

THE PROGRAM IN
THEOLOGY
AND
PRACTICE

MANUAL



VANDERBILT
Divinity School

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SCHOOL OF
PROPHETRY

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THE PROGRAM IN
THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE

MANUAL

PURPOSE

The Program in Theology and Practice seeks to form a generation of theological educators who are outstanding teachers of people preparing for ministry and groundbreaking scholars who do practical theology in every discipline.

Each line of this statement invites commentary.

The program is an exercise in formation. It seeks not just to transmit information, but also to cultivate a set of questions, habits of mind, and patterns of conversation—a certain style, a taste for the practical—that might shape a person's work in any discipline. The program seeks to create an environment in which individuals are formed in relationship with one another, with ministers of many kinds, and with faculty mentors. The formative work of the program is deliberately open-ended, for the leaders of the program believe theological education will require faculty we cannot fully imagine in advance.

The program aims to form a generation of outstanding scholars and teachers. A \$10 million grant from the Lilly Endowment provides funding for ten cohorts of five fellows each, beginning in 2006. We believe that 50 fellows—connected by bonds that span decades, academic disciplines and religious traditions—can lead a renewal of theological education.

Fellows in the program learn how to teach their home disciplines in ways that matter for ministry. The home disciplines of fellows play a crucial role in the work of the program. Our hope is not to dissolve disciplines, but to renew them by reconnecting them to practice—and, in particular, the practice of ministry.

Vanderbilt Divinity School conceives of “ministry” in a broad and contested sense. It can include ordained congregational leadership, but also work of advocacy, chaplaincy, artistic creation, lay leadership of religious institutions, and more. We expect fellows will teach people preparing for ministry in a wide variety of contexts, including divinity schools, seminaries, schools of theology, and religiously affiliated liberal arts colleges.

Excellent teaching of people preparing for ministry both requires and enhances scholarship in practical theology. Fellows engage in “practical theology” in multiple senses. Some fellows are in disciplines

concerned especially with arts of ministry, disciplines often grouped together as the practical area of the curriculum. Some fellows identify with practical theology as a distinct discipline in its own right. But all fellows do practical theology in the sense of working in their home disciplines in ways that learn from and speak to the practice of ministry.

While language of “ministry” and “practical theology” reflects Vanderbilt Divinity School’s roots in Protestant Christian traditions, the program seeks to create a space in which fellows, faculty, and leaders from multiple traditions think together about education for leadership of religious communities.

The program aims to renew theological education, not simply for its own sake, but also for the sake of ministries that in turn point beyond themselves to the renewal of individual lives, religious institutions, civil society, and all creation.

Components of the Program

The program offers fellows a *curriculum* of components. The curriculum is a sequenced course of study aimed at formation of both individual excellence and cohort connections.

Components include:

- Major and minor areas
- Two core seminars
- Two electives
- Colloquy
- Teaching internships
- An “externship” in theological education
- Travel grants
- Public presentations of research

These components are described in detail on the following pages.

ADMISSIONS

AWARDING THE FELLOWSHIPS

Criteria for Selection

The Program in Theology and Practice awards fellowships to people who have already been admitted to one of the eight areas of study in which the Graduate Department of Religion (GDR) offers a Ph.D. The first criteria of admission, then, are those of an applicant's particular area and of the GDR as a whole.

In addition to the academic excellence required for admission to an area, fellows in the program have demonstrated interest in and potential for teaching people preparing for ministry. They typically have prior education and experience in ministry, broadly construed. Desirable qualities include: appreciation for ministry in multiple forms; capacity for critical reflection on the social contexts and power dynamics of religious practice; past involvement in and reflection on religious communities; and evidence of leadership skills.

A broad-based renewal of theological education will require fellows from a variety of religious traditions, academic disciplines, countries of origin, and racial/ethnic groups. The awards process therefore values many kinds of diversity as essential to the work of the program.

