Course Description:
This travel seminar is a hands-on opportunity to learn about leadership and ministry “on-the-ground” (literally!) in a globally connected rural setting. It focuses on Christian ministry in Nebraska and offers an occasion to taste rural ministry at its best and opportunities to witness and discuss major challenges taking place in the rural-global culture (e.g. ecology, economic globalization, alternative energy, organic and sustainable farming, urbanization, agribusiness, etc.). As missional leaders we discover that it is in the context of real life that our theological, historical, and biblical knowledge are truly nourished, challenged and formed; that we begin to understand our own leadership abilities best “on the ground”; and that our contextual and cultural competencies are formed when they are seen through different lenses. This course focuses on theology in the messiness of the challenges listed above as they are faced in a rural context, the ways leaders and communities are creatively engaging these new challenges and opportunities, and how pastors and leaders (church and community) understand and implement their mission. Given that Jesus often makes reference to the rural context, this course helps to glean insights that the rural church has to share out of its own unique context. The class will have opportunities to meet with pastors, church leaders, and leaders from business, social services and the community to discuss the expectations, challenges and joys of leadership and the skills and gifts that help shape effective church/community leaders.

This course is designed around the reality that the majority of congregations in the ELCA are in rural settings and that a large number of pastors serve their first call in a rural setting. This course also offers an alternate context into which students can translate and experience a theology/praxis learned in urban/suburban communities. Students will work on a strategy from their individual intercultural development plan during the travel seminar.

Instructors: LSTC faculty member Dr. Esther Menn, members of the Nebraska Synod Rural Ministry Task Force, and local pastors and lay hosts in central Nebraska, exact locations to be determined.

Participants: A cohort of between 4 and 10 LSTC MDiv, MAM, and MA students from LSTC and Wartburg Theological Seminary.

Costs: The Nebraska Synod will cover all costs in Nebraska, including food, lodging (with host families), and ground transportation during the immersion. Participants are responsible for travel to central Nebraska, LSTC course tuition, books, and incidentals. LSTC students may arrange for carpooling (10 hours drive approximately) to minimize costs and to build community before the immersion.
Time Frame: Pre-Trip Meeting Thursday, May 16, 1:00-4:00pm (date negotiable); Nebraska Rural Immersion Monday, May 20-Sunday, May 26; Project Videoconferencing Thursday, May 30, 2017; Revised Papers/Projects and Reflections Due Friday, June 7. Schedule is as follows:
- Pre-Trip Meeting on Thursday, May 16, 1:00-4:00 (date negotiable) includes introductions, review of course syllabus, book discussion, and intercultural workshop.
- Pre-assigned reading and written reflection are due the morning of Monday, May 20, the first day of the Nebraska Rural Immersion.
- Transportation to Byron-Hardy (near Omaha) should be arranged for arrival on May 20.
- The Nebraska Rural Immersion will take place from May 20-26, with a daily schedule consisting of morning field trip, afternoon conversation with local leaders, daily spiritual formation and worship elements. See schedule from last year, 2018, at the end of this syllabus for an idea of the daily rhythm of the Nebraska Immersion.
- Work on completing projects once you have returned to Chicago, May 27-30.
- Students will present their projects via videoconferencing on Thursday, May 30.
- Revised Papers/Projects and journal/intercultural reflection are due Friday, June 7.

I. Rationale for the Course
This course is especially designed to address student learning competencies # 4 and #5.

Outcome #4 states: Ministry Arts and Public Leadership – “Oversight in and stewardship of communities that discern and develop the gifts of all people.” LSTC’s goal is to develop public leaders who “exhibit confidence/gracefulness in exercising ministry, …articulate a sense of self as leader and demonstrate an understanding of their own strengths and limitations that is congruent with feedback from others, and …clearly articulate a personal and communal/ecclesial call to ministry and basic vision for ministry, informed by theological studies and vibrant personal faith.”

Outcome #5 states: Cultural Context-- Within and around each of these competencies, manifests the ability to know, interpret, and affect particular situations, values, and meanings through methodologically grounded historical, socio-cultural, ethical readings/analysis of one’s own denomination and broadly cultural-historical traditions. Here LSTC’s goal is to develop leaders who “Critically analyze and assess social locations and cultural/religious contexts. …speak theologically and pastorally about structural inequalities present in society, …strive to engage difference with understanding while persuasively presenting the Christian heritage in multi-religious contexts.

