

## M. DIV. THEMATIC REQUIREMENTS

Some areas of learning are seen as important for ministerial formation but require no specified credit hours. Learning in these thematic areas may be done informally (e.g. attending a non-credit workshop or colloquium) as well as formally (a paper or project in a credit course or taking a course to meet another M.Div. requirement that at the same time addresses the theme). The requirements also can be met with evidence of previous experience or study that addressed the themes. Planning specific ways to meet the requirements is done in consultation with the student's faculty adviser who also determines and records the satisfactory completion of the requirements.

The four thematic requirements focus on:

1. communication across cultural, racial or economic boundaries
2. relationships between women and men in Scripture, church and society
3. modern Mennonite history, practice and life (for Mennonite students)
4. arts in worship

In the explanatory sections below, ways to fulfill the thematic requirements are intended to be illustrative and not exhaustive. Development of creative and meaningful ways to meet the requirements are encouraged.

### Communication Across Cultural, Racial or Economic Boundaries

Given a strong commitment to the global character of the church and the increasing need for church leaders to be prepared to minister in pluralistic societies, pastors are encouraged to develop competencies in communication across cultural, racial and economic boundaries.

#### Competencies:

- I. Ability to relate respectfully and with Christian hospitality to persons from cultural, racial or economic backgrounds different than one's own.
- II. Awareness of the impact of culture, race or class (especially one's own) on Christian thought and practice.
- III. Ability to articulate one's approach to Christian mission/evangelism in relation to persons from another culture, race or social/economic class.

#### To fulfill the requirements:

To fulfill the communication across boundaries thematic requirement students should demonstrate basic competency in at least one of the three competency areas.

- I. Students may demonstrate ability to relate respectfully to persons from different backgrounds by such things as:
  - A. Participating for one semester in the mentoring program at the Hawthorne Elementary School.
  - B. Presenting documentation for a cross-cultural ministry experience (MCC, mission board, or equivalent domestic assignment) of at least a one-year duration.
  - C. Demonstrating this ability while studying in the SCUPE program in Chicago (including the Interterm course) or in other cross-cultural or cross-economic educational experiences (Middle-East study tour, Rural Ministries program if you are an urban person, the Columbia or

Guatemala study opportunities, an internship in a congregation which meets the communication across boundaries criteria, etc.).

- D. Being a student from another culture, race or social class from the dominant ones at AMBS and demonstrating this ability while on campus.
- II. Students may demonstrate awareness of the impact of culture, race or class (especially one's own) on Christian thought and practice by such things as:
- A. Enrollment in classes which deal substantively with this agenda:
    - 1. The Church and Cultural Change, Liberation Theologies, Church and Society, Church and Race, Economic Justice and Christian Conscience, etc.
    - 2. Credit study in other cultural settings.
    - 3. Attending relevant Mission/Peace colloquium sessions
  - B. Focusing a class project to develop greater awareness in this area.
  - C. Conversation on this theme with one's faculty adviser based on current or previous involvement in MCC or mission work, community service, or other relevant experience with persons of another culture, race or class.
  - D. Attending non-credit workshops or conferences which develop awareness in this area.
- III. Students may demonstrate basic competence in ability to articulate their approach to Christian mission/evangelism in relation to persons from another culture, race or social/economic class by such things as:
- A. Writing a brief statement and submitting it to the faculty adviser: the Mission/Peace course will help provide a framework for this but completion of the course does not in itself fulfill this dimension of the thematic requirement.
  - B. Writing a paper on this theme in the context of another course.
  - C. Submitting a copy of a sermon preached on this topic

## **Relationships Between Women and Men in Scripture, Church and Society**

This thematic focus is included because of the need for those in pastoral vocations to minister sensitively and inclusively to both women and men and to assist the church in formulating worship, mission, and patterns of community life which can signify the reign of God for both women and men.

### Competencies:

- I. Ability to understand Scripture and draw responsibly from it in suggesting God's intention for current relationships between and roles of women and men in the family, church and society.
- II. Awareness of cultural, social and psychological factors related to gender identity and patterns of interaction between women and men in the family, church and society
- III. Ability to understand Christian feminist challenges to one or more of the theological/ministry disciplines and to thoughtfully respond.
- IV. Ability to work with respect and use healthy patterns of communication (including maintaining appropriate boundaries) with persons of the opposite sex.

