

New Brunswick Theological Seminary
Course Syllabus

**Creating and Sustaining a Debt Free Ministry: The Clergy Cycle,
Congregation and Church**

Spring, 2015

PROFESSOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION

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Time when the Professor can meet in person: By appointment

Course Administration:

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DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE OF COURSE:

This course offers an historical, cultural, Biblical and social overview of consumer debt in Western society. The evolution and impact of marketing and advertising as contributors to the culture of debt will be explored. The relationship between Christian faith, clergy and consumerism will also be considered. The impact of debt on clergy and congregational ministry will be studied. Methods of assessing, addressing and avoiding high levels of personal debt will be developed. Consideration will be given to the implications of the prosperity Gospel theology and movement for mainline churches and clergy. Models for financial health among professional clergy will be designed.

THEME SCRIPTURE:

“The rich rule over the poor; the borrower is slave to the lender.” Proverbs 22:7 NIV

THE LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE PROGRAM ARE:

As the student fulfills the requirements of this program, s/he will:

1. Be constructively engaged in the life of the world beyond the walls of the church, bearing faithful witness to the Christian faith in word and deed.
2. Habitually “think theologically,” in the sense of applying analysis to bring knowledge and experience of the Christian faith to bear on situations, texts, ideas, issues (etc.) and vice-versa.
3. Be able to identify, locate, and make critical use of diverse information sources in assessing ministry contexts and planning for her/his on-going learning.

4. Possess a financial perspective and plan to guide decision-making, pursuit and continuation of a clergy career.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Articulate a theological perspective concerning clergy, congregational and institutional finance.
2. Create and manage budgets.
3. Understand the nature and implications of personal debt.
4. Understand and communicate clearly concerning clergy compensation.
5. Define financial goals and strategies to meet those goals.
6. Identify resources for managing personal and institutional finances.
7. Execute changes in money management and debt reduction.

Assessment:

- A. Financial vocabulary
- B. Self-awareness of financial perspectives
- C. Knowledge of Biblical texts concerning money
- D. Ability to manage financial matters
- E. Level of financial discipline
- F. Attitudes that contribute to financial status
- G. Establish and attain financial goals
- H. Ability to avoid and eliminate debt
- I. Create a plan for future financial needs and decisions
- J. Readiness to assist others in the area of financial wellness

SAKAI INFORMATION

All students *are required* to enroll in their courses in Sakai after registration. Upon registration, you should have received a handout that explains the basics on how to enroll yourself into your courses and another one on how to use Sakai (including your login settings). Read both carefully and follow the instructions in them.

If you have problems and/or are not able to login, have questions concerning the use of Sakai, send an email to jperalta@nbts.edu. Describe the problem in detail and include your full name, your email address, and telephone number(s).

All important announcements and communication for this class will take place through Sakai and the NBTS email addresses of the students. Make sure that you periodically check the course and your NBTS email inbox to stay informed and communicate with your professor and classmates. Students should always include their first and last name at the end of all e-mail messages. This will enable the professor to quickly identify the student and course, facilitating a timely response. Responses to email will be received within 24 hours.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

We recommend you start building a library for your present and future ministries or vocations. The following are the books required for this course.

Required

1. *dfree®: Breaking Free from Financial Slavery*, DeForest B. Soaries, Jr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011
2. *dfree® Lifestyle: 12 Steps to Financial Freedom*, DeForest B. Soaries, Jr., Chicago: UMI, 2013
3. *Zero Debt*, Lynn Khalifani-Cox, South Orange, New Jersey: Advantage World Press, 2004

Suggested

4. *Exploring Prosperity Preaching: Biblical Health, Wealth and Wisdom*, Debra Mumford, Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2012
5. *The Overspent American*, Juliet B. Schor, New York: Basic, 1998
6. *How to Get out of Debt, Stay Out of Debt and Live Prosperously*, Jerrold Mundis. New York: Bantam, 1988

You may purchase the course textbooks at a local bookstore and/or utilize a book distributor such as www.amazon.com; www.bn.com; <http://www.cokesbury.com>; or www.bibliofind.com. Since online purchases can take a week or longer, make sure to order the textbooks as soon as possible. Most required material may be found in our library and some of it also can be downloaded from various academic websites. Any additional materials (e.g., articles, etc.) may be found in your course in Sakai.