II. Objectives of the Course
The Leadership and Mission in Rural Ministry course aims to help students:
1. Gain an orientation to rural life and the changing realities of rural and agricultural life.
2. Inform their current understanding of ministry in general and ministry in a rural setting though interacting and working with church and community leaders “on the ground.”
3. Affirm the vitality of life-changing ministry in rural settings.
4. Deepen their capacity to consider and assess complex theological and social issues within those communities and from a variety of contextual perspectives.
5. Describe the practice of the arts of ministry (worship, preaching, evangelism, education and pastoral care) at a church service within the context of thriving rural congregations.
6. Assess the insights, skills and self-awareness they will need to be effective rostered leaders in the 21st century and foster their ability to deepen them.
7. Observe and experience how the people in rural settings embody leadership in service to environmental stewardship, sustainability and biodiversity.
8. Engage and reflect on a strategy from their individual intercultural development plan during the immersion.
Required Texts

- Ted Genoways, *This Blessed Earth: A Year in the Life of an American Family Farm*
- Scott Skelly, *Tilling God's Land: 100 Devotions for Christian Farmers*
- "As Pipestone grows more diverse, it faces tough conversation on race: A slur on a student's truck has prompted difficult conversations." [Source](http://www.startribune.com/pipestone-grapples-with-growing-diversity/477222943/)
- "From Awareness to Action: Becoming a LGBT Advocate in a Conservative Rural Community" [Source](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.counseling.org/docs/default-source/vistas/article_66.pdf?sfvrsn=6&ved=2ahUKEwjzwY3JzaAhWo34MKHe2UAzwQJAgQIABAB&usg=AOvVaw3TVqmD8EZfGNBxHdpN2O5B)

We will watch the following movies together in Nebraska: *Farmland, Nebraska*

III. **Strategies for Learning—Expectations and Assignments**

1. *Integrating new information with our current theology* by engaging with members of the Nebraska Synod Rural Ministry Task Force in a discussion of the required readings. In preparation for those discussions and the immersion students will write a **1500 word reflection paper** on the three required texts: Dudley; Hoeft, Jung and Marshall; and Lischer texts (Due: Monday morning, May 20). The questions below are designed to provide only a guide and a stimulus for you as you prepare your reflection paper.
   a. What motivated the author to write this book? Articulate the particular context of the author’s life, the audience the author had in his/her mind’s eye, the problem(s) the author sought to address, and/or the hope that animated the writing.
   b. What is the central message/purpose of the book according to the author? Convey the message—or messages—that the author explicitly states as a thesis/purpose, using the words the author uses to speak of his/her purposes/goals. Be as faithful to and as empathic as possible about these explicit messages/purposes.
   c. What methods and mentors are present in the work? What voices does the author introduce you to in this work? On whose/what work does the author rely? Who/what has been influential in the author’s thinking? **Who/what** does the author respect/hold dear?
   d. What do you find personally/pastorally interesting or valuable about this work? What are the take-away points that you want to remember for pastoral ministry? Pick two or three things you find especially meaningful, interesting or fascinating as you reflect on *Leadership and Mission in Rural Congregations* and consider how you believe they would contribute to a stimulating conversation about ministry in a rural context.
   e. Do you hold values/principles/convictions in common with the author? Do other values/principles/convictions you hold dear lead you to want to (1) raise a question about something that puzzles/confuses you, (2) express an alternative perspective, or (3) share something you feel conflicted about as you consider the relevance of this work for your life and ministry? **Be prepared to share something about which you feel puzzled, confused, and/or would welcome more conversation.**
2. **Living in the context, engaging the immersion:** From Monday, May 20, to Sunday, May 26, we will live in the context of the Nebraska Synod. While in Nebraska, students will keep a journal of their experiences. The journal itself is personal—for uncensored thoughts and feelings about what you are experiencing every day—and will not be turned in. Journal entries may include personal observations, experiences, and insights gleaned from conversations with peers, pastors, leaders (church and communities) and people engaged in the immersion, (this would be a good place to reflect on how the experience impacts your understanding of pastoral leadership). Suggested areas for journaling:

   a. How are your expectations/assumptions about rural ministry being reaffirmed or challenged?
   b. What you are noticing about how leaders (lay and clergy) gain trust and credibility?
   c. Leadership “moves”/choices that impress you as being life-giving, community-building.
   d. What it is like to be a guest/sojourner: when did you feel comfortable or uncomfortable?
   e. Theological reflections, e.g., theology of church, theology of ministry, theology of the Holy Spirit?
   f. What intercultural experiences are you noticing and how are you engaging these?

Your journal will remain private, but a 1000-1500 word, post-immersion essay, based on your journal insights, is due by June 7 (one week after the conclusion of the course). This reflection paper will:

   - Briefly (1-2 paragraphs) return to the observations/key points of your first reflection paper: were those observations/convictions expressed by the authors of the texts you read confirmed, challenged, or modified in any way?
   - Highlight 2-3 key observations you’ve made about theologically faithful, effective leadership in the context(s) of rural ministry.
   - Identify and reflect on a strategy from the student’s individual intercultural development plan as part of these post-immersion essay.

3. **Active participation** in class discussions and immersion activities.

4. **Creatively share insights learned from the course through a paper/project that draws from the Nebraska Rural Immersion and relates back to that context.** Proposals for the paper or project are approved by the teaching team and will be presented on Thursday, May 30 via videoconferencing. Each student will be allotted 45 minutes for the presentation of their paper/project. The final version of the paper/project is due Friday, June 7. The completed papers/projects will be sent to the Nebraska Synod in two forms, through videoconferencing and through submission in written form.

5. **Select and work on a strategy from the student’s individual intercultural development plan,** with short reflection (500 words) included in the post immersion essay due Friday, June 7.

**IV. Assessment**

How shall we know if we—students and instructor—have been successful in achieving the outcomes?

The work of assessment and evaluation is shared by all members of the course.
What the instructors expects of students:
1. To be aware of the Learning Outcomes and Strategies for the course.
2. To state the kind of feedback and evaluation that would be the most helpful.
3. To engage with peers and give feedback on their presentations and to be willing to respond to other requests they may make. The task in those cases is to be as honest and specific as possible about what went well and what behavior might have further enriched the conversation.
4. To share concerns about the course and requests for adjustments that would facilitate learning with the instructors as soon as possible after becoming aware of them.
5. The completion of a course evaluation is required at LSTC before grades are released. These *anonymous* evaluations are extensive and offer much space for commenting on the course and the instructor. Students’ comments about what went well and what needs to be improved both are deeply welcome and will make a difference in future offerings of ML/CC 412.

What students can expect from the instructors:
1. That we will be available to meet with you individually, respond to your emails, to discuss any issues you would like to discuss.
2. That we will give you feedback for/assessment of your work. Much of the feedback in this course will be oral, but students may expect to receive an overall written response to the cumulative work you have accomplished during this intensive course within three weeks of when the last assignment is submitted.
3. That we will respectfully receive your requests for changes/adjustments that you believe will better facilitate your learning, to consider them carefully.

Assessment of Student’s Work
1. *Attendance and participation is huge in this kind of intensive course.*
2. The specific assignments are assessed according to the following scale:
   - Interaction/engagement during the immersion: 25 pts.
   - Feedback to peers throughout the immersion: 10 pts.
   - Individual reflections on required readings (May 21): 15 pts.
   - Post-immersion integration essay of experience and theology (June 8): 15 pts.
   - Work on IDP followed by reflection as part of integration essay (June 8): 15 pts.
   - Paper/Project and presentation (May 31, June 8): 20 pts

Academic Policies at LSTC

LSTC academic policies may be found in the *2018-19 LSTC All Students Handbook* and its academic supplements for LSTC’s respective degree programs (located on home page of LSTC.NET, under “LSTC Handbooks and Program Manuals”).