Process of Selection

1. People interested in the fellowship first select an area of study within the Graduate Department of Religion. They then apply for admission to the GDR according to the standard procedure, which is detailed on the GDR application page at www.vanderbilt.edu/gradschool/applications_and_information.
2. Applicants to the GDR who are interested in the Program in Theology and Practice (T&P) complete one supplemental essay using the online form on the T&P website. The essay supplements but does not replace the statement of purpose in the standard GDR application.
3. Area faculty and members of the T&P committee consult throughout the fall on potential nominees for the fellowship.
4. Taking the preferences of area faculty into account, the T&P committee determines a list of finalists to interview for the fellowship. The Graduate Policy and Admissions Committee (GPAC) may elect to bring other applicants to campus who are finalists for GDR admission but not for a T&P fellowship. Finalists are typically invited to visit campus for interviews in early February.
5. Area faculty determine lists of people to be admitted and placed on the waitlist. The areas send these lists to GPAC, which sets the final lists for admission to the GDR.
6. The T&P committee selects up to five people from among those offered admission to receive T&P fellowships.
7. Fellows matriculate as part of a GDR cohort in the fall of the following academic year.

DISCIPLINES

MAJOR AND MINOR AREAS

Fellows in Theology and Practice are selected from among the doctoral students in the Graduate Department of Religion. Thus they are admitted like other doctoral students and fulfill the same requirements that other doctoral students do. The program adds some additional requirements (like the colloquy) and guides fellows' choices on some matters (like the selection of electives). But the program does not displace GDR standards. For a complete guide to GDR policy, see the GDR website at www.vanderbilt.edu/divinity/graduateprograms.php.

Each fellow enters the GDR as a student in one of the GDR's eight areas of study. This is the fellow's "major" area. T&P fellows currently work in all eight areas in which the GDR offers a Ph.D.

GDR regulations also require students to have at least one "minor" area of study. The T&P program does not restrict a fellow's choice of minor. Fellows should work with faculty in their areas to choose the minor or minors that best fit with their overall preparation. The minor should be selected early in a fellow's course of study.

The Program in Theology and Practice is not itself a major or minor area of study. It seeks rather to cultivate a distinctive set of reasons and habits for doing work in any major or minor area.

The program therefore encourages electives in every area of the GDR. These courses can "double-count" as program electives and as coursework in a student's major or minor area.

Because it fits with their larger plans for teaching and research, and because it makes efficient use of program requirements, fellows may choose to minor in the discipline of Practical Theology.

The Practical Theology minor focuses on practical theology in a *disciplinary* sense. All fellows engage in the *activity* of practical theology, thinking through their disciplines in ways that learn from and speak to ministry. Students in Homiletics and Liturgics and Religion, Psychology and Culture engage in practical theology as an *area of the curriculum*. Students who minor in the discipline of Practical Theology take up a related but distinct program. They enter an academic conversation

focused on questions about the relationship between theory and practice, the purpose of theological education, and the nature of practical theology itself.

While requirements for the minor in Practical Theology can overlap significantly with requirements for the Program in Theology and Practice, a student need not be a T&P fellow to minor in Practical Theology. The minor is open to all GDR students.

For a complete description of the Practical Theology minor, please see its website.¹

THE CORE

CORE SEMINARS

Two Core Seminars

Two core seminars stand at the center of the program's curriculum. The core seminars are led by changing teams of GDR faculty members. The seminars are offered in rotation in the fall semesters of alternating years. Each fellow should register for the core seminar offered in the fall semester of his or her first and second years of coursework.

Teaching for Ministry

This core seminar focuses on the purposes, practices, and institutions of theological education. The seminar is led by two or three Vanderbilt faculty members. It typically includes visits from leaders in theological education from beyond Vanderbilt. The first edition of the seminar, for instance, included a visit from Daniel Aleshire, Executive Director of the Association of Theological Schools. The seminar works through an extensive syllabus of literature on theological education. Assignments stress both theoretical and practical mastery of the material. The seminar prepares fellows not only to write outstanding books about theological education, but also to design and implement excellent curricula in theological schools.