LIBRARY RESOURCES

All NBTS students have access to Sage Library. A library card is provided free of charge to all students who have a NBTS ID. For further information on Sage Library and access to the online library catalog, visit the web site at <http://www.nbts.edu/newsited/sage.cfm>. Also students should explore what library services are available in their local area (i.e. Rutgers Library). College or community college libraries near the students are also good options. For more information on how to use the library systems or to have a training session on how to perform database research, feel free to contact Chris Brennan at cbrennan@nbts.edu or Bethany O'Shea at boshea@nbt.edu.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING PERCENTAGES: 250 total possible points

Participation	Explanation	Points
Class Participation	A larger than usual portion of the course grade will be based upon the quality of class participation. This includes attendance and discussion.	75
Student Portfolio	The dfree® workbook includes assignments that will be reviewed by the professor and will function as portfolio.	50
Final Paper	Final paper will be a 20-minute written sermon on stewardship that can be preached to a congregation.	50
Online Participation	* See “Discussion Board” below	50
Timeliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to discussion question or statement before the end of the week. • Meets the minimum response of 3 postings per week and are evenly distributed throughout the week. 	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response does not meet the required posting time or frequency. 	0
Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response demonstrates a clear understanding of the topic. • Responses are thoughtful, reflective, well developed and directly address the assigned question or statement. 	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are unclear and show no understanding of the topic. 	0
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses encourage deeper thought; adds to the body of knowledge and stimulate thoughtful discussion among cohorts. • Responses are off topic, unclear and do not engage cohorts with broader expansion of the discussion topic. 	10
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are respectful, thoughtful, and encourage connections of varying points of view. • Responses are inviting to a broader discussion of the topic and share information and resources. 	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses are inappropriate, lack respect and ignore comments by cohorts and lacks collaboration. 	0
Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses use conventional English without grammatical or typographical errors. Sources used to support responses are correctly cited. 	10
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses have misspelled words, incorrect grammar and typographical errors. Sources used to support responses are not correctly cited. 	0

* Discussion board assignment expectations:

In order for you to gain the full scope, spirit and experience of the course, I have included an online discussion board where we can share experience and engage in further discussions on the topics. In order for you to gain full benefit of the discussion board you are expected to actively participate in weekly collaborative discussions. This is your space. I will drop in from time to time but not to take away from your discussions.

Each week I will pose a question or post a statement relevant to the week's activities and readings. The question or statement will be available in Sakai on Sundays. You are expected to post an immediate response to the question or statement allowing all to read and comment/discuss. This allows all to read and comment/discuss the postings of your classmates. In addition, you are required to post a minimum of 3 responses (comments) to your cohorts posting. Your comments should be reflective, expansive in scope, and move the discussion forward. Reference the readings to support your statements and don't forget to cite your sources. Your responses should be well developed and adhere to conventional English.

Pace yourself and avoid waiting to the last night (Saturday) to respond. Waiting to the last night does not allow others to respond to you, distracts from the spirit of collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and all the experience you have to offer. I have included a rubric on how you will be graded on your participation on the online discussions. The online discussion board is 20% of your grade. If you have any questions or concerns, send me an email and I will respond within 48 hours.

In addition, keep the following course requirements in mind:

You must write in **grammatically correct English**. (Note: papers using slang, "text language," or profanity will be returned with no opportunity to re-write.) Papers that are poorly written will be turned back to be redone, and will need to be resubmitted within three (3) days of having received it with corrections.

NBTS is committed to an *inclusive* theological agenda. The use of inclusive language is a *requirement* for *all* written work, and encouraged in all other written or oral communications. Students are urged to develop greater sensitivity in their written work to issues of inclusion in all forms, but especially regarding humankind. Terms such as "mankind" or "sons of God" are not inclusive of women. Instead, students could say humanity and children of God. Students will be urged in classes to consider more inclusive ways of speaking about God as well.

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION POLICY

An absence is defined as missing class for any reason including sickness, work related travel, church meetings, services, or other church related events. Though class absences are sometimes necessary, each student's participation is beneficial for the whole class. It is critical for students to participate in all Sakai discussions and submit all assignments to accomplish the learning outcomes.

Four (4) unexcused absences in a full course (two in a single term course) may result in dismissal from the course. In extraordinary circumstances, and at the sole discretion of the professor, a student with four (4) unexcused absences may be allowed to continue (and obtain a passing grade) in the course, on condition of no further absences in the course (whether excused or unexcused), the completion of all missed course assignments, and the performance of additional work (if any) assigned by the professor.

A student who exceeds the allowable number of absences may petition to withdraw and receive a “W” instead of failing the course (**Refer to Student Handbook**). The granting or denial of any such petition is within the purview of the Academic Affairs Committee.

Absences (excused or unexcused) may result in the reduction of percentage points 20% from the student’s final grade. The professor may at his discretion offer a student an opportunity to gain back the lost percentage points through whatever means are appropriate to the situation. Any additional assignment given to the student as an option for replacing missed work must be completed within six (6) days after the faculty member determines the work may be replaced.

Contact the professor before the absence (or up to one (1) day after the absence if the reason for the absence prevented communication with the professor). The professor is not responsible to contact a student to inform him/her of a missed assignment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Come prepared for each class session. This course will require an informed class interaction and the timely completion of all assignments. You may assume about ten hours of preparation for a two-credit hour class. Your personal schedule must allow you to keep up with the due dates for the readings and other assignments.

It is recommended that you place this Course Schedule in a convenient place and refer to it each week of the course. Follow it closely as late assignments may be subject to a grade reduction. Also be sure you can complete this course in the scheduled period. Incompletes will only be granted for true emergency situations, not for poor planning (**see the NBTS Incomplete Grades Policy in the Student Handbook**).

