeople (men & women) in a shepherding ministry.
 - Your view on the role of discipline (pastoral and procedural) and pastoral counseling in the spiritual health of the congregation.
 - Your view on how to nurture a church culture characterized by prayer and mutual support.

Excellent work	97-100% A 94-96% A-	Paper is within page limits. All 4 elements are included. Paper demonstrates interaction with Scripture, personal convictions, and course material.
Above average work	91-93% B+ 88-90% B 86-87% B-	Paper is within page limits. At least 3 of the 4 elements are included. Paper demonstrates interaction with course material.
Average work	83-85% C+ 80-82% C 78-79% C-	Paper is outside the page limits. At least 2 of the 4 elements are included.
Below average work	75-77% D+ 72-74% D 70-71% D-	Project is submitted, but it fails to meet the average standards. Below 70% results in a Failure (F).

POLICY ON CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM: Cheating is the use of another person's work on behalf of your own work, with the assumption being that it is your work. The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers says, "To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought something that you have in fact borrowed from someone else." Plagiarism is the use of ideas, information and content from a particular source without giving credit to that source by footnoting the source or accounting for it in a bibliography. Cheating will result in an automatic zero (0) grade for the assignment, paper or exam involved. Plagiarism, whether intentional or unintentional, is considered academic theft. The RTS academic consequences of plagiarism are as follows: 1) First offense: The student must rewrite the paper and receive no better than a passing "D" grade for it. 2) Second offense: The student fails the entire course.

EXTENSION POLICY: Since this is a practical theology course, the course projects are designed to be very practical. There is no final exam for this class; therefore, our hope is students will be able to complete all of the requirements early so they can focus on their other classes at the end of the semester.

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Registrar's Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 46 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 18)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 49)

POLICY ON GRAMMAR AND SPELL CHECK: Any work turned in which appears to lack "proofing" or displays poor grammar will receive a small penalty affecting the grade.

POLICY ON INTERNET USAGE (from the RTS/Charlotte Student Handbook): Students are expected to conduct themselves at all times as mature believers. Godly behavior, expected of all Christians, is especially required of those who are preparing themselves to become ministers of the Word. Classroom manners should reflect this maturity. Students should be respectful of professors, attend all class periods, and hand in assignments on time. **Classroom etiquette also includes leaving cell phones turned off, refraining from surfing the Internet and laptop computer games and talking to your neighbor during lectures.**

RTS ZOOM POLICY

Your professor may allow you to Zoom into class or watch Zoom recordings for excused absences based on the professor's discretion and subject to the availability of equipment. Students should contact their professor well in advance of the class meeting. For a third absence the Registrar should be consulted. Your professor may require additional interactive assignments to offset the absence of classroom interaction. Sync or Remote Live courses have priority for the limited Zoom equipment.

PT5250 PASTORAL MINISTRY
Reformed Theological Seminary-Charlotte
Fall 2026 Schedule
Drs. Ed Dunnington and Stephen Estock
Visiting Lecturers

Class	Date	Topics
1	Aug 24 STE/ED	Introduction, Review Course & Syllabus Devotion: 1 Timothy 1 The life of a pastor (personal piety & growth) Living in the “fishbowl” (you and your family)
2	Aug 31 STE/ED out	Developing a Team Mentality and Ministry Devotion: 1 Timothy 2 Parity in the office of elder Working with elders on a Session (different models of oversight) Training and developing a team of leaders.
	Sep 7	Labor Day (No Class)
3	Sep 14 ED/STE	Personality, Emotional Intelligence, Ministry Capital Devotion: 1 Timothy 3 Know who you are, emotional intelligence and relational wisdom Power, influence, and relational capital
4	Sep 21 ED/STE	The Call and Ordination Process Devotion: 1 Timothy 4 Navigating the interview(s) and call process Knowing if and when God is moving you to another place Faithfulness as a measure of success
5	Sep 28 ED/STE	Philosophy of Gospel-Leader Ministry [Project 1 (Philosophy of Ministry) due] Devotion: 1 Timothy 5:1-16 Developing a philosophy of ministry The pastor as leader (chief of the servant leaders) The pastor as preacher, counselor, peacemaker, personnel manager
	Oct 5	RTS Fall Break (No Class)
	Oct 12 ED out	OFF (No class)
6	Oct 19 ED/STE out	The Pastor as Prophet, Priest, and Shepherd-King Devotion: 1 Timothy 5:17-25 The pastor as worship leader

Special services: baptism, the Lord's Supper, weddings, funerals
Special opportunities: visitation at home, hospitals, funeral homes

	Oct 26 ED/STE out	OFF (No class)
7	Nov 2 ED/STE	The Pastor as a Businessman [Project 2 (Formats of Special Services) due] Devotion: 1 Timothy 6:1-10 Pastoral leadership in the budgeting process Managing the relationship between elders and deacons
8	Nov 9 ED/STE	The Pastoral Ministry Involves Faithful Plodding Devotion: 1 Timothy 6:11-21 Principles and practices of a resilient ministry
9	Nov 16 STE/ED	Class Wrap-up/Case Studies [Project 3 (Philosophy of Shepherding) due] Devotion: 1 Peter 5:1-5 Case studies and Q&As
	Nov 23	OFF (No class)
	Nov 30	OFF (No class)
	Nov 30	Last day of classes
	Dec 7	Reading percentage and all assignments due. No extensions beyond this date.

The grades in this course are project-based. There is no final exam.