

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
DMIN 715: Prophetic Leadership for Spiritual and Social Transformation
Summer 2026
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Course Description

A tension exists at the heart of Christian ministry, one that is not always easily reconciled but that must always be contended with seriously. That tension can perhaps best be described as the pastoral responsibility to tend to the spiritual and temporal needs of those we are called to serve and the prophetic responsibility that scripture calls us to so that our world more fully reflects the intentions and the justice of the God we worship and serve. While not inherently in conflict, these two calls are often experienced as such by Christian leaders, who often choose to lean into one more fully than the other depending on their social location, theological perspective, or individual inclinations.

This course will attempt to explore in greater depth the meanings and ramifications of prophetic leadership for spiritual and social transformation. Yet, the late Hebrew Bible scholar Walter Brueggemann has argued that “prophetic ministry does not consist of spectacular acts of social crusading or of abrasive measures of indignation. Rather, prophetic ministry consists of offering an alternative perception of reality and in letting people see their own history in the light of God’s freedom and [God’s] will for justice. The issues of God’s freedom and [God’s] will for justice are not always and need not be expressed primarily in the big issues of the day. They can be discerned wherever people try to live together and show concern for their shared future and identity.” (Brueggemann, *Prophetic Imagination*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001. p. 116-117.)

It is this task that we will explore together—how to, as a leader, offer an alternative perception of reality for the ministry contexts in which we serve and how to discern with the people we serve how best to live together and to show concern for our shared futures and identities. While at times that work may require “spectacular acts of social crusading or of abrasive measures of indignation,” prophetic leadership mostly takes place in day-to-day interactions, in the cultivation of a vision and of a shared way of life as a community, and in a commitment to embody together the justice of God in our lives, in our churches, in our relationships, and in our communities. Leadership of this sort is rarely headline grabbing, but almost always transformative.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and describe different leadership models for Christian ministry and the theological underpinnings and assumptions that inform those models.
2. Analyze and describe biblical examples of prophetic leadership.
3. Analyze models of social transformation and identify the biblical and theological frameworks that inform each model.
4. Propose for implementation a method or approach to prophetic leadership for social transformation in the student’s specific ministry context.

Required Readings (*books to be purchased)

*Brown, Brené. *Strong Ground: The lessons of daring leadership, the tenacity of paradox, and the wisdom of the human spirit*. (New York: Random House), 2025. I encourage you to purchase the audio version so that you can listen to Brown narrate this book.

*Brueggemann, Walter. *The Prophetic Imagination*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press), 2018. This is the principal text that will frame the course and the first one you should read.

Gafney, Wilda C. *Womanist Midrash: A Reintroduction to the Women of the Torah and the Throne*. (Westminster/John Knox Press: Louisville), 2017. (Selections to be provided on course Canvas site)

Ganz, Marshall, "What is Public Narrative?" 2008. (Article to be provided as PDF on course Canvas site).

Gutierrez, Gustavo. "The Option for the Poor Arises from Faith in Christ" in *Theological Studies* 70, 2009. (Article to be provided as PDF on course Canvas site).

Illich, Ivan. "To Hell with Good Intentions." Address to the InterAmerican Student Project in Cuernavaca, Mexico. 20 April 1968. (Article to be provided as PDF on course Canvas site).

*Mingo, AnneMarie. *Have You Got Good Religion?: Black Women's Faith, Courage, and Moral Leadership in the Civil Rights Movement*. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 2024.

Course Expectations

1. Class Attendance

This is an online course conducted via Zoom. Students are expected to do preparatory course-related work before our intensive week, which is described in detail below.

2. Preparation and Participation

Completion of required readings prior to the scheduled date is necessary and will enhance the student's developing understanding and participation in the course. Participation includes preparation, selective verbal contributions to class discussions, attentive and engaged listening, and facilitating the participation of other learners in the course.