### To fulfill the requirement:

To fulfill this thematic requirement, students are expected to demonstrate basic ability in at least one of the four competencies, by one of the following:

- I. Students can demonstrate understanding and use of scripture in such ways as:
  - A. completing a Bible or theology course at either undergraduate or graduate level dealing substantially with this theme
  - B. writing a paper evidencing this ability in another Bible or theology course
  - C. reading a book or series of articles approved by the faculty adviser
  - D. submitting sermons or Sunday School teaching materials developed by the student on this theme
- II. Students can demonstrate growth in awareness of cultural, social and psychological factors related to gender identity and patterns of interaction between women and men in the family and church by
  - A. completing a course including attention to this topic at undergraduate or graduate level
  - B. completing a paper on this theme in another course
  - C. watching several videos on this topic
  - D. reading a book or series of articles approved by the faculty adviser
  - E. writing reflections on learnings from experience submitted to the faculty adviser
- III. A student's ability to understand Christian feminist challenges to one or more of the theological/ministry disciplines and to thoughtfully respond can be encouraged through such actions as:
  - A. completing a paper on this theme in the context of a seminary course
  - B. discussion with the adviser or another faculty member who confirms that the student has given attention to understanding and response to some aspect of Christian feminism.
- IV. Students can indicate ability to work with respect, and use healthy patterns of communication (including maintaining appropriate boundaries) with persons of the opposite sex by submitting two evaluations by co-workers, members of committees, fellow students or seminar members, K-group members, supervisors, etc. These can be based on experiences previous to or current with seminary study but should be from within the past five years. One evaluation should be from a person of the opposite sex who is not a spouse of the student.

### **Modern Mennonite History, Practice and Life (for Mennonite Students)**

Mennonites have a tradition that developed over nearly five hundred years of eventful history. Examining how we have lived with that heritage and helping set directions for the future are essential tasks for a denominational seminary such as AMBS and its graduates. The specific purpose of the thematic requirement in Modern Mennonite history, life and practice is:

#### Competencies:

- I. To ensure sufficient familiarity with the broad lines of Mennonite development after the Reformation era beginnings, particularly in matters of faith during the 19th and 20th centuries, to be able to exercise leadership responsibly.
- II. To be acquainted with the diversity of ways in which Mennonite thought, life and practice is being expressed (in written and other forms).
- III. To facilitate knowledgeably competent reflection on denominational agenda (including confession of faith, polity, major issues).

#### To fulfill the requirements:

The Modern Mennonite history, practice and life thematic requirement can be fulfilled in such ways as the following:

- I. By enrollment in a seminary level course in Mennonite history or by having a college level course in Mennonite history or a related Mennonite studies course.
- II. In the context of another course, by writing a substantial paper (at least 6 sources cited, both general and specific) that focuses on Mennonite materials. For example, Mennonites and mission, or Mennonites and peacemaking, or Mennonites and Biblical interpretation, discussed within some critical comparative framework.
- III. By a special project within a course, or as part of an internship, that studies a selected theme such as Mennonite preaching, Mennonite spirituality, Mennonites and the arts, Mennonite institutions, etc..
- IV. By an independent study on a specific topic.
- V. By attendance/participation in a relevant conference/workshop event and submitting a report.

NOTE: For Methodist students, this requirement is fulfilled through the Methodist History, Doctrine, and Polity course. For those of other faith traditions, this requirement is fulfilled by similar required learning in their respective tradition, set by the denomination.

## Arts in Worship

There is a rich heritage of mutual inspiration between the Arts and Christian worship from which Christian leaders can draw. The Arts engage our senses and emotions as well as our intellect and will. Worship directs and releases artistic energy toward God and God's purpose on earth. There are two aspects of competency--one theoretical and the other practical--related to arts in worship:

### Competencies:

- I. Awareness of the value of the intuitive mode of knowing for ministry
- II. Basic tools for the use of the arts in worship

### To fulfill the requirements:

To fulfill the thematic requirements in the arts the student should demonstrate some competency in (both aspects I and II) at least one of the above aspects.