Research for Ministry

This core seminar asks fellows to work in their home disciplines in close proximity to some concrete situation in ministry. It is an exercise in the activity of practical theology. Different editions of the seminar focus on different situations in ministry. (The first edition of this seminar, for instance, focused on questions around marriage for two different religious communities.) Two faculty members and two local ministers typically lead the seminar. The seminar seeks to immerse fellows in particular situations in ministry. Past seminars have done this through site visits, readings, and presentations by ministers, faculty members, and others. Fellows then develop independent research projects that learn from and speak to those situations. They work from their own disciplines and in conversation with colleagues in other disciplines. The seminar is designed to help each fellow produce an article suitable for publication in a good journal in the fellow's home field. The article should both respond to the situation and meet the standards of the relevant academic guild.

The core seminars complement one another on multiple levels. One core seminar focuses on teaching for ministry, while the other focuses on research that can learn from and speak to the practice of ministry. The seminar on theological education emphasizes a shared set of readings, while the seminar on research emphasizes independent work by fellows. The seminar on theological education reaches beyond the Vanderbilt faculty to include scholars and administrators from other schools, while the research seminar reaches out to include ministers from the Nashville area. Together the two seminars connect fellows to members of the cohorts ahead of them and behind them in the program.²

ELECTIVES

Each fellow is required to take two courses designated as electives in the Program in Theology and Practice. Electives are typically open to all GDR students. They usually fulfill both the T&P program's requirement for electives and the requirements of some particular GDR area or areas. Fellows are free to select electives listed in any area of study, but they often take electives listed in their major or minor area in order to meet two requirements with a single course.

Program electives are:

- **Concerned with questions from and for “ministry,”** in an expansive sense of the term. Program electives often include study of the practices of some religious community or communities. They always involve some critical connection to the questions asked by members of those religious communities.
- **Doctoral-level courses,** either doctoral seminars, or courses that offer a clear, distinct track for doctoral students. A doctoral “track” in a larger course usually involves additional meetings between the instructor and the doctoral students in the course.
- **From every area of the GDR.** Electives should be engaged with the practical theology embodied in the everyday activity of religious communities. The discipline of practical theology and the

areas of the curriculum most associated with practical theology make essential contributions to the roster of electives. But the program needs electives from every area and from every discipline in the GDR. Program electives are not distinguished by area or discipline, but by a sense of purpose that includes learning from and providing critical resources for religious communities.

- **Not only concerned with Christian practices and communities.** The distinguishing feature of a program elective is its concern for religious practice, not the particular religious tradition in which the practice is performed.
- **Often team-taught.** The program hopes to bring multiple disciplines together in conversation about the practices of religious communities. Not every elective needs to do this work by itself—it happens through core courses and the program as a whole—but team-taught electives have been very effective in the past.

Program electives include both courses in *methods* and courses that are *models*.

Methods

The program features electives that give fellows *methods for attending to religious practice*. Teaching for ministry requires understanding the lived stuff of religious communities. And understanding ministry requires attending to it in its lived complexity. Method electives might

include courses in ethnography, quantitative sociology, cultural studies, congregational studies, ecclesiology, ritual studies, critical theory, and practical theology in the disciplinary sense. To be a T&P elective, a course would need to work through a method while making some specific reference to religious practice. For instance, a course in performance theory could make a good T&P elective if it included consideration of the liturgical practices of some religious tradition.

Models

The program also features electives that give fellows *models of teaching and scholarship for ministry*, especially in their home disciplines. These courses do the work the program asks fellows to do: they connect first-rate scholarship in a discipline with concerns that run through and beyond a wide range of ministries. Past “model” electives have included courses on marriage, eschatology, teaching the Bible, and theological anthropology.

Program electives have made connections to ministry in a variety of ways. This variety is crucial for the good of the program. It makes room for differences in disciplines, subject matters, and pedagogical styles. It gives fellows more than one way to go about connecting theory and practice. And it creates the context for ongoing conversation about how to make

these connections—a conversation which is itself a goal of the program. Strategies have included:

- inviting Field Education students to bring questions from their placements to a doctoral seminar, and then shaping the seminar’s engagement with a canonical disciplinary reading list around those questions.
- sending students out to do qualitative research on the practices of religious communities and then asking them to reflect critically on those practices.
- helping students develop tools for analyzing religious practices (from critical theory, sociology, and anthropology) and then asking students to use those tools to consider case studies from some practice in ministry.
- attending to the ways that particular communities engage biblical texts, with an eye to better teaching, preaching, or interpretation of those texts.
- studying the history of some practice in religious communities, with an eye to explaining how current questions about that practice came to take the form they have.
- requiring students to teach course material in a congregation as part of the seminar.

