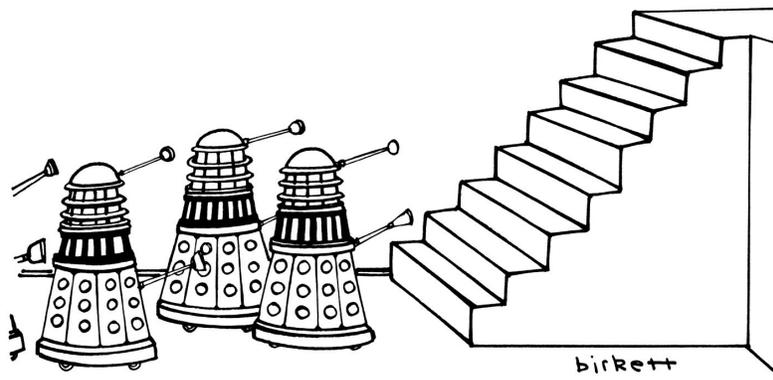


Rev. Dr. Erin Raffety  
 Office Hours: Fridays, 1:15-3:15pm, Tennent 105  
 Phone: 609-497-3634  
 Email: [erin.raffety@ptsem.edu](mailto:erin.raffety@ptsem.edu)



*“Well, this certainly buggers our plan to conquer the Universe.”*

**EF3316 Ministry with People with Disabilities**  
**Course Syllabus—Spring 2018**  
*Tuesdays 2:00-4:50 pm*

**Course Description:** While The Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) and The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004) have set the legal precedent for equal rights and inclusion for people with disabilities in the United States, scholars of disability charge that our society remains problematically ableist in its orientation. Are our churches, our Sunday schools, and our ministries abelist, too? Should inclusion necessarily be a priority for the church, and is it even a salient model for a theology of disability? How do we as ministers, people of faith, and practical theologians encounter and minister with people with disabilities in our congregations and the broader culture? This course explores the intersection between the field of disability studies and practical theology, endeavoring toward a fuller understanding of God and the Church. Participation in the Institute for Youth Ministry’s January 2018 conference on Disability and Youth Ministry is required except that students must attend their regularly scheduled classes. Students will use conversations and workshops in the conference as preliminary readings and toward the required course practicum of partnering with individuals with disabilities in ministry.

**Course Philosophy**

**1. This course is interdisciplinary.**

How do we understand disability? You’ll notice that the course begins with the writings of activists, scholars, and theologians (many people with disabilities themselves), readings from the interdisciplinary field of disability studies, while also considering

theological work on disability, legislation, and practical texts and challenges regarding preaching, teaching, and ministering with people with disabilities. Because we read and pull from a such a diverse set of texts, you'll want to be particularly attuned to decoding disciplinary differences—what are the overlaps in the methods of analysis that such scholars use? Where are the divergences? What are the differences between popular and scholarly sources? And what ways, as practical theologians, can we draw upon the wisdom of other disciplines to seek and find and make sense of God, ourselves, and the Church?

**2. This is a practical theology course, focused on ministry with people with disabilities.**

This may seem straightforward, but I encourage you to read even the more theoretical and theological texts with an eye toward developing a definition of practical theology and an understanding for why it matters. You'll see that practical theology takes the lived experience of human beings seriously, and for us, that especially means considering what God is doing in and with people with disabilities both in and outside the Church. In other words, the “with” in the title of this course, “Ministry *with* People with Disabilities,” is not a typo, but rather a practical, theological conviction that God is active in the lives of people with disabilities and that they have much to give to our understanding of God, what it means to be human, and the Church. (The second *with* in “People *with* Disabilities” is not a typo either, but rather an intentional preference and reference for highlighting people with disabilities’ humanity.) As much as ministry in the Church with people with disabilities has often been a mere matter of accommodation or inclusion, in this course we are invited to consider the problems, biases, and limitations of such approaches, and to draw upon practical and theological sources of knowledge in order that God might expand (and disrupt!) our anthropology and theology to its fullest.

