

IN 207W BOUNDARIES: SEXUAL ETHICS AND CHURCH INTEGRITY

Instructor: Craig L. Nesson

Required. Open to all.

1 Credit; letter grade or credit/no credit

Meets 2 hours per week during the second half of the semester and one session in Prolog Week.

This course examines professional boundaries in the practice of ministry and provides boundary training for ministry candidates. Topics include professional boundaries, congregation boundaries, sexual boundaries, social media boundaries, and child protection practices. Students will explore family of origin dynamics through genogram work.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To define professional boundaries in relation to the congregation as a system (Practice of Ecclesial Partnership).
2. To foster ethical commitments in the stewardship of one's own life (Practice of Personal Faith and Integrity).
3. To explore the dynamics of sexual ethics and provide sexual boundary training for ministry candidates (Practice of Complex Analysis).
4. To promote best congregational practices in child protection (Practice of Pastoral Concern).
5. To map one's family of origin through genogram work (Practice of Being Rooted in the Gospel).

PROCEDURE: The course will meet once per week for two hours. The primary format is lecture and interactive discussion.

EVALUATION: 1) Attendance. 2) Class participation informed by readings. 3) Completion of summative project.

BIBLIOGRAPHY (**required texts; *required chapters only):

**ELCA. *Definitions and Guidelines for Ministry*: <https://resources.elca.org/office-of-the-secretary/definitions-and-guidelines-for-discipline-2021/>

*Ellison, Marvin. *Making Love Just: Sexual Ethics for Perplexing Times*. 2012.

Fortune, Marie M. *Is Nothing Sacred? The Story of a Pastor, the Women He Sexually Abused, and the Congregation He Nearly Destroyed*. 2008.

Fortune, Marie M. and James N. Poling. *Sexual Abuse by Clergy: A Crisis for the Church*. 2004.

Galindo, Israel, Elaine Boomer, and Don Reagan. *A Family Genogram Workbook*. 2016.

*Jung, Patricia Beattie and Darryl W. Stephens. *Professional Sexual Ethics: A Holistic Ministry Approach*. 2013.

**Mahlberg, Arden and Craig L. Nesson. *The Integrity of the Body of Christ: Boundary Keeping as Shared Responsibility*. 2016.

**McGoldrick, Monica and Tracey Laszloffy. *You Can Go Home Again: Reconnecting with Your Family*. 2024.

**Nesson, Craig L. "Surviving Congregational Leadership: A Theology of Family Systems." *Word & World* 20: <https://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/20-4-The-Congregation/Surviving%20Congregational%20Leadership;%20A%20Theology%20of%20Family%20Systems.pdf>

Steinke, Peter L. *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*. 2006.

Tchividjian, Basyle and Shira M. Berkovits. *The Child Safeguarding Policy Guide for Churches and Ministries*. 2017.

**Vieth, Victor I. *On This Rock: A Call to Center the Christian Response to Child Abuse...*

*Selected articles from *Currents in Theology and Mission*: www.currentsjournal.org

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Fall Semester 2025