

Competency Exercise

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

For the competency exercise joining Interpreting the Faith of the Church and Leading the Church in Worship, 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, and proclaim a critical, contemporary interpretation of a doctrine of the church.

This doctrine must be negotiated with the faculty before beginning the exercise. And because the entirety of a doctrine cannot be shared within the scope of a single worship service, the student will also negotiate with the faculty the limited way in which the doctrine will be approached.

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 theology, liturgy, and preaching:

- Three weeks before the service, the student will turn in to the faculty a critically written **credo** (2000 words) concerning the relation of theology and Christian worship, which includes¹
 - Theology: statements concerning your understanding of
 - the core theological message of the Christian gospel ,
 - the role of the church (ecclesiology) in proclaiming this core theological message
 - the role and authority of the pastor/preacher as a theological teacher 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 theological instruction and the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ,
 - the significance that theology should hold for worship practices;

This credo requires no new research, but students should draw on and cite readings, lectures and discussions from LW courses. From the IF curriculum, students should write the Credo in conversation with one theologian they have studied who best represents the student's theological orientation. The document should follow Turabian style. This early deadline for the credo signifies that the professors 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.

¹“A Credo is the thoughtful expression of what one believes and is prepared to act on. . . . [a] Credo by a Christian is not a statement of original or novel beliefs; on the contrary, it is the personal embrace, the personal representation of beliefs central to the Christian tradition.” Sallie McFague, *Life Abundant: Rethinking Theology and Economy for a Planet in Peril* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000) 15-16.

- Two weeks before the service, a **research paper** (2,000 words) that identifies and analyzes a theological 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 theological issue as it touches the life and/or mission of the congregation;
 - use historical and contemporary theologians to discuss the ways this theological issue has been and is now understood.
 - based on this discussion, draw a conclusion on how the congregation should respond to the issue.

While drawing on skills and content from IF courses, this paper requires new research and should be well-documented following Turabian style. The paper is to be submitted two weeks before the worship service is led. This date signifies that faculty assumes the paper will be informed by the credo (turned in a week earlier) and will (with the credo) 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 service, 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 theological 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.

- By the Friday before the service, a **sermon manuscript** that includes a statement of the sermonic claim and a description and rationale for the rhetorical form used, rooted in the way the student was taught in Sermon Preparation. (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 present the doctrinal issue to the congregation critically, but should avoid becoming a lecture. In other words, the sermon

should relate the doctrine to the congregation's existential needs. The annotated script of the worship service and the sermon manuscript are to be submitted by the Friday before the worship service is led.

- 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 the Instructional Designer/Technologist. 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 Faith 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).