**3. This course assumes that ministry with people with disabilities is primary, not secondary, ministry.**

Too often the experiences of people with disabilities and other minorities are dismissed as specialized ministries and marginalized within a church setting. Yet, not only because disability is actually much more widespread than most people presume (according to the WHO, 10% of the world population are people with disabilities; People with disabilities are the largest minority group in the United States, comprising 19% of the population according to the U.S. Census Bureau), but also because experiences of people with disabilities teach us about what it means to be human and who God is, ministry with people with disabilities is ministry for the whole Church. We'll see throughout the course how theology, particularly practical theology, is one discipline that has the expertise to assert both the common humanity for people with and without disabilities as a doctrinal teaching, furthering not just the ministry of the Church but the work of the Church in the world.

#### 4. This course aims to be Spirit-led, not merely syllabi-led.

We will cover a lot of content through this document over the course of the semester, but I urge you to join me in listening for the voice of the Spirit in our readings, discussion, conversations, and prayers. As an instructor, I often struggle to stop, watch, and wait for God to work (as you can see, I've planned ahead here). *So help me do that.* Tell us where you see the Spirit moving in your own life and experience. And let's make sure we attend to what God wants us to attend to, even when it involves slowing down, taking a risk, or (God forbid!) skipping a sustained discussion of a particular theoretical reading!<sup>1</sup>

**Learning Outcomes:** By the semester's end, you will...

- Develop a definition and an understanding of disability that is backed by scholarly evidence.
- Articulate your understanding of disability within a practical theological framework.
- Bring theoretical understandings of disability, disability studies, and theology of disability into conversation with the lived experience of people with disabilities in the Church.
- Develop a vision for ministry with people with disabilities that emerges from your particular context and theological commitments.
- Trust and believe that God is working in and through people with disabilities and you today in passionate, thoughtful, and dynamic ways!
- Experience a shift in your worldview and your theology (I'm really prayerful about this), by considering and critiquing the ableist biases of our world and our churches and encountering a God whose ways are different and good.

#### **STRUCTURE & POLICIES:**

##### **Attendance**

Your active engagement in this course is crucial. For this reason, you are expected to attend every class session. After two excused absences, your final grade will be affected and is considered cause for concern. Please note that a late arrival of more than 15 minutes will count as an absence. You are responsible for material covered in each class, so even if you are late and thus already incurring an absence, please do come to class.

##### **E-mail and Blackboard Announcements**

I will often use using email and our Blackboard site to relay some of the nuts and bolts of the course, which, logistically, is quite complex. You are responsible for any information that I pass along via these media. ***Make sure to check your email at least once a day!***

---

<sup>1</sup> The course syllabus should not be understood as an inflexible contract with the members of the class, but the terms will be honored to the greatest extent possible.

### **Office Hours**

Office hours will be held on Friday afternoons from 1:15-3:15pm in my office, Tennent 105. On Monday of each week, I place a sheet of paper on my door with 15-minute slots for that Friday. The best practice is to sign up for a slot in advance. However, if there are openings, you are also welcome to drop in! I'm also happy to see multiple students a one time if you want to sign up for 30 minutes in groups of 2 or 3 (the more the merrier!). If all slots are full early in the week, please feel free to email me to seek out additional availability (this is fine, too, if your class schedule interferes with office hours). In the event that I am out of town on a Friday, I will make other arrangements for that week.

### **Email Policy**

You are welcome to email me with questions about the course that are not covered in the syllabus. (For instance, please do let me know if there is a problem with a reading on Blackboard as soon as possible so that I can correct it!) Although I am happy to read written work in person (during office hours), I do not comment over email on written work (given the sheer number of my students, this is just not possible, nor do I find it the most effective tool). Finally, I do not answer email over the weekend (I'd recommend this to all of you, too—God made Sabbath and it's glorious!).

### **WRITTEN REQUIREMENTS:**

#### **1. Key Term Paper (35%)—due Friday, March 9 by 4:30pm on Blackboard**

Write 5-6 pages (1500-1800 words) analyzing a question, problem, contradiction, or inconsistency in the presentation of a key term, approach to a theological doctrine, or central idea across 2-3 texts we've read thus far in the course. Your paper should clearly set up the problem, puzzle, or controversy introduced by that term, doctrinal interpretation, or central idea and make an argument that responds to the problem or puzzle you present. Please draw on scholarly evidence from no more than 2-3 texts from the course to support your analysis. Finally, please conclude by offering an interpretation or a question as to why this paper's argument matters to or what it offers to practical ministry with people with disabilities.