T&P Electives as of April 2010

Instructors	Course	Area(s)
Victor Anderson	Black Religion and Culture Studies II	ES
Ellen Armour	Theological Anthropology	TS
Patout Burns Robin Jensen	Seminar in Patristic Thought: Theology and Practice in Roman Africa	HS
Kathleen Flake Robin Jensen	Christian Marriage Practices and Theologies in Historical Context	HS/HL
Robin Jensen	Sacraments: History, Theology, and Practice	HS/HL
Susan Hylen	Teaching the Bible in Congregations	NT/RE
Susan Hylen	Bible and Sermon: The Gospel of John	NT/HL
Amy-Jill Levine Ted Smith	Jewish-Christian Relations	HL/ES for PhD; NT for MDiv/MTS
Paul Lim	Theodicy and the Problem of Evil in Western Traditions	HS
Barbara McClure	Selves in Social Context	RPC
John McClure Bonnie Miller-McLemore Graham Reside	Qualitative Methods and Practical Theology	RPC/HL/E
Douglas Meeks	Eschatology in Modern Theology	TS
Bonnie Miller-McLemore Ted Smith	Theories of Practice	ES / RPC
Daniel Patte	Global Interpretations of Christian Scriptures	NT

COLLOQUY

More than any other part of the program, the colloquy should be designed and led by the fellows. While there have been certain constants—like monthly meetings and the participation of two or three faculty members—colloquies have taken many different forms over the life of the program.

In recent years colloquies have featured “case presentation” of teaching experience in general courses or in the integrative courses. They have also involved presentations of research by fellows, discussions of professional ethics, and conversations about vocation. Colloquy is a time for making connections between what we do and why we do it.

Whatever its form, the colloquy aims to create a social space for deliberation about the goods of theological education. It opens opportunities for fellows to think through their own vocations in relation to the wider work of theological education. It provides a venue in which fellows and faculty think together about the shape of the T&P program itself.

The social space of the colloquy is distinctive. It is neither an informal gathering of friends nor a formal doctoral seminar, though it shares a boundary with each of those events. It is a space for making connections—between people, between disciplines, between theory and practice, and between our ideals and the work we do every day.

The colloquy typically meets once each month during the school year. Fellows will participate in the colloquy for the first three years of their course of study. Fellows may register for the colloquy as a course: one-hour of graduate credit will be awarded for satisfactory participation in this colloquy each year, up to a total of three hours credit. But fellows may also participate without registering officially. The requirements for participants are the same in either case. Fellows should consult with advisers in their home areas and staff in the GDR office to decide whether to take the colloquy for credit or not.

TEACHING INTERNSHIPS

The terms of the Theology and Practice Fellowship require fellows to serve without additional pay as teaching assistants in two courses at Vanderbilt. One of those courses should be in the fellow's home area of study. The course might be in the Divinity School or the Department of Religious Studies. The other teaching assistantship must be in one of the "integrative" courses in the Divinity School curriculum.

In recent years theological schools have created a host of courses to help students learn to integrate theory with practice and multiple fields with ministry. But there is overwhelming evidence that this is one of the places where theological faculty members are least prepared for their duties. Vanderbilt intends to graduate men and women who are better prepared for integrative teaching than scholars of an earlier generation. The twin assistantships play a crucial role in this preparation for integrative teaching throughout the curriculum.

Area Teaching Assistantship

Each fellow should serve as a teaching assistant in a course in his or her home area of study. Responsibilities of the fellow will be the same as those of other teaching assistants: leading discussion groups, grading papers and examinations, and offering lectures as specified by the faculty instructor. Fellows will participate in the preparatory and reflection exercises associated with the teaching assignment, which are organized by the Center for Teaching and the GDR.

Integrative Teaching Assistantship

Each fellow will serve as a teaching assistant in one of the integrative components of the VDS M.Div. curriculum. Fellows typically serve in one of the three main integrative courses: the Supervised Ministry Seminar, the Senior Seminar, or the Global/Local Immersion Seminar.