- I. Awareness of the intuitive mode of knowing. American education is strong in rational, linear modes of knowing. The intuitive mode is often suppressed, especially by the time a student reaches the graduate level of study. Interaction with the arts demands that the right side of the brain be activated in order to catch the message in non-rational, non-linear ways. Students may demonstrate development of their intuitive mode of knowing through:
  - A. Attending lectures or reading works by specialists such as:
    1. Wilson Yates, author of The Arts in Theological Education (1987), and editor of The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies, a periodical appearing three times a year since 1988.
    2. Betty Edwards, author of Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain (1989).
    3. Henri J.M. Nouwen, for his work with icons and with the paintings of Rembrandt.
  - B. Attending Forums or workshops using resources in the community:
    1. visual arts for the Church: Banners. Barbara Peterson, Elkhart, teaches liturgical fiber art at the University of Notre Dame.
    2. visual arts for the Church: Needlework, e.g. Liz Wenger, whose work resides at AMBS.
    3. right brain organization: Note-taking which makes full use of the approach of Tony Buzan in Use Both Sides of Your Brain.
    4. exercises in right-brain activity: Drawing. See the approach of Betty Edwards, whose exercise in drawing (for the amateur) "draw" heavily upon the right side of the brain.
    5. work in clay
    6. dance in the Church
  - C. Relating responsiveness to the arts to the Myers-Briggs evaluations or assessments and reporting this to the faculty adviser
  - D. Creating a painting, sculpture, photo display or pottery, composing or performing music; writing or performing drama; writing or reading poetry; creating or performing dance
  - E. Doing a class project focusing on theory of aesthetics

II. Basic tools for the use of the arts in worship.

A. Use of hymns in worship

1. the student may complete a music interview with a designated faculty member or appointed person. The interviewer will inquire about the student's background in the arts and specifically in hymnody. The interviewer will assess ability to
  - a. carry a tune
  - b. carry a part or other than melody, alone or with someone else
  - c. read music notation (this should not be required of students)
  - d. read/understand a page of the hymnal:
    - i. tune name and poetic meter
    - ii. is it a unison or hymn in parts?
    - iii. usefulness of the information at the bottom of the hymn
    - iv. what are the clues to a hymn's difficulty?
    - v. is the hymn complete on the page?
    - vi. meaning of a time signature? why is it missing sometimes?

The interviewer will suggest appropriate ways to meet the music in worship requirement.

2. ways to meet this requirement include such things as the following:
  - a. join a music reading workshop for beginners or a song leading workshop
  - b. enroll in the Hymnology course
  - c. join the choir or Camarata singers
  - d. arrange for private lessons on voice or some instrument
  - e. compare hymns or hymn texts
  - f. attend workshops or seminars on church music
  - g. plan a project within a class such as a study of metrical Psalms or modes of singing Psalms in the Psalms course
  - h. plan or lead a chapel or congregational worship service using music
  - i. watch several videos such as "Amazing Grace," and "The Study of the Carol."

B. Architecture and Visual Arts in Worship. At the present time an interview process comparable to the use of hymns in worship is not in place. However students may focus on visual arts in worship by:

1. enrolling in Christianity and the Fine Arts
2. selecting an art project within a class (e.g. study of icons in a course on the Eastern Orthodox Church)
3. making banners (wordless) for a season, Baptism, Communion, etc. in the Foundations of Worship and Preaching class
4. creating a painting or sculpture or dance for use in worship
5. attending lectures by or interviewing artists whose work is used in the context of worship.

wms\dean\formin.syl  
 originated 10-24-94  
 revised 3/96;

**ASSOCIATED MENNONITE BIBLICAL SEMINARY**  
**Master of Divinity Program**  
**Completion Form for Thematic Requirements**

This form will be used to record the student's progress in completing the "Thematic Requirements" component of the Master of Divinity program. (See the 2006-08 AMBS Catalog, p. 66.) The form is to remain in the advisee file. Each faculty adviser will note the progress made during the time he or she advises the student. The adviser during the student's final term of study is responsible to see that the student has completed each requirement before recommending the student for graduation.

Student \_\_\_\_\_

1. **Communication across cultural, racial or economic boundaries.** Plan for Completion:

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Adviser's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

2. **Relationships between women and men in Scripture, church and society.**  
Plan for Completion:

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Adviser's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

3. **Modern Mennonite history, practice and life** (for Mennonite students).  
Plan for Completion:

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Adviser's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Arts in Worship.** Plan for Completion:

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Adviser's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_