#### **2. Final Project/Paper: Practical Approach to Ministry with People with Disabilities in the Church (50%)—See Course Schedule for due dates**

A structured 10-12 page creative project that expresses your vision for ministry with people with disabilities in the church or another context, that makes extensive use of course materials in a thoughtful and innovative way. The format here is open-ended: you could develop a very practical resource for your future ministry (a 6-week teaching curriculum, a 3-week sermon series, a liturgical resource for a disability Sunday, a researched memorandum for session or governing body study, including a 5-year plan toward greater inclusion in ministry, etc.) with a short rationale (1-2 pages); you could write a more formal term paper, that critiques and builds on the practical, theological approaches to ministry with people with disabilities that we've studied in the course thus far; or you could pursue an intersectional, narrative, and/or multimedia approach to

creating and providing resources for the Church around disability, discrimination, advocacy, education, or health. More information will follow, but start thinking about now about what challenges your churches and contexts face when it comes to ministry with people with disabilities and how you can be a resource for growth and change.

**\*\*Optional Practice Writing:** I understand that it can be intimidating and challenging to be in a course where 85% of your grade comes from two written assignments. This is not my preference and it's entirely reflective of structural limitations (there are 30 of you and one of me!). Therefore, if you're eager to write something low-stakes (no grading just comments) prior to your first or second assignment submission to get some practice writing for me, you are welcome to produce a two page (double-spaced) précis of *one* of our readings to be emailed to me prior to our Tuesday class period for that reading. In the précis, please do three things: 1) Present a question about a specific moment in the text that shows contradiction, tension, or imprecision and make an argument for interpretation based on other evidence within the text; 2) Summarize the main argument of the text; 3) Demonstrate your interpretation by drawing on specific evidence from the text and conclude by restating your thesis and offering further questions or insight for interpretation. This piece of writing should include properly formatted citations, bibliography, title, etc. I'll aim to send you feedback within 1-2 weeks of submission.

## **OTHER GRADED REQUIREMENTS:**

### **Citizenship Grade (15%):**

The citizenship portion of your final grade will be evaluated using the following criteria and the accompanying grading scale:

#### *Citizenship Criteria*

- The student is always on time and prepared.
- The student participates actively in class, consistently contributing thoughtful and thought-provoking comments and questions; speaks not only to the professor but to other students; works energetically in small group or pair activities; overall, improves the day-to-day quality of the seminar for everyone.
- The student submits thoughtful and complete assignments.
- The student demonstrates serious engagement with course texts, particularly in the presentation of a book for review on Tuesday, March 27 in class.\*

A student who earns an A-range grade for citizenship meets or surpasses all of the above criteria in a striking way; a student who earns a B-range grade for citizenship commendably satisfies most or all of the above criteria; a student who earns a C-range grade for citizenship meets few of the above criteria.\*\*

\*A note! This class has a glaring omission (probably several but this is one I see—let me know where the others are!) when it comes to the intersectional nature of the experience of disability (the relationship between disability and race, ethnicity, class, gender, age, etc.). Therefore, one of the opportunities in our practice and book studies is to select curriculum, resources, and texts that really speak and inform us of these intersections. We'll talk about this more as the course goes on, but my goal is for us to be compiling a list of topics and resources for further learning that you can pull from for our

presentations on Tues, March 27 in class. I'll give you time the previous week in class to prepare the presentations, but your book selections will be due to me in class on Tuesday, March 6 (just write down the bibliographic info and your name on a piece of paper.)

\*\*I will seek to give you an update on your citizenship grade mid-semester specific feedback for how you can improve, but if you feel that your active engagement in class is lacking due to external or internal challenges, please see me so that we can brainstorm some ways to make your learning more effective in the classroom.