3. Zoom Protocols

Since you are participating in the course by Zoom, there are several expectations for maintaining the Garrett Zoom room as a productive learning experience for everyone. Zoom participants should plan for the following:

- Join the Zoom class from a computer that has a video camera. As you will need to open documents, participate in chat, and join breakout groups, it is not possible for you to fully participate in class from a phone.
- Join the Zoom class from a quiet room without distractions, both to yourself and to your classmates.
- All students are expected to have their cameras turned on so that the class is a face-to-face, immersive experience for everyone. Please speak with the professor in advance if this is going to be a challenge for you.

- When in the Zoom room, please mute your microphone when you are not speaking. Use the chat and raise your hand features of Zoom to join the conversation when others are speaking.
- Consider using headphones that have a microphone built in as this will maximize your listening and speaking participation.

4. Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. You may access the Catalog and Handbook [here](#). The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing

- Academic integrity and plagiarism: Instructors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- Writing and citations: The Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provides the standard format for use in this course.
- Writing Support: The Writing Center at Garrett- offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See <https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services> "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- Inclusivity/Diversity: The basic values and commitments of the seminary lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected, and ideas are to be freely discussed. All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues.
- Attendance and lateness policies: Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 1 class in the weekly schedule) should not expect to pass the class.
- We will limit the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all cell phones should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations

- Garrett's Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities policy and process is set out in the Academic Handbook and the Academic Accommodations section on <https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services>.
- Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact Student Support (email: student.support@garrett.edu) to move forward with the established accommodation process. If you already have established accommodations with Student Access, please contact the instructor prior to the first class session so the instructor can work with you to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations.
- Extensions: Extensions, if granted, are normally negotiated with the instructor, but not to exceed four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Artificial intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, Copilot, and other similar platforms) are increasingly common in ministry and academic work, and students may choose to use them in very limited ways as part of their learning process. However, because this course emphasizes theological reflection, contextual analysis, and the development of the student's own voice and leadership imagination, all submitted work must represent the student's original thinking, interpretation, and lived engagement with the course material. AI may be used for limited support functions (such as brainstorming, outlining, editing for clarity, or proofreading), but it may not be used to generate full written assignments, discussion board posts, or theological reflections in place of the student's own work. If AI tools are used in any substantive way, students must include a brief statement at the end of the assignment describing which tool and how the tool was used. Failure to disclose AI-generated or AI-assisted work may be treated as a violation of academic integrity standards.

Assignments

1. Daily Havruta

Havruta is the Jewish practice of paired study and focused conversation around classical Jewish texts. In the context of this course, however, we will adapt the practice of Havruta to the texts we will be exploring during the morning biblical reflection. An article introducing the concept of Havruta is found on the course Moodle site, and we will discuss it during the first class session. Students will be assigned a Havruta partner on the first day of class, and that partner will become your dialogue companion throughout the week. Following our opening morning greeting and class business, partners will go into separate zoom rooms to discuss the assigned biblical text and commentary. Logistics and more detailed instructions will be discussed at the first class session.

2. Assigned Readings Discussion Forum

Throughout the course, students will engage with their peers in a Canvas Forum. Every student is expected to write a post on each of the assigned readings, creating their own discussion thread. The post should be approximately 500 words (1 page single spaced) and should be a critical response to the assigned book or article, except for the Gaffney and Brown readings. The deadline for posts on the Brueggemann and Mingo books is August 15 (pre-course). The deadlines for posts on the Gutierrez, Illich, and Ganz readings are at 9.00 am CT on the morning they will be discussed in class (see schedule below). Because your classmates need you to complete this assignment by the deadline, no late entries will be allowed.

After you have created your initial post and discussion thread, you are expected to respond to at least one of your classmate's posts. These responses must have substance and represent thoughtful engagement with your peers and the ideas they present. "Good job," "Well said," and "I agree," or similar comments do not constitute a substantial response on their own. They should minimally be 250 words, and you should have responded to at least one of your classmates' posts by August 25 at the latest.

3. Final Project: Prophetic Leadership Intervention Project

The final project is intended to help students integrate their learning, demonstrate mastery of the course learning outcomes, and apply the course themes directly to their own ministry context. Rather than writing only a traditional academic essay, students will design and carry out (or meaningfully pilot) a prophetic leadership intervention appropriate to the community they serve.