Week One: March 24

- A. Introductions and lecture – Religion and Money
- B. Luke 15

Week Two: March 31

- A. Biblical and Historical Models of Money and the Church
- B. A Financial Hermeneutic

Note: No Class April 7

Week Three: April 14

- A. Identifying Causes and Challenges Related to Clergy Finances
- B. Crafting a Financial Strategy for Clergy

Week Four: April 21

- A. The Clergy Financial Attitude
- B. Getting Started with a Financial Plan

Week Five: April 28

- A. Steering the Financial Power
- B. Understanding Financial Dreams and Goals

Week Six: May 5

- A. Maximizing the Financial Margin
- B. Minimize Financial Stresses

Week Seven: May 12

- A. Maintaining Financial Focus
- B. Pairing with Financial Coaches & Course Evaluation

GRADING SYSTEM (Points)

245 - 250	A	193 - 199	C+
235 - 244	A	185 - 192	C
225 - 234	A-	175 - 184	C-
218 - 224	B+	168 - 174	D+
210 - 217	B	160 - 167	D
200 - 209	B-	153 - 159	D-
		158 and below	F

General Grade Definitions:

A: Conspicuous excellence, showing a thorough mastery of the material, critical use of sources, exceptional creativity, constructive imagination, outstanding oral and written expression and organization.

A-: Exceptional graduate-level attainment, with conspicuous excellence in most respects, but not uniformly so.

B+: Superior level of attainment, marked by consistently good work, advanced understanding of the material, clear logic, circumspect judgment, originality and clear communication.

B: Good work, with general indication of constructive ability in application.

B-: Satisfactory achievement, with assignments completed accurately and on time, but without significant evidence of excellence or distinction.

C+: Satisfactory understanding of course contents, with significant limitations in analysis, communication, integration, or class participation.

C: Minimal understanding of course content, with significant limitations in several of the following: analysis, communication, integration, and class participation.

C-: Minimum understanding of course content, with significant limitations in all of the following: analysis, communications, integration, and class participation. (NOTE: A grade of C- or higher must be received in order for a required course to be considered successfully completed.)

D: Faithful participation and effort, but inability to grasp the most important essentials of the course

Any student who receives an “F” for a required course in the curriculum will be required to repeat the course in order to graduate. When a student has repeated such a course, both the original grade of “F” and the subsequent grade will be recorded on the transcript and will be factored into the overall student GPA. Students repeating a course must pay full tuition.

F: Failure to meet student learning outcomes or cases of Plagiarism.

I: An "Incomplete" may be given when a student is unable to complete all assigned work within the particular semester. Incompletes are only granted at the discretion of the Professor, for any period of time up to 90 days, and must be reported on the appropriate form that is available from the Registrar's office. After 90 days, an Incomplete will automatically be converted to an F. (**Refer to Student Handbook**)

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS —Students with a documented disability may contact the Associate Dean of Student Services, Joan Marshall at jmarshall@nbts.edu in order to make arrangements for an academic accommodation. Certificate Program students may contact Dr. Terry Smith at tsmith@nbts.edu to make similar arrangements.

NBTS ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY (Plagiarism)

One of the primary learning objectives of the Seminary is to help students acquire the gift of discernment—the ability to think critically and ethically. Essential to this task is the requirement that students learn how to investigate the thoughts of others, to organize these thoughts in a fresh way, and, in combination with one's own thoughts and experiences, to communicate one's findings.

It is with this conviction that the Seminary does *NOT* permit the presentation of someone else's thoughts as one's own. Books, articles and other materials used in the presentation of

assignments must be credited properly in the footnotes/endnotes and the bibliography. Sentences and a paragraph cannot be copied without proper attribution, copying more than one paragraph is strongly discouraged, and entire pages is not allowed. A student may not turn in a paper written in part or entirely by another, claiming it to be solely his or her own work. It is the Faculty's view that plagiarism is not only personally dishonest, but also a violation of the integrity of the practice of ministry.

Plagiarism, in those instances where the original source cannot be located, may be determined by three members of the Faculty, who report their judgment of plagiarism to the full Faculty, and have their judgement of plagiarism confirmed by the majority vote of the full Faculty. Plagiarism may result in automatic course failure and/or dismissal from the Seminary.

The full Seminary policy on plagiarism may be found in the **Student Handbook**.

TECHNOLOGY NEEDED

All students should own or have access to a computer in order to take this course. This access should include a web browser, document reader (i.e. Adobe Reader), media and flash player, Microsoft Office products (or equivalent). Note: Students can have difficulty accessing and using course materials and communicating with faculty and staff if their equipment does not meet minimum standards.

Internet Service Providers (ISP)

A reliable Internet connection, which includes direct access to the worldwide web is needed.

From time to time, the professor may be dealing in greater depth with particular concerns or issues that emerge during the course of the semester, and adjusting items in the syllabus whenever necessary. The Professor will keep you informed of any changes.