### **Grading Standards**

When grading papers, I evaluate the words on the page before me and don't factor in "improvement" or "effort." However, the effort you put into an assignment will most certainly be evident in the paper you produce. An "A" paper is outstanding: well-organized, persuasively reasoned, thoughtfully supported with evidence and analysis, error-free, and fulfills all conventions of academic writing. B, C, D, and F papers lack one or more of these qualities with increasing degree. A 0 paper is less than half the assigned length and does not fulfill the basic expectations of the assignment. Unlike an F paper, a 0 does not count as successful completion of the assignment and puts the student in jeopardy of failing the course. Please reference the grading criteria for each assignment as you write.

Grade Table	
Letter	95-point scale
A	92.51-95
A-	89.01-92.5
B+	86.51-89
B	82.51-86.5
B-	79.01-82.5
C+	76.51-79
C	72.51-76.5
C-	69.01-72.5
D	64.51-69
F	0-64.5

### **Grading**

The majority of your final grade comes from the major writing assignments. They are weighted more significantly as the semester goes along in order to reward your improvement and acknowledge the assignments' increasing complexity. The other 15% comes from your citizenship. Here is the grade breakdown:

**Citizenship 15%**

**Paper #1 35%**

**Final Paper 50%**

## **Paper Format**

Writing assignments must be typed. Also, always:

- Use Times New Roman 12 or its close equivalent. All papers should have header information with student's name, class, professor, and date and should have a uniquely chosen title that reflects the argument of the paper (not the assignment name I gave it before you even wrote it!).
- Set your margins at 1" and don't "justify" your right-hand margin. All papers should be double-spaced and in Word format (this is very important because I use the track changes feature to make comments in the margin and you will not receive marginal comments from me if you submit a pdf).
- Use your word-processing program's automatic pagination function to number your pages.
- Proofread your writing for typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors. If you consistently make these kinds of errors, your grade will drop.
- Include proper and extensive citations using Chicago Manual of Style footnotes, APA or AAA (American Anthropological Association) in-text citations (there's some flexibility here on what you choose since the course is interdisciplinary). A properly formatted Bibliography (single-spaced and indented) is also necessary even if you use footnotes.
- Avoid computer disaster by regularly saving your work and periodically printing out drafts while you write. ***Technical difficulty is not a legitimate reason for late work.*** Saving your work to Google docs as well will ensure that if your personal computer crashes, a copy will still exist somewhere in the internet. Google docs has saved my sanity more than once and it will likely save yours sometime during the semester.

## **Submission Method**

Please submit all papers for the course via the "Final Paper Dropbox" on our Blackboard site. You are responsible for submitting by the deadlines outlined on this syllabus and the individual essay schedules, so give yourself time to deal with any technical difficulties you may encounter. Blackboard is relatively intuitive to use, but feel free to contact Patrick Milas at the Blackboard help desk ([patrick.milas@ptsem.edu](mailto:patrick.milas@ptsem.edu)) if you need assistance.

Please name your documents by combining your pts email designation with the assignment abbreviation (e.g. "A1" for "Assignment #1, etc."). Thus, my Assignment 3 would be named [erin.raffetyA3.doc](#).

## **Deadlines**

Absences should be treated professionally; you are missing a pastoral obligation. All deadlines in this course are firm. Except in the case of medical or family emergency or religious observance, I give no individual extensions. If, due to such an emergency, you cannot meet a deadline, please contact me as soon as possible so that we may work out an

alternative schedule of due dates and times. In the event of a medical emergency or a family emergency, please email me or speak with me and we will respond appropriately and pastorally.

However, there are serious consequences to missing deadlines. A late assignment will be graded down by a third of a grade for every 24 hours that it's late, up until the final extended deadline, at which point you may not complete the course (see the "Completion of Work" policy below).

These policies have two concrete benefits for everyone in the class: (1) you may be less likely to fall behind if you know that your actions (and inactions) have real consequences, and (2) you can count on being treated the same as your classmates, which is another way of saying that no one will receive preferential treatment (by, for example, having immunity to overrun a deadline in order to work longer on a piece of writing). As a writer myself, I know how hard it is to bite the proverbial bullet and submit a piece of writing. We often want extra time to polish one last sentence or re-organize one last paragraph. But what we most often need in these cases is feedback—my late policies will help you to take the leap and submit your writing, even when you don't think it is yet "ready."