Other options can be arranged at the discretion of the program director. But integrative teaching assistantships will always involve placement in a course that brings multiple disciplines together for theological reflection on the practice of ministry.

Timing

Fellows usually do the teaching assistantships in their second and third years of coursework. Fellows may do either assistantship first. Timing of the assistantships should be determined by the fellow in consultation with the director of his or her area and with the Director of the Program in Theology and Practice. In most cases the needs of the areas should determine the order in which a fellow takes the two placements.

Additional Assistantships

After two teaching assistantships, fellows have fulfilled this portion of the terms of their offer letters. Fellows who take on teaching assistantships beyond these two will be paid on top of their stipends at the rate specified by the GDR.

Research Assistantships

Like every GDR student, fellows in the Program in Theology and Practice serve as research assistants in their home areas in the first year of doctoral study.

TEACHING EXTERNSHIPS

Funding for Years Five and Six

The initial award of the fellowship offers up to four years of funding. Renewal of funding each year is contingent upon a fellow's making satisfactory progress towards the degree. In the fourth year of study a fellow can apply for funding for up to two more years of study. Applications for this additional funding are due to the Program Director by March 15 of the fourth year of study. Funding for years five and six depends on a fellow's making satisfactory process towards the degree. "Satisfactory progress" in this case typically includes, but is not limited to, successful completion of all qualifying exams and successful proposal of the dissertation.

If the program steering committee approves a fellow for additional funding, the fellow will have year five for dissertation research and year six for an "externship" in theological education.

Dissertation Research. Prior to the Teaching Externship, a full year of dissertation research will be funded for fellows. The Director of the Program will organize a colloquy in which students will present their research for discussion. At some

point in the fifth or sixth year, each fellow will also present his or her research in a public forum like the Relevant Religion Series sponsored by Vanderbilt Divinity School in conjunction with Nashville's Scarritt-Bennett Center.

Teaching Externship. The externship offers a set of unparalleled opportunities that serve as a kind of capstone to the program. During the sixth year of study fellows will teach in a seminary, theological school, or other institution oriented primarily toward teaching for religious leadership. Placements will usually be at schools within driving distance of Nashville. The Director will coordinate the matching of available externs with appropriate placements (see the next page for a description of the process).

The externships give fellows an opportunity to gain experience in the full work of faculty members while they complete their dissertations. Externs teach one course per semester. Typically they partner with a senior colleague to teach the introductory course in their area in one semester and then teach an

elective related to their dissertation in the other. They also engage in limited service activities. Each extern is supervised and mentored by an experienced faculty member of the school. The dean of the school provides a teaching and service evaluation. The president or another officer helps the extern understand the culture and mission of the school. Occasional workshops at Vanderbilt provide opportunities for all the externs and their advisers to come together to think through the vocation of teaching for ministry.

The externships offer fellows a chance to be immersed in the practice of teaching for ministry. Fellows get to practice teaching with a reduced load, a supportive mentor, and structured reflection. They learn at a new level how to combine teaching, research, and service. Working beyond the Ph.D.-granting institution, they develop a wider network that can help with job placement and with a lifetime of academic work. After completing the externship, T&P fellows are uniquely well-prepared as teachers of people preparing for ministry.

