

Competency Exercise

Leading the Church in Worship and Interpreting the Behavior of the Church

For the competency exercise joining Leading the Church in Worship and Interpreting the Behavior of the Church, the student will prepare and lead a worship service in her or his congregational setting in which the sermon, liturgy and music relate to, teach about, persuade and inspire the congregation to act in relation to an ethical issue facing the church (broadly, but also specifically facing the student's congregation) today. This ethical issue must be negotiated with the faculty before beginning the exercise.

The student will inform the faculty of the date of the worship service described above. The deadlines listed below are relative to that date, but are firm. The Seminary's policy concerning late work applies to these dates: grades are dropped a letter grade per day that the assignment is late.

The following work is to be submitted as demonstration of the student's critical thinking and practical skills related to ethics, liturgy, and preaching:

- Two weeks before the service, the student will submit a critically written **credo** (2000 words) concerning the relation of ethics and Christian worship, which includes
 - Ethics: statements concerning your understanding of
 - the core ethical orientation of the Christian gospel,
 - the nature of the church as an ethical community,
 - the role and authority of the pastor/preacher as an ethical leader in the community of faith;
 - Worship: statements concerning your understanding of
 - the purpose of worship within the community of faith,
 - the purpose of preaching within the community of faith;
 - Integrated: statements concerning your understanding of
 - the relationship between ethical exhortation/instruction and action and the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ,
 - the significance that ethics, ethical stances, and social action should hold for especially worship practices;

This credo requires no new research, but should draw on and cite readings, lectures and discussions from LW and IB courses following Turabian style. This date of submission signifies that faculty assume the credo will inform the approach taken and conclusions drawn in the research paper and will inform the way the worship service and sermon is designed.

- A week before the worship service, the student will submit a **research paper** (2,000 words) that identifies and analyzes an ethical issue significant for society, the church, and your individual congregation (this issue must be approved by the professors administering the competency exercise). In this paper the student will
 - identify and frame the ethical issue as it touches the life and/or mission of the congregation;
 - using various approaches/methods in Christian ethics, engage in ethical analysis and reflection on the issue;

- based on the analysis, draw a conclusion on how the congregation should respond to the issue.

While drawing on skills and content from IB courses, this paper requires new research and should be well-documented following Turabian style. The submission date for the paper signifies that faculty assume the paper will be informed by the credo (turned in a week earlier) and the research will inform the content and design of the worship service (led a week later). The due date is *not* meant to signify that students should wait until the credo is completed to begin researching their ethical issue. Work can and should overlap, but the final form of the paper should reflect the final form of the credo.

- By the Friday before the Worship service, the student will submit an **annotated script of the worship service** (1,500 words for these annotations; the word count for the annotations does not include hymn titles, texts of prayers, etc.) that provides
 - an explanation of why this service is appropriate for the particular cultural and congregational setting;
 - the liturgical, theological, ecclesiological, aesthetic and/or pastoral rationale for each liturgical action (i.e., do not simply describe what happened or was said in the liturgical act, but *why* you chose this hymn or said these words, etc.); and
 - the relation of each liturgical element to the ethics issue chosen for the service.

The reality of congregational worship and student roles in congregations means that you may not be able to shape every aspect of worship the way you think it ought to take place. That is fine: simply comment in the annotations why such-and-such does not reflect the best practice and what you would have done if you had more freedom to have changed the liturgical element. (Make sure to cite any sources you use in developing the service, and if you use a hymnal other than *Chalice Hymnal* or *Chalice Praise*, scan and submit the music as well.) Your annotations should reflect (and cite) course content, but requires no new research.

- Also by that Friday, the student will submit a **sermon manuscript** that includes a statement of the sermonic claim and a description and rationale for the rhetorical form used (as informed by your Sermon Preparation class). The manuscript length should fit with the expectations of the congregation concerning the typical length of a sermon in their worship. Further, the student is not expected to stick to the manuscript word-for-word during the delivery of the sermon. The sermon should deal with the ethical issue critically, offering the congregation appropriate things the student has learned from her or his research, but should avoid becoming a lecture. In other words, the sermon should relate the ethical issue to the congregation's existential needs.
- On the day the student leads the worship service, surveys concerning the sermon are to be distributed to and completed by a group of volunteers set up in advance by someone other than the student. Instructions for this process are included in a separate document, and will require some advance preparation. The completed should be placed in the mail to the professors no later than the day after the worship service, so that they arrive at the seminary later that week.
 - The student should supply the same survey to her or his mentor to evaluate the sermon. If the mentor is not able to attend the service, he or she can watch the video (see below) and then return the evaluation directly to the professors

afterward.

- By the Thursday after the worship service, the student will upload to a video recording of the service following instructions provided by Ben Wyatt. The URL for the video must be supplied to the faculty in the course dropbox. Students should make sure they check with Ben in advance to obtain and test these instructions. (As technology used at the seminary changes, these instructions may change. Do not assume the way you have uploaded videos in the past is the way to do it for this exercise!)

Evaluation

Students will receive two grades for the exercise—one for each area covered. As part of the feedback provided to the student, the attached rubric will be used to signal to the student her or his strengths and weakness in the two areas.

As part of their evaluation and grading of the exercise, the two faculty (one from Leading the Church in Worship and one from Interpreting the Behavior of the Church) will also take into consideration

- the survey filled out by a laity attending the service; and
- an evaluation form filled out by the student's onsite mentor (who may watch the video afterward).