

Course: MS459-O Senior Seminar-Ministry Studies
Credit: 3 Semester Hours
Semester: Spring 2026
Time By Appointment, Cohort meetings to be scheduled with instructor
Instructor: Dr. Joshua Paxton, Joshua.paxton@calvary.edu,
(816)679-9387(cell); (816)322-5152 ext. 1353 (office); Office: CABRE 108

I. DESCRIPTION

An integration of the theoretical and practical skills gained in the program in order to prepare the Ministry Studies student for securing a ministry position upon graduation. The course will synthesize the student's knowledge, character and ministry skills through a life development process, cohort discussions, an oral examination, the preparation of documents used in the normal pastoral search process, and the development of a written philosophy and strategy of ministry unique to the kind of ministry sought upon graduation.

This course is offered in two formats: in-person and online. Students registered for in-person attend the classes in person, online students attend the classes via the online classroom. For both in-person and online students, assignments, and interaction outside of the class period are done in the learning management system.

II. OBJECTIVES

A. General competencies to be achieved:

1. Demonstrate preparedness for local church ministry. (PLO: 1-5) (A: 1-8)
2. Begin the ministry search process and assess preparedness for ministry. (PLO: 1-5) (A: 1-8)
3. Develop a written philosophy and strategy of ministry. (PLO: 1-5) (A: 2, 6)

B. Specific competencies to be achieved. The student will:

1. Defend a personal doctrinal statement and position statements on significant ministry issues. (PLO 1, 3, 5) (A: 3, 4, 8)
2. Study the current context of a desired ministry position and develop / refine a personal philosophy of ministry and ministry strategy for the same. (PLO: 2, 5) (A: 2, 6)
3. Explore a ministry position that corresponds to God's unique calling and gifting. (PLO: 2-5) (A: 2, 7)
4. Synthesize understanding with ministry skills and Christian character. (PLO: 5, 6) (A: 1-8)

III. REQUIREMENTS / ASSIGNMENTS

Our Mission: "...to prepare Christians to live and serve in the church and in the world according to the Biblical worldview."

1. Cohort Meetings

1. Senior Seminar Cohorts will consist of the course instructor and all students enrolled in the Ministry Studies Senior Seminar (MS459O) in a given semester.
2. Cohorts will meet at least seven (7) times according to the schedule listed below under Assignment 2 *Life*. The course instructor may allow students to record video reports at his/her discretion.
3. Cohorts will share and discuss work done in Assignment 2 *Life*.
4. Cohort meeting #1 (Week 1): Look over *Life: Life Stewardship in Community* (Reed), discuss the schedule (set specific dates and times of future cohort meetings) and clarify the process.

2. *Life: Students will work through Life: Life Stewardship in Community* (Reed) in seven steps:

1. My Story: What is my past and where am I going?

- a. Read and work through "Introduction" and "Step 1" of *Life: My Story-What is my past and where am I going?*
- b. Write or identify a Personal Doctrinal Statement (Assignment 3): The student will write or identify a doctrinal statement that reflects his/her personal doctrinal beliefs. The student may write an original doctrinal statement or adopt the statement used by another ministry (Calvary University, Local Church, etc.). If the latter, the student may be asked to expand and elaborate. The student will be required to defend the statement via an oral exam (See Part 3: Assignment 8 below).
- c. Cohort meeting #2 (Week 3): My Story Presentations (Step 1) and Doctrinal Statements.
 - i. Cohort students who are able will present "live" in person or via Teams.
 - ii. Students who are unable to join the cohort "live" will upload video recordings of My Story Presentations (30 minutes maximum; screen share or spreadsheets).

2. My Purpose: Why do I exist?

- a. Read and work through "Step 2" of *Life: My Purpose-Why do I exist?*
- b. Write or Identify Personal Position Statements (1 page each; Assignment 4a): Students will write original statements or identify via appropriate referencing of sources, position statements to include the following:
 - i. How to Study the Bible
 - ii. How to Reach Unbelievers in Our Time and Culture
 - iii. How to Explain the Gospel
 - iv. How to make Disciples
 - v. How to Defend the Faith
- c. Cohort meeting #3 (Week 6): Discuss Step 2 and Position Statements.

3. My Abilities: What are my unique contributions?

- a. Read and work through "Step 3" of *Life: My Abilities – What are my unique contributions?*
- b. Work through "Life and Ministry Assessment" (Assignment 5)
- c. Cohort Meeting #4 (Week 8): Discuss Step 3 and "Life and Ministry Assessment."

4. My Legacy: What am I intentionally passing on?

- a. Read and work through "Step 4" of *Life: My Legacy – What am I intentionally passing on?*
- b. Write or Identify Personal Position Statements (2 pages each: Assignment 4b): Students will write original statements or identify via appropriate referencing of sources, position statements to include the following:
 - i. The Importance of Biblical Marriage; including a personal application statement.
 - ii. The Importance of Biblical Families; including a personal application statement.
 - iii. The Importance of the Local Church; including a personal application statement.
- c. Cohort Meeting #5 (Week 10): Discuss Step 4 and Position Statements.