**Students living with disabilities.** LSTC is committed to assist students living with a disability to engage in academic and campus life as fully as possible. Accommodations refer to the modifications that are needed to minimize the discriminatory effect of a person’s physical, emotional, or learning disability insofar as the provision of the adjustment not cause undue burden on the setting or the institution. It is the responsibility of students with disabilities to identify themselves and request accommodations by contacting the Dean of Student Services, who will begin the process of seeking appropriate accommodations. Please consult the *2018-19 LSTC All-Students Handbook* for policies and procedures related to accommodations (pp. 46-47).
**Attendance reports.** At the outset of a course, faculty members are required to report students who do not attend the beginning class period. Faculty members also are required to submit reports of a second unexcused absence to the Registrar. The Registrar is required to forward this report to the Financial Aid Office. *(2018-19 LSTC All-Students Handbook, p. 16)*

**Academic honor system.** Instructors expect that students will follow guidelines and standards for participation in the classroom and the completion of assignments. Instructors expect that students will present their own original work for evaluation, providing written acknowledgement of sources used in the writing of papers and examinations (e.g., whether hard copy texts or the internet) through footnotes, endnotes, and other kinds of acknowledgement appropriate to the subject being reported. Presenting another's work, from whatever the source (e.g., the Internet, a peer, or hard copy texts) as if it is one's own is called plagiarism, and it is considered a serious offense in the academic community. Students needing help with learning about methods for proper citations are encouraged to consult the latest edition of Kate Turabian’s *Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* and to seek expert personal assistance that is available at the Language Resource and Writing Center (LRWC) or from a research librarian. *(2018-19 LSTC All-Students Handbook, p. 23-24)*

**Incompletes.** Being granted an incomplete in order to complete course requirements after a course has ended is a privilege, not a right. Professors are under no obligation to grant incompletes, but may choose instead to assign a grade based on the quantity and quality of work submitted by course deadlines. To request an incomplete, students must fill out an incomplete form and have it signed by their instructor. Students have 6 months after the end of a term before the incomplete (I) will be recorded as a No Credit (NC) which counts the same as an F in GPA calculations. *(2018-19 LSTC All-Students Handbook, p. 20-21)*

**Inclusive Language.** As a diverse community of people preparing for Christian leadership, LSTC acknowledges that language has the power to convey facts, attitudes, and values. Recognizing that we all suffer when exclusive, prejudicial, and/or ethnocentric language is used, LSTC calls on its faculty, staff, and students, in written and spoken communication, to use inclusive language that affirms the full humanity of all people. Resources to assist the LSTC community are available through the Pastor to the Community/Director of Worship and the JKM Library. *(2018-19 LSTC All-Students Handbook, p. 60)*
Nebraska Synod Rural Immersion  
May 21-27, 2018  
Tri-Saints Lutheran Parish  
Byron & Hardy, Nebraska

**NOTE:** This schedule from last year, May 21-27, 2018, provides an illustration of the kind of activities, experiences, and learning opportunities during the Nebraska Synod Rural Immersion. Details for May 20-26, 2019 are under still emerging. This year the immersion will be held in central Nebraska.

### Monday, May 21
Arrive at Camp Carol Joy Holling by 4:00 PM
4:00 PM Student Introductions
  Partners in Ministry Conversation
  - Susan Medina: Lutheran Family Services
  - Jason Gerdes: Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries
  - Rev. Steve Meysing: Assistant to the Bishop, NE Synod (Rural Ministry Network member)
5:30 PM Supper at Camp
6:30 PM Partners in Ministry Conversation
  - Jordan Rasmussen, Center for Rural Affairs (Rural Ministry Network member)
  - Rev. Brenda Pfeifly, Salem Lutheran Church, Stromsburg (Rural Ministry Network chair)
  - Rev. Breen Sipes, Tri-Saints Lutheran Parish, Byron and Hardy (RMN member, host)
8:00 PM Farmland Movie

