

Course Number: MN 195W

Course Title: Rural Plunge

Name of Instructor: Mark Yackel-Juleen **Semester and Year:** Fall 2022

Fulfills the Rural Ministry requirement, Open to all students, 1 Credit Hour, Credit/No Credit only

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course centers on a field experience in the communities of Poplar Grove, Illinois and Clinton, Wisconsin, where students will observe agricultural and other rural enterprises in operation, converse with community and congregational leaders, and learn about the resources and challenges that can affect the quality of life in a rural setting. This course runs from a Friday afternoon until Sunday afternoon, normally the first weekend in November.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To experience the dynamics of a rural community and congregation (Practice of Curiosity, Practice of Complex Analysis);
- To grow in interpreting the context of rural communities (Practice of Immersion in Context, Practice of Complex Analysis);
- To reflect upon the role of pastor of a congregation in a town and country setting (Practice of Immersion in Context); and
- To reflect upon readings and experiences collaboratively with course colleagues (Practice of Collegiality).

PROCEDURE:

Students will depart Wartburg Seminary by 2 pm on the Friday of the experience and arrive in Poplar Grove by 4:15 pm. Students who need to do so, may arrange their own transportation. Participants stay with host families Friday and Saturday night, make site visits Friday evening and Saturday, and finally worship with their host families on Sunday. Participants returning to Wartburg Seminary should arrive at approximately 3 pm.

EVALUATION:

Students are expected to attend a preliminary meeting prior to the weekend, actively participate in all the events of the weekend, and participate in a follow-up Zoom small group verbal processing session before the end of the semester (date and time TBD). That session will encourage peer-to-peer learning praxis and the groups will be configured based on the books individuals have chosen to read and the number of participants.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Students are required to read **one** of the following books.

- ❖ Wendell Berry. *Jayber Crow*. Berkley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2001.
- ❖ Miriam Brown. *Sustaining Heart in the Heartland: Exploring Rural Spirituality*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005.
- ❖ Lawrence Farris. *Dynamics of Small Town Ministry*. Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2000.
- ❖ Jeanne Hoeft and L. Shannon Jung. *Practicing Care in Rural Congregations and Communities*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013.
- ❖ Lyz Lenz. *God Land: A Story of Faith, Loss, and Renewal in Middle America*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019
- ❖ Lyn C. Macgregor. *Habits of the Heartland: Small Town Life in Modern America*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010.
- ❖ Kathleen Norris. *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*. San Diego, CA: Mariner Books, 2001.
- ❖ Sarah Smarsh. *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on Earth*. New York: Scribner, 2018.
- ❖ J. D. Vance. *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2016.
- ❖ Richard E. Wood. *Survival of Rural America: Small Victories and Bitter Harvests*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008.
- ❖ Mark Yackel-Juleen. *Everyone Must Eat: Food, Sustainability, and Ministry*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2021.