Placement Process for Externships

1. In the spring semester of the fourth year of study, each fellow meets with the Director to talk about preferences and priorities for a placement. Fellows are encouraged to consider first the schools with which the program is trying to build long-term relationships: Sewanee, Memphis, Hebrew Union College, Columbia, Louisville, Eden, ITC, and St. Meinrad. Fellows may propose schools beyond this list. Placements in those schools would depend on approval by the Dean, the Director, and the program steering committee.
2. After meeting with all fellows who will be placed in externships, the Program Director drafts a list of preferred placements. Final approval of the list depends on the consent of fellows to their individual placement priorities and the approval of the entire list by the Dean.
3. Once the list of preferred placements is approved, the Program Director will approach the schools on that list with the offer of an externship placement. The offer will not be open-ended, but particular to the fellow involved. The offer will be clear that placement will depend on the approval of three parties: the fellow, the school, and the T&P committee.
4. Each fellow will interview with the preferred school late in the fall semester or early in the spring semester of the year before she or he seeks to be placed in an externship. Schools should make a decision about whether or not to accept an extern by February 15. Fellows should make a decision about whether or not to accept the offer of an externship by March 15.
5. Decisions and contingencies
 - a. If a fellow and a school both agree to a match, the Director will take the terms of the match to the Dean and the committee for final approval. We expect most cases to move fairly smoothly to this outcome.
 - b. If the school turns a fellow down, the program will work for another placement until the fellow has a placement. If the program can't get a placement offer for the fellow, and the fellow participated in the placement process in good faith, and the fellow is otherwise making good progress towards the degree, then the fellow is still eligible to receive sixth-year funding.
 - c. If the school a fellow initially agreed to makes an offer, and the fellow turns it down, the fellow should give the Director a written statement of reasons for refusal of the placement. If the T&P committee thinks there is sufficient cause, the Director will work on a second placement. If the committee decides the fellow did not have sufficient cause to turn the placement down, the fellow could lose sixth-year funding.

OTHER COMPONENTS

Travel Grants

Fellows in Theology and Practice are eligible for grants of up to \$200 to support travel to conferences and other events.

Fellows may receive a maximum of one T&P travel grant each year. They may receive a maximum of three travel grants over the course of their studies at Vanderbilt.

Grants will be awarded for travel to conferences or other events that meet these criteria:

- The conference should involve conversation with people whose primary work is ministry outside the academy.
- The conference should feature conversations about ministry—conversations that have learned from and speak to ministries of some kind.

Fellows wishing to apply for a travel grant should send an email to the Program Director with the name, date, and location of the conference they might attend. The email should also describe the work of the conference and make clear how it meets the criteria above.

Fellows traveling with support from a T&P travel grant must complete a Vanderbilt University travel form. The form must be filed with the T&P office before departure.

Support for Publication

A financial award to support publication of the dissertation will be made to any student who presents an outstanding completed dissertation by the end of the second year of the Dissertation Fellowship and Teaching Externship.

Outside Employment

Like other students in the GDR, fellows may not work more than 15 hours per week in employment beyond their teaching and research in Vanderbilt's Ph.D. program. Fellows wishing to exceed the 15-hour limit must get approval from the steering committee and written permission from the Director. Fellows whose outside work obligations exceed acceptable levels may lose funding from the program.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

	Years One and Two	Years Three and Four	Years Five and Six
Scholarship	<p>Coursework Teaching Assistantship Colloquy Participation</p> <p>Fellows do coursework for their major and minor areas of study.</p> <p>Included in the coursework are four seminars related to the Program in Theology and Practice:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. T&P Core Seminar: Teaching for Ministry 2. T&P Core Seminar: Research for Ministry 3. Program Electives 4. Program Electives 	<p>Exams and Proposal Teaching Assistantship Colloquy Participation</p> <p>Fellows take examinations set by their areas.</p> <p>Fellows make dissertation proposals and begin writing.</p>	<p>Dissertation Teaching Externship Public Presentation</p> <p>After the fourth year students may apply to extend the fellowship for two more years. The Program in Theology and Practice has funding to support every fellow for a full six years, and we hope and expect to fund every fellow through completion of the dissertation.</p> <p>A financial award to support publication of the dissertation will be made to fellows who complete excellent dissertations by the end of the teaching externship.</p>
Teaching	<p>Fellows serve as Teaching Assistants for one semester in a course in the Divinity School, the Department of Religious Studies, or another department of Vanderbilt University.</p> <p>Fellows participate in the Center for Teaching's program to prepare graduate students to be excellent teachers.</p>	<p>Fellows serve as Teaching Assistants in an "integrative" setting that features multi-disciplinary reflection on practice. Teaching Assistants work as partners with faculty members in planning, leading, and evaluating a seminar. Fellows might do their integrative TAship in one of these three settings:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supervised Ministry Seminar 2. Senior Seminar 3. Global/Local Immersion Seminar Other options as approved by the Director. 	<p>In the final years of study Vanderbilt coordinates and pays for a teaching externship in an area theological school. Externs will teach with reduced loads that allow them to complete their dissertations. Each extern will receive mentoring from an experienced faculty member of the school.</p> <p>Fellows present their research to a public beyond the academy.</p>
Service Relationships Reflection	<p>Fellows attend a monthly colloquy.</p>	<p>Fellows continue to attend the monthly colloquy through the end of their third year.</p>	<p>The externships involve structured opportunities for reflection with mentors from within and beyond Vanderbilt.</p>

FAQ

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What makes this program different from other Ph.D. programs in religion?