### Tuesday, May 22
7:30 AM Breakfast at Camp
8:15 AM Morning Devotions with Pastor Breen
9:00 AM Depart for Byron (2.5 hours)
11:30 AM Meet with local historian Linda Simonsen at Tillie’s Bar and Grill
12 noon Noon Meal at Tillie’s
1:00 PM Meet with Agronomists Alan Wenske and Arlis Eitzmann at Aurora Co-op
2:00 PM Tour the Corner Market with Linda Heitmann
2:30 PM Tour the Bank with Tara Kuhlmann and Dana Eitzmann
3:00 PM Tour St. Paul, Byron, Geography and Ethnography of Tri-Saints with Pastor Breen
5:00 PM Tour the Byron Community Center with Jaye Moeller
6:00 PM Supper with host families at the Community Center (Sheena Moeller and Chris Heitmann)
  Nebraska Trivia Game
7:30 PM Travel to Host Family Homes, settle in for the night

### Wednesday, May 23
*breakfast with host families
8:30 AM  Morning Devotions at St. Peter with Pastor Breen
9:30 AM  Tour Nebraska Shrimp Company and Brinegar Hogs in Carleton (Dietrich Brinegar)
11:30 AM  Lunch at St. Peter/Colleague Conversation with Rev. Patrick Sipes (Transitional Minister)
1:00 PM  Tour Reinke Manufacturing in Deshler (Jake)
3:00 PM  Introduction to Spiritual Direction with Rev. Patrick Sipes
4:00 PM  Class Time with Dr. Menn
6:00 PM  Potluck with St. Paul, Byron (Lori Heitmann)
7:00 PM  Tour Good Intentions with Kara Wenske and Charlotte Tietjen
7:30 PM  Tour Snip 'n Clip with Myra Schardt
8:00 PM  Tour the Fire Hall with Doyle Heitmann

**Thursday, May 24**
*breakfast with host families
8:30 AM  Devotions at St. Peter with Pastor Breen
9:00 AM  Colleague Conversation: Bishop Brian Maas by Zoom
10:00 AM  Digital Ministry Presentation with Pastor Breen
11:00 AM  Class Time with Dr. Menn
12 noon  Lunch at St. Peter
1:00 PM  Brother James Arrives
1:30 PM  Visit Warwick Honey Acres in rural Hardy (Jason Gillilan)
3:00 PM  Visit C & C High Tunnel Farms in Scandia, Kansas (Chris and Christi Janssen)
6:00 PM  Spaghetti Supper at St. Paul, Hardy
7:30 PM  Evening at the St. Peter Parsonage

**Friday, May 25**
*breakfast with host families
8:30 AM  Devotions at St. Peter with Pastor Breen
9:00 AM  Visit Kirchhoff Farm, rural Byron (Rex & Linda, Matt & Cindy, Mike & Sarah, Blake, et al.)
10:30 AM  Visit Steve Heitmann Farm, rural Byron
12 noon  Lunch at St. Peter (with Steve Heitmann)
1:00 PM  Colleague Conversation: Rev. Stuart Sell (Trinity, Bruning), Rev. Judy Nuss (Transitional Minister, Tri-Point Parish), Jim Germer (PMA, Transitional Minister, Tri-Point Parish)
(2:00 PM Pastor Breen has a burial at St. Peter)
3:30 PM  Visit Free Day Popcorn (Nate Freitag)
6:00 PM  Potluck Day Popcorn (Nate Freitag)
7:00 PM  Men in Mission Drive

**Saturday, May 26**
*breakfast with host families
8:30 AM  Devotions at St. Peter with Pastor Breen
9:00 AM  Visit Duensing Farm, rural Byron (Trey Duensing)
10:30 AM  Class Time with Dr. Menn
11:30 AM  Brother James Departs  
12 noon  Lunch at Las Canteras in Superior  
1:00 PM  Jeff Miller Departs  
2:00 PM  Nebraska Movie Part 1  
4:00 PM  Colleague Conversation: Rev. Jim Fruehling (MOSIAC)  
6:00 PM  Supper hosted by Sipes Family  
7:30 PM  Nebraska Movie Part 2  
              Final Wrap-Up Conversation  

**Sunday, May 27**  
*breakfast with host families, pack (not returning after church)*  
9:15 AM  Coffee Fellowship at St. Paul, Byron (meet and greet with Tri-Saints members)  
10:30 AM  Tri-Saints Worship at St. Paul, Byron  
11:45 AM  Depart for Omaha/Chicago