The purpose of this course is to provide opportunity for study and reflection about the experiences of transition and crisis. We will investigate the psychological nature and cultural aspects of transition and crisis experiences. Attention will also be given to the pastoral, theological, and ecclesial dimensions of, and responses to, transitions and crises.

Please note that the Vanderbilt Honor Code applies to all aspects of this course. Grades will be issued by letter, with pluses and minuses which also impact quality points.

If you have questions or wish to set up an appointment, please leave a message at (615) 293-6559.

Requirements

1. Each student is expected to read the assigned material and to take an active part in class discussion. The pattern of attendance will be taken into consideration. More than three unexcused absences will result in failure of the course. (20% of final grade)

   It is expected that each student will write two reflection papers:

2. The first paper is to be reflection upon a transition or crisis that the student has experienced. What was of help to you? Were there things said or done that you found painful or damaging? (5-7 pages and 10% of final grade)

3. The second reflection paper is to be a pastoral/cultural, theological, and ecclesial response to experiential accounts of the Holocaust (Night by Elie Wiesel), September 11, 2001 (Never Forget: An Oral History of September 11, 2001 by Mitchell Fink and Lois Mathias), or Hurricane Katrina (Time: Hurricane Katrina by the Editors of Time Magazine) from the student's denominational perspective. If a student is interested in another communal experience of crisis, the instructor is open to your proposal if presented by January 26, 2009.

   In preparing the second paper, the student is to have a conversation about the event they have selected with his or her minister, pastor, priest, rabbi, or spiritual leader. Please document this conversation in the appendix of your paper. (15 pages and 25% of final grade)

4. Research papers are to be 20 pages. Those enrolled in the Graduate Department of Religion are to write 25 pages. The research paper should address the psychological/cultural, theological, pastoral, and ecclesial (both local congregational and denominational) dimensions of, and responses to, the transition or crisis which the
student is researching. This paper is due **Monday, April 20, 2009 by 6:10 p.m.** Please use Kate Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. The paper is to include a bibliography. Late papers, or papers that are not 20 pages, will not receive full credit. (45% of final grade)

**Course Outline**

January 5: Introductions to the course and to one another.


January 19: No Class—Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday

January 26: David Switzer's *Pastoral Care Emergencies* will give shape to our discussion, pp. 1-117. Please bring an article that relates a transition or crisis.

February 2: **FIRST REFLECTION PAPER DUE**
We will continue with a discussion of *Pastoral Care Emergencies*, pp. 118-191.

February 9: Read and be prepared to discuss Part I-Introduction and chosen case study from *Counseling Survivors of Traumatic Events: A Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals* by Andrew J. Weaver, Laura T. Flannelly, and John D. Preston.

February 16: Read the Part III-Summary of *Counseling Survivors of Traumatic Events*. We will continue with the presentation of the case material.

February 23: Read and be prepared to discuss Andrew Lester’s *Hope in Pastoral Care and Counseling*.

March 2: Holiday

March 9: **SECOND REFLECTION PAPER DUE**
The class will watch *Wit*, a movie based on *Wit: A Play* by Margaret Edson.
March 16: Jot some notes to yourself about what comes to your mind when you hear the phrase, "The will of God." Then read Leslie Weatherhead's *The Will of God* and come prepared to share how it either confirms or conflicts with your views.

March 23: Read and be prepared to discuss Douglas John Hall's *God & Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross.*

March 30: Read pp. xi.-79 of *Lamentations & the Tears of the World* by Kathleen M. O'Connor. Write a brief poem, reflection, or prayer that is a lamentation for suffering that you or loved ones have endured.

April 6: Our discussion will center on pp. 88-147 of O'Connor's text. Find a psalm that is a lament. How might this help one who suffers?

April 13: Read and be prepared to discuss Elaine Ramshaw's *Ritual and Pastoral Care.* Bring an example of ritual from your tradition.

April 20: **6:10 p.m. RESEARCH PAPERS ARE DUE.** Course synthesis and a conversation of evaluation.