Many things set Vanderbilt's Program in Theology and Practice apart:

- a commitment to preparing fellows to be outstanding professors in theological schools
- a focus on practical theology and religious practices
- a multi-disciplinary approach to religion in everyday life
- an emphasis on scholarship for broad publics
- extensive collaboration with local clergy, activists, and other leaders
- a final "externship" that gives fellows significant teaching experience beyond their Ph.D.-granting institution
- mentoring and partnership at every stage of the program
- financial support for publication of dissertations
- a stipend of \$18,500 for up to six years
- a diverse, open Divinity School environment

Do I have to apply for the Ph.D. program in the Graduate Department of Religion (GDR) to be eligible for this fellowship?

Yes. Other fellowships are available for Master's and Ph.D. students in other departments and schools at Vanderbilt.

Is Theology and Practice its own area of study, like Historical Studies or Ethics and Society? If I became a fellow, would I get a Ph.D. in Theology and Practice?

The Program in Theology and Practice is not an area unto itself. It is defined neither by some particular body of knowledge that all fellows learn nor by some particular method that all fellows master. It is defined rather by a shared sense of purpose and a shared set of dispositions. Participants in the program work from a contested but common hope for theological education that can form people for ministries that share in the work of mending creation. And participants share a respect for ministry of many kinds. They share a disposition to learn from and teach for ministry.

Can I apply to any area of study within the GDR?

Fellows are free to work in any area of study within the GDR that offers the Ph.D. Fellows already work in every one of those areas: Ethics and Society; Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel; Historical Studies; History and Critical Theories of Religion (HACTOR); Homiletics and Liturgics; New Testament and Early Christianity; Religion, Psychology, and Culture; and Theological Studies.

What qualities will successful applicants have?

Candidates for the fellowship will be drawn from the pool of people already admitted to the GDR, so applicants must first display all the qualities necessary for admission to one of the areas of study. In addition to this baseline of academic excellence, fellows in the Program in Theology and Practice should demonstrate wisdom for critical, theological reflection on the lived religions of people and institutions. We expect that many successful applicants will demonstrate that wisdom through experience in ministry.

By "ministry" we mean not only leadership in congregations, but also activities like chaplaincy, social work, and faith-based activism. Outstanding candidates might also point to things like patterns of research, a history of active participation in movements or congregations, or writing and speaking for diverse publics. If you wonder if you fit with this program, please go ahead and apply.

Is this fellowship open to people of all faith traditions — or no particular tradition at all?

Yes. The fellowship is not just "open" to all, but actively seeking fellows with a variety of relationships to a variety of religious traditions. The most important thing is not a particular kind of religious identity, but the ability to reflect critically and theologically on religious practices, and the ability and desire to teach such reflection to people preparing for religious leadership in some tradition.

Can I still get into the GDR if I don't receive a fellowship?

Yes. Applying for the fellowship will not hurt your chances of regular admission. And GDR students often win other fellowships, both from Vanderbilt and from sources beyond Vanderbilt.

Can I "stack" other scholarship funds on top of a T&P fellowship?

Yes. Fellows can add to the fellowship money received from Vanderbilt (like the Provost's Graduate Fellowship) and money from sources beyond Vanderbilt (like an award from the Fund for Theological Education).

Will participation in T&P slow down my progress towards the Ph.D.? Will it make the Ph.D. program take longer?

No. We are convinced that this program will help the vast majority of Ph.D. candidates to finish their degrees more quickly and at a higher level than they would otherwise. Quality and completion rates

both soar when candidates have adequate funding, a supportive cohort, attentive mentoring, and opportunities for publicly sharing their work.