A prophetic leadership intervention is a concrete leadership action that seeks to embody the kind of prophetic imagination described by Walter Brueggemann: offering an alternative perception of reality, helping a community see itself truthfully, and inviting it toward God's justice, freedom, and future. This intervention may take many forms depending on context, including (but not limited to) preaching, teaching, organizing, public witness, pastoral communication, or congregational practice. The project must be context-specific, realistic, and rooted in the student's ministry setting, addressing a challenge or opportunity for social transformation relevant to their community.

Students will submit three components:

A. Intervention Proposal (2–3 pages)

This proposal should be written in clear, concrete terms and should include:

- A description of the ministry context and the social issue or leadership challenge being addressed
- The specific intervention being proposed (what you will do, for whom, and why)
- The theological and biblical grounding for the intervention (drawing explicitly from course readings)
- Anticipated resistance, risks, or ethical concerns
- A realistic timeline for implementation or pilot activity

B. Prophetic Leadership Intervention Artifact (evidence of implementation)

Students must submit a tangible artifact that demonstrates the intervention itself. This may include:

- A sermon manuscript or teaching outline
- A liturgy, prayer service, or public worship resource
- A curriculum or Bible study plan
- A strategic leadership plan or organizing roadmap
- A pastoral letter or congregational communication
- A community listening session plan and summary
- A video or audio recording (optional but encouraged)
- Flyers, meeting agendas, workshop materials, or other relevant documentation

The artifact should reflect the student's leadership work and be clearly connected to the prophetic and theological framework of the course.

C. Theological Reflection and Leadership Analysis (6–8 pages)

Because of the short timeframe between the course intensive and the due date, students are not expected to fully implement their intervention. Instead, students should use this section to provide a theologically grounded leadership analysis of the intervention they are proposing, including:

- The biblical and theological framework informing the intervention
- How course readings shaped the student's leadership approach (refer to specific assigned readings and how they related to the proposed intervention.)

- Anticipated challenges, resistance, or ethical concerns
 - What “faithfulness” and “success” would mean in this context, and why
 - Next steps and a realistic plan for implementation over the following 3–6 months
- If a student is able to pilot or test part of the intervention (e.g., meeting with leaders, preaching the sermon, facilitating a listening session), they may incorporate observations and feedback into this reflection.

Important Notes

- Students are encouraged to choose an intervention that is challenging but achievable.
- The intervention does not need to be “successful” by measurable external standards in order to receive a strong evaluation; students will be assessed on clarity of purpose, theological depth, contextual awareness, leadership insight, and critical reflection.
- Students must maintain appropriate pastoral and professional ethics, especially when engaging conflict, trauma, vulnerable communities, or sensitive congregational dynamics.

Length and Due Date

The final project submission should include all three components in a single document or organized PDF upload. The theological reflection should be 6–8 pages, double-spaced (not including appendices/artifacts). The project is due September 1.

Grading

Written work will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Theological Depth
Demonstrates substantive engagement with Scripture and theological reflection, showing clarity of theological claims and integrity of interpretation.
2. Integration of Course Readings
Draws meaningfully from course texts, not merely citing them but using them as resources for analysis, critique, and constructive leadership imagination.
3. Contextual Awareness
Shows a nuanced understanding of the student’s ministry setting, including social realities, power dynamics, and pastoral complexity.
4. Leadership Insight and Practical Wisdom
Articulates a clear leadership approach that is realistic, ethically grounded, and responsive to the actual challenges of prophetic ministry.
5. Clarity and Quality of Writing
Work is well organized, coherent, and clearly expressed, with appropriate citations and academic integrity.

Grade Descriptors

- A-level work is exceptional in depth, integration, and originality; it demonstrates mature theological and leadership thinking.
- B-level work is strong and thoughtful but may lack depth or integration in one or more areas.
- C-level work meets basic expectations but remains largely descriptive, unclear, or underdeveloped.

- D/F-level work does not meet the requirements of the assignment or shows insufficient engagement with the course.