### **Completion of Work**

You must complete all papers to pass the course, and you must complete them within the schedule of the course—i.e., you may not turn in all your papers in the final week. If you fail to submit a paper by its due date, your grade for that paper will be reduced (see "Deadlines," above). You are responsible for contacting me about any late work; if you do not, you will receive an e-mail from me copied to Dean John White, Dean Cathy Cook-Davis, and/or Ms. Marty Lee in Academic Support regarding your future in the course.

### **Academic Integrity**

As the *Seminary Handbook* states: "Freedom of inquiry can flourish only in a community that recognizes that intellectual integrity in one's academic work lies at the heart of its mission" (7.1). All students are expected to maintain integrity in all of their academic submissions and oral presentations and abide by the academic integrity policy. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to unattributed quotations, unattributed paraphrasing, unauthorized multiple submissions, false citations, and false submissions. Please refer to the *Seminary Handbook* for specific terms, definitions, and institutional policies related to the norms of academic integrity.

### **Academic Support**

Accessibility Accommodations PTS provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified through the Office of Academic Support. Students must register with the office (Stuart Hall, B-16 [academic.support@ptsem.edu](mailto:academic.support@ptsem.edu)) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Requests need to be made at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible for newly approved students.

Additional resources available to students for pastoral care and counseling include Dean of Student Life, John White ([john.white@ptsem.edu](mailto:john.white@ptsem.edu); 609-497-7880), Minister of the Chapel, Rev. Jan Ammon ([Janice.ammon@ptsem.edu](mailto:Janice.ammon@ptsem.edu); 609-497-7890), and Director of Counseling, Nancy Schongolla-Bowman ([nancy.schongolla@ptsem.edu](mailto:nancy.schongolla@ptsem.edu); 609-497-7844). For harassment or discrimination issues, please see the Associate Dean for Institutional Diversity, Rev. Dr. Victor Aloyo ([victor.aloyo@ptsem.edu](mailto:victor.aloyo@ptsem.edu); 609-688-1941).

### **Books Required for Purchase:**

- Anderson, David W. 2013. *Reaching Out and Bringing In: Ministry To and With Persons with Disabilities*. Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press.
- Black, Kathy. 1996. *A Healing Homiletic: Preaching and Disability*. Abingdon Press.
- Reinders, Hans, Ed. 2010. *The Paradox of Disability: Responses to Jean Vanier and L'Arche Communities from Theology and the Sciences*. Eerdmans.
- Yong, Amos. 2011. *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision for the People of God*. Eerdmans.

## **REVISED\*\* Course Reading Schedule**

### **Week 1: What is Disability?**

*Guiding Questions: What are the medical model and the social model of disability? How do theologians define, respond, and interpret the experience of disability?*

1/23

Reading: Brisenden, Simon, 1998, "Independent Living and the Medical Model of Disability," p. 20-27; Crow, Liz, 1996, "Including All Our Lives: Renewing the Social Model of Disability," (Abridged) p. 1-8; 17-21; Eiesland, Nancy, *The Disabled God*, Chps. 5&6, p. 81-119; Block, Jennie Weiss, *Copious Hosting*, Chps. 7&8, p. 101-156

### **Week 2: Introduction to the Theology of Disability (and Youth)**

*Guiding Questions: What is the relationship between disability, time, and youth? How can/should theological anthropology make sense of the medical model and the science of disability?*

1/30 Special Visitors and conference week ☺

Reading: Jacober, Amy Elizabeth, 2017, *Redefining Perfect: The Interplay Between Theology and Disability*, Chp. 4&5, p. 32-47; Conner, Benjamin, (Article under review) "Disabled Adolescents, Enabling Youth Ministry," p. 1-22; Swinton, John, 2016, *Becoming Friends of Time*, Chp. 2, "Time and Progress: Disability and the Wrong Kind of Time," p. 35-53