The evidence so far supports this conviction. T&P fellows are moving through the program at or faster than the usual pace.

What can I do to make sure I progress through the program in a timely fashion?

Fellows should plan to do all the things that every Ph.D. student does to ensure timely progress, including: fulfilling language requirements as quickly as possible, taking a full load each semester, working steadily (and, early in the program, perhaps for academic credit) through the summers, minimizing outside employment, strategically managing transfer credits, and seeking out guidance from faculty in the primary area of study.

Fellows in the program can also make choices that let them fulfill program requirements without additional time in coursework. Fellows should take particular care to enroll in program electives when they are offered in a fellow's major

or minor area of study. A single course can then fulfill both the requirements for a fellow's major or minor and the requirements for the T&P fellowship.

What is the minor in Practical Theology?

The Practical Theology minor focuses on practical theology in a disciplinary sense. All fellows engage in the activity of practical theology, thinking through their disciplines in ways that learn from and speak to ministry. Students in Homiletics and Liturgics and Religion, Psychology and Culture engage in practical theology as an area of the curriculum. Students who minor in the discipline of Practical Theology take up a related but distinct program. They enter an academic conversation focused on questions about the relationship between theory and practice, the purpose of theological education, and the nature of practical theology itself.

How do requirements for the minor in Practical Theology overlap with requirements for the Program in Theology and Practice?

The T&P program's two core seminars can count towards a minor in the discipline of Practical Theology. All of the courses offered towards this minor also count as T&P electives (though not all T&P electives count towards the Practical Theology minor). Fellows who wish to pursue this minor, then, can "double count" all their work for T&P towards the minor area.

Do I have to minor in Practical Theology?

No. In principle, fellows are free to minor in the area or areas that they and the faculty in their major area think most fitting for their development as scholars and teachers. And in practice, fellows who choose minors other than Practical Theology can find T&P electives that overlap with their major and minor areas and then use the T&P core seminars to fulfill GDR elective hours. The T&P program should not erect any obstacles to the pursuit of any major or minor area.

I would like to finish my Ph.D. in less than six years. Can I do that in this program?

Yes. While the fellowship provides up to six years of funding, it does not mandate six years of time towards the degree.

Can I do the externship in my fifth year?

Yes, with permission from the program steering committee. Fellows are eligible for the externship in the year before they plan to graduate. Fellows who plan to graduate at the end of their fifth year of study and wish to do the externship in that year must notify the Director before the end of the spring semester of their third year of study. If the committee approves the timeline, the fellow can go through a placement process in the fourth year of study and then serve in the externship in the fifth and final year of study.

Is the externship mandatory?

The externship is not required for graduation. Good-faith participation in the externship process is required for sixth-year funding. A fellow might choose to opt out of the externship if she or he got a good job offer in her fifth year. In special circumstances a fellow might choose to forego the externship—and sixth-year funding—to focus on research or other matters.

That said, fellows are strongly encouraged to complete the externship. The program is conceived as a curriculum, and the externship is its capstone. It provides an opportunity unlike any other in North American Ph.D. programs. We believe this year for a gradual, mentored transition from graduate student to faculty member will not only help fellows on the job market, but also over the course of a career.

¹ Fellows who entered the program in or before 2009 can still create an interdisciplinary minor in Theology and Practice. A T&P minor is subject to GDR guidelines for interdisciplinary minors. A T&P minor requires the two T&P core seminars, two T&P elective seminars, and a capstone project (usually a paper, but possibly an exam) as negotiated with the minor area adviser. Any VDS faculty member who has ever served on the T&P steering committee can serve as an adviser for this minor.

² The papers from the Research for Ministry seminar will count as the major research paper described in the original grant narrative. Fellows who have not taken the revised version of the research seminar—those who entered the program in or before 2007—should still plan to complete the major research paper as part of their suite of qualifying exams. The paper may count as part of a T&P minor.

This manual is intended to offer a picture of the program for faculty, fellows, prospective students, and others who might be interested. While it reflects program policies at the time of its printing, it is not intended as a binding policy statement. Program policies are subject to change without amendment to this document. Final authority in all matters related to the program remains with the Dean of the Divinity School in consultation with the program steering committee.

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