Daily Havruta:

Havruta is eligible for credit when it demonstrates an informed engagement with the readings and the ideas/questions of your Havruta partner. Grading is credit/no credit.

Class Discussion Forum:

Discussion posts are eligible for credit when completed by the deadline AND demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the assigned text and with a classmate's essay. If you submit an initial post but do not respond to your peers or vice-versa you will receive half-credit. Grading is credit, half-credit, or no credit.

Final Grade Percentages:

Class Participation	10%
Havruta	15%
Discussion Board Posts	25%
Final Project	50%

Class Schedule: Times are Central Time:

Monday, August 17

- 9.00 a.m. Opening Prayer and Daily Check-in
- 9.05 a.m. Introductions
- 9.35 a.m. Preliminary Considerations and Introduction to the Course
- 10.00 a.m. Break
- 10.15 a.m. Havruta/Prophetic Leadership Biblical Reflection: Hagar
(Genesis 21.1-21/Gafney 38-45)
- 10.45 a.m. Group Discussion on assigned biblical text
- 11.15 a.m. Lecture/Setting the Stage
- Noon Break
- 2.00 p.m. Engagement with assigned reading for the day (Brueggemann, chps. 1-4)
- 2.45 p.m. Break
- 3.00 p.m. Small Group Work
- 4.00 p.m. Class ends

Tuesday, August 18

- 9.00 a.m. Opening Prayer and Daily Check-in
- 9.05 a.m. Havruta/Prophetic Leadership Biblical Reflection: Shiphrah and Puah
(Exodus 1.8-21/Gafney 89-91)
- 9.35 a.m. Group Discussion on assigned biblical text
- 10.00 a.m. Break
- 10.15 a.m. Lecture/Engagement with assigned reading for the day
(Brueggeman chps. 5-postscript)
- 11.00 a.m. Small Group Work/Critical Questions
- Noon Break
- 2.00 p.m. Leadership Models: Gutierrez Reading
- 2.45 p.m. Break
- 3.00 p.m. Exploring Strategies for Social Change

4.00 p.m. Class ends

Wednesday, August 19

9.00 a.m. Opening Prayer and Daily Check-in
9.05 a.m. Havruta/Prophetic Leadership Biblical Reflection: Miriam
(Exodus 2.1-10; 15.1-21/Gafney 95-99)
9.35 a.m. Group Discussion on assigned biblical text
10.00 a.m. Break
10.15 a.m. Lecture/Engagement with assigned reading for the day
(Mingo: Chaps. 1-3, including sections on Moral Exemplars)
11.00 a.m. Small Group Work/Critical Questions
Noon Break
2.00 p.m. Leadership Models: Illich Reading
2.45 p.m. Break
3.00 p.m. Exploring Strategies for Social Change
4.00 p.m. Class ends

Thursday, August 20

9.00 a.m. Opening Prayer and Daily Check-in
9.05 a.m. Havruta/Prophetic Leadership Biblical Reflection: Abigail
(1 Samuel 25/Gafney 203-207)
9.35 a.m. Group Discussion on assigned biblical text
10.00 a.m. Break
10.15 a.m. Lecture/Engagement with assigned reading for the day
(Mingo: Chaps. 4—Epilogue, including sections on Moral Exemplars)
11.00 a.m. Small Group Work/Critical Questions
Noon Break
2.00 p.m. Leadership Models: Ganz Reading
2.45 p.m. Break
3.00 p.m. Exploring Strategies for Social Change
4.00 p.m. Class ends

Friday, August 21

9.00 a.m. Opening Prayer and Daily Check-in
9.05 a.m. Havruta/Prophetic Leadership Biblical Reflection: Jezebel
(2 Kings 9.30-37/Gafney 240-247)
9.35 a.m. Group Discussion on assigned biblical text
10.00 a.m. Break
10.15 a.m. Lecture/Engagement with assigned reading for the day
(Brown, *Strong Ground*)
11.00 a.m. Small Group Work/Critical Questions
Noon Class ends