

General Criteria for Interpreting/Confessing Area of Curriculum

Luther Seminary

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1. This division of the curriculum seeks to be a bridge between the basic subject matter of theology and the mission of the church. The concern, therefore is for the normative content of the Christian message, its interpretation and presentation in the life of the church. Courses will focus explicitly on the activity of confessing, both to clarify what sort of activity it entails and to assess its claims to truth, fidelity, and efficacy. For a confessional church, committed to an understanding of truth that is both public and unprotected by institutional guarantees, such a critical assessment is necessary. This assessment will seek to define and hold in relationship the fundamental poles of "Tradition," "Context," and "Experience" and to give specific focus and attention to the confession of the faith in today's world.
2. In the area of "Tradition," specific attention is to be given to the Scriptures, the Ecumenical Creeds, and the Confessional writings of the Church, including their authority and truth claims in the shaping and teaching of the faith. Thus what is historically normative and decisive for the church's life and practice should provide the basic content for the courses of the division.
3. In the area of "Context," attention is focused on the interrelation of the worshipping community with the neighborhood/world in which it lives. The aim is to foster awareness of the way theological perspectives shape and are shaped by the context and its understanding in the delineation of the church's mission in a particular time and place, as well as to relate that particularity to larger geographical areas (State, nation, world) and broader social and political constructs (economic structures, political realities, etc.).
4. In the area of "Experience," critical attention will focus on the place of personal and communal in theology and practice as well as on the way experience and confessing the faith are mutually related.
5. This division seeks constantly to ask who our students are and to assist them in questions of faith and commitment as well as to prepare them to minister effectively in their world with a critical sense of their context and with a confessional confidence that will enable them faithfully to integrate Tradition, Context, and Experience.
6. This division will constantly inquire about the distinctive perspectives from the Lutheran tradition for critical and creative discernment and application in each of these areas.
7. In sum, this division will seek to foster reflection on what it means to be a pastor in the light of the issues evolved in the attempt to interrelate Tradition, Context, and Experience. By careful attention to the normative instances of the faith it seeks to enhance confessional confidence. By critical attention to tradition, context, and experience, it seeks to enhance openness to and awareness of the world in which the church must minister. The aim is to foster confidence without succumbing to authoritarianism and openness without succumbing to empty tolerance.