\*\*In addition to class today, you are required to register and attend as much of the Disability and Youth Ministry conference as possible hosted by the Institute for Youth Ministry here at PTS on Thursday, Feb. 1 and Friday, Feb. 2. Please follow the link to register for free: <http://dym.ptsem.edu>\*\*

\*\*\*Note: We will host a special wine and cheese reception for our class and today's presenters, Dr. Jacober, Dr. Conner, and Dr. Swinton, on Wednesday, January 31, from 4:45-6:00pm in the Private Dining Room in Mackay. This will give you an informal setting to visit and have unprecedented access to resident scholars. This special reception is made possible by a generous grant from The Templeton Foundation.\*\*\*

### **Week 3: Disability Theology Part II**

2/6

Reading: Creamer, Deborah, 2009, *Disability and Christian Theology*, Chp. 5, "Limits and Disability Theology"; Reinders, Hans, 2008, *Receiving the Gift of Friendship*, Chps. 6&7; Reynolds, Thomas, 2008, *Vulnerable Communion*, Chp. 6

### **Week 4: Inclusion...**

2/13

Reading: Block, Chp. 9; Webb-Mitchell, 2009, "Chp 3: A Brief History and Theological Reflection on the Place and Presence of People with Disabilities," p. 50-75; Reynolds, 2008, *Vulnerable Communion*, Chp. 7

### **Week 5: ...and its limits**

2/20

Reading: Swinton, John, 2016, *Becoming Friends of Time*, Chp. 4 & 5; Wilder, Courtney, 2016, *Disability, Faith, and the Church: Inclusion and Accommodation in Contemporary Congregations*, Chps 6 & 7

### **Week 6: Biblical Approaches to Disability**

2/27

Reading: Yong, Amos, *The Bible, Disability, and the Church*; Selections from Black

**Book Review selection due by email Friday, March 9 by 4:30 pm**

**Paper #1 Due Friday, March 9 by 4:30pm on Blackboard**

*March 7-11 Reading Period*

### **Week 8: Fellowship with people with disabilities**

3/13 \*\*Note: Our class will not meet during its regularly scheduled time on this date; rather, we will carpool to the Center for Independent Living, a residence for adults with developmental disabilities, at 700 Whispering Woods Blvd, Monmouth Junction, NJ 08852 (approx. 20 minutes from campus), where we will gather from 6:30-8pm for fellowship and desserts. Please bring a dessert to share as you are able!\*\*

### **Week 9: Practical Ministry with and by people with disabilities**

3/20

No Reading! (:

Guest Speakers: Stephen Faller, Chaplain and Director of Clinical Pastoral Education at Capital Health System and Kristin Kondratowski, Director and Special Needs Coordinator, Pequea Community Church, Lancaster, PA

\*\*Please bring the books you're reading for next week to class: we will have time to meet in groups and practice presentations.

### **Week 10: Practice & Book Presentations**

3/27 In-class presentations

### **Week 11: Theology and the Community/Practices of L'Arche (and its critiques)**

4/3

Reading: Listening: Jean Vanier interview; Reinders, ed., 2010, *The Paradox of Disability*; Badetti, Luca, 2016, "Self and Community: The Importance of Interdependence and its Shadow Side," *Journal of Disability & Religion* 20(3): 154-162; Burghardt, Madeline, 2016, "Brokenness/Transformation: Reflections on Academic Critiques of L'Arche," *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 36(1)

### **Week 12: Christian Education & Pastoral Care**

4/10

In class: Review curriculum

Reading: Webb-Mitchell, 2009, "Chp 6: The Banquet Feast: Christian Religious Education with People with Disabilities"; Selections from Anderson, Chps. 5 & 6

### **Week 13: Worship & Preaching**

4/17

Reading: Selections from Black; Saliers, Don, 1998, "Intro: Toward a Spirituality of Inclusiveness," *Human Disability and the Service of God*; Selections from Anderson

*Reading Period April 24-30*

**Fri, May 4 4:30 pm Final Papers due for graduating students**

**Mon, May 7 4:30 pm Final Papers due for all students**