

Course Syllabus

Course Number: MN 195W

Course Title: Rural Plunge

Name of Instructor: Mark Yackel-Juleen

Semester and Year: Fall 2024

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.
- **Writing Style Guidelines & Plagiarism:** Please see the Style Sheet (found on MyWTS) for information about style guidelines for academic writing. *Writing Center:* If you need writing help, contact the Graduate Writing Center Coordinator Jennifer Agee at jagee@wartburgseminary.edu.
- **Inclusive Language:** It is expected that all Wartburg Theological Seminary students use inclusive and expansive language for humankind and for God in classroom discussion and written assignments. It is appropriate for all members of the Wartburg community—students, staff, and faculty alike—to remind each other of our commitment to the use of inclusive language. For more information regarding Wartburg’s policy on inclusive language, please consult the Student and Community Life Handbook.
- **Learning Disabilities Accommodations Policy:** It is Seminary policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have medically documented disability conditions that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Any student who feels they may need a learning accommodation should contact the Academic Dean and complete the Accommodations Request Form. Students are responsible for informing their instructor of any documented disability by the end of the first week of class or upon subsequent diagnosis. For more information regarding Wartburg’s policy on Learning Accommodations, please consult the Student and Community Life Handbook.
- **Title IX – Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Misconduct:** Wartburg Theological Seminary is committed to ensuring a safe environment free of discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual misconduct and harassment. If you have experienced any incident of sex or gender-based discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct, we encourage you to report it. Wartburg faculty and staff are required to report incidents of sex- or gender-based discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct of which they are aware. The Director of Community Life and Candidacy, Deacon Kellie Lisi, is the designated Title IX Coordinator. Students may address complaints and grievances related to Title IX to the Title IX coordinator. Reports may be made in person, via email or phone, or via the [Incident Reporting Form \(IRF\)](#). For more information about Wartburg’s Title IX policy, please consult the Student and Community Life Handbook.

- **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** Members of the Wartburg Theological Seminary community are expected to conduct themselves responsibly and honestly in academic matters. The seminary defines plagiarism as the copying or use of another person's work in any form without acknowledgement. The act of Plagiarism refers not only to the citation of books and articles but also to personal interviews, the Internet, and all other sources of information. Students are expected to submit their own original work for all assignments. Students shall neither represent the work of another as their own nor in any way misrepresent either their own work or the work of another. For more information regarding Wartburg's policy on plagiarism, please consult the Student and Community Life Handbook.
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement:** Creating Beloved Community and a learning environment of mutual respect is hard and ongoing work. We are a diverse community seeking greater diversity, and this diversity is paramount in the beauty of God's good creation and even the Trinity itself. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, national origin, languages, sex, ability, body type, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, gender identity, ancestry, veteran status, culture, or genetic information. These diversities and more contribute to the perspectives and excellence we bring into the classroom and beyond and will be affirmed.

Personally, I acknowledge that by virtue of the reality that I am white and male I have been afforded unfair privilege in our society. I am in an ongoing process of deconstructing how that privilege has shaped my perceptions, viewpoints, and attitudes and created blind spots in my understanding. I am still learning how to best celebrate multiple perspectives; please let me know ways to celebrate your identities, pronouns to use, and/or when something said/assumed in class concerns you. Research and resources specifically related to my field of rural ministry are limited to begin with. What material is available is predominately from a white male perspective. The broader field of rural sociology which provides significant conceptual background to my discipline engages more diversity of voice. I will seek to identify materials from diverse perspectives when they can be found. In our common work, your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. How can I improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally and for future students?

Topics covered in seminary are often difficult on various planes. When we embrace diverse perspectives, we embrace healthful disagreement—a mark of deep and true community. Please engage in discussion with care and empathy for yourself and others. In this class we endeavor to embrace the uncomfortable as we critically examine some of our most basic assumptions, values, and beliefs. As you work to bring good courage to this course, I will work to ensure an environment that supports your full participation and risk taking.

EVALUATION:

Students are expected to read one book of their choice from the bibliography below. Students are expected to attend a preliminary meeting prior to the weekend, view the videos in the cultural primer section, 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:

- Michael Beck & Tyler Kleeberger. *Fresh Expressions of the Rural Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2022.
- Nickolas Butler. *Little Faith: A Novel*. New York: Ecco, 2019.
- 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.
- Brad Roth. *God's Country: Faith, Hope, and the Future of the Rural Church*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2017.
- Sarah Smarsh. *Heartland: A Memoir of Working Hard and Being Broke in the Richest Country on*

- Earth*. New York: Scribner, 2018.
- 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: Fortress Press, 2021.