5. My Strategy: How do I make my legacy a reality?

- a. Read and work through "Step 5" of *Life: My Strategy – How do I make my legacy a reality?*
- b. Write a Strategy of Ministry Paper (4 pages: Assignment 6). Develop a strategy of ministry for the kind of ministry position sought, by addressing the following questions.
 - i. Why do you want to pursue this kind of ministry position?
 - ii. What are the present challenges to this kind of ministry?
 - iii. How will you go about gaining this kind of ministry?
 - iv. How will you do this kind of ministry after you've obtained the position?
- c. Develop search documents (Assignment 7):
 - i. Make (and keep) an appointment with the Clark Academic Center (in person or online) to receive coaching and resources.
 - ii. Develop a cover letter template.
 - iii. Develop a resume.
- d. Cohort Meeting #6 (Week 12): Discuss Step 5, Strategy of Ministry Paper, search documents progress and schedule oral exams (Assignment 8).

6. My Habits: How can I pursue lifelong learning?

- a. Read and work through "Step 6" of *Life: My Habits – How can I pursue lifelong learning?*
- b. Cohort Meeting #7 (Week 14): Discuss Step 6; search documents (complete by end of Week 16) and oral exams.

3. Take an oral examination (Assignment 8).

- 1. The student will take a one hour and fifteen-minute oral examination of questions from a committee of college and seminary faculty.

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2. The exam committee will consist of the course instructor, one other faculty member and one person of the student's choosing.
3. The student will answer and defend questions related to their doctrinal and positional statements.

IV. Methods.

A. In class methods include lecture, discussion, and question and answer.

B. Out of class methods include reading, writing, and studying.

C. Grading.

Assignment 1	Cohort Participation (7)	84 points (12 each)
Assignment 2	<i>Lifeⁿ</i> Parts 1-6	420 points (70 each)
Assignment 3	Personal Doctrinal Statement	86 points
Assignment 4	Personal Position Statements (8)	160 points (20 each)
Assignment 5	<i>Life and Ministry Assessment</i>	50 points
Assignment 6	Strategy of Ministry Paper	40 points
Assignment 7	Search Documents (3 parts)	60 points (20 each part)
Assignment 8	Oral Exam	100 points
	Total	1000 points

C. The Bible is a required textbook in every course at Calvary University. To facilitate academic level study, students are required to use for assignments and research an English translation or version of the Bible based on formal equivalence (*meaning that the translation is generally word-for-word from the original languages*), including any of the following: New American Standard (NASB, English Standard Version (ESV), New King James (NKJV), or King James (KJV). Other translations and versions based on dynamic equivalence (*paraphrases, and thought-for-thought translations like NLT and NIV*) may be

used as supplemental sources. Please ask the professor if you have questions about a particular translation or version.

D. All class papers must follow the Turabian style according to *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th edition. Unless otherwise indicated book reports and study questions may be in non-research format, interviews and other research papers should be in research paper format. A copy of the Turabian Style Guide is available on the Clark Academic Center page of Calvary's website.

E. Late Assignments: Assignments will be penalized according to the professor's late policy as explained in Canvas.

F. Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined as copying any content without identifying the source. This also includes taking another person's or AI entity's ideas or constructs and presenting them as your own. Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Most assignments at Calvary require the student to produce original work. Therefore, unless specifically permitted by the instructor, the use of AI-generated content is prohibited (even if cited) as it does not represent original work created by the student and is an unreliable aggregate of ideas from other sources. AI, however, may be utilized in cases where the instructor has explicitly permitted its use to accomplish specific tasks. It is only in these cases that AI-generated (or modified) content may be submitted by the student. If there are any questions as to the permissibility of AI use for an assignment, please ask your instructor for clarification.

Any assignment that includes plagiarism will receive a zero (0) grade. Students should note that papers will be submitted in Canvas via "Turn-It-In". This program automatically gives the student's work a plagiarism score, students should strive for a score less than 20.

G. Disabilities: Students with disabilities have the responsibility of informing the Accommodations Support Coordinator (aso@calvary.edu) of any disabling condition that may require support

H. The Clark Academic Center (learning@calvary.edu), located in the library building, is dedicated to providing free academic assistance for all CU students. Student tutors aid with all facets of the writing process, tutor in various subject areas, prepare students for exams and facilitate tests. Please take advantage of this service.

I. Attendance Policy – Calvary has no official attendance policy, the attendance policy of the professor will be explained in class and in Canvas.

V. Materials

A. Required

1. The Bible (Instructor will use ESV)

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2. *Lifeⁿ: Life Stewardship in Community* Resource © Jeff Reed 2003; \$35;
<https://store.bild.org/life-n-life-stewardship-in-community-1/>

B. Recommended study materials.

1. Ryrie, Charles C. *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1999. **ISBN-13:** 978-0-8024-2734-2, **Retail price:** \$34.99
2. Class notes from all Theology courses.
3. Class notes from all Ministry studies-related courses.

VI. TENTATIVE CLASS SCHEDULE

Schedule will be presented during first class session

See Canvas for Due Dates