

Instructor: Rev. Mary Nichol
Director of Theological Field Education
Vancouver School of Theology
Email: mnichol@vst.edu Phone/Text: 778-980-1374
You can book an appointment via [Calendly](#) for onsite (Room 418) or zoom

PUBLIC AND PASTORAL LEADERSHIP: THE STUDIO PT651

The Studio

Fall 2026

Course Outline

A Syllabus will be posted in Populi

PURPOSE: PT 652 follows this course in Spring Term 2027 and is its required completion.

Together these two courses, and the required field work of 200 hours, fulfill two units of Theological Field Education (*TFE-P: Leadership in Practice*).

Theologically trained professionals serving congregational or social ministries, agencies, organizations and other institutions are continually presented with a changing context and the need for their organizations to respond. A key critical leadership challenge is to identify opportunities which are truly strategic and then to assist the organization to embrace the occasion.

The Studio for Public and Pastoral Leadership (*The Studio-PT651/PT652*) is designed to be a crucible into which we bring ourselves – our gifts, hopes, vulnerabilities, strengths, weaknesses, uncertainties, experience – so that we may become transformed, effective leaders. It is a different kind of classroom. We will consider this question, among others: ‘How can we act from the future that is seeking to emerge?’ (Scharmer) as we also seek to engage the *missio Dei* (“the good news that God is a God-for-people”, Bosch).

Here there will be an opportunity for those preparing for pastoral and public leadership to combine instruction in leadership theory and theology with on-the-ground experience of discerning and developing leadership challenges and ministry opportunities. Alongside *The Studio*, students will be in a ministry/leadership site, with a mentor/supervisor, where they will engage in a collaborative, creative, experiential and educational environment. A broad range of partners in church and society may become involved in the project, thus presenting learning opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. In all cases, we will understand the leadership opportunity to be one of serving the community in a specific context. The Studio mentors and instructors will assist the students to research, prepare, exercise, and evaluate their leadership in the context in which they are situated. In conversation with The Studio Instructor (in the prerequisite course PT 505 – Leading in Context), students will have selected their learning sites and mentors based on the criteria related to the promise of the best learning opportunity for their leadership.

Students in *The Studio* will:

- Be introduced to key concepts in pastoral and public leadership and mentored in the practices of leadership.
- Practice peer learning, support, and accountability.
- Reflect critically and constructively on all aspects of The Studio team’s work: interpersonal relationships, analysis, planning, consulting, delivery, and evaluation of effectiveness of leadership offered.
- Reflect theologically on the exercise of leadership in context.

PREREQUISITES: Students are required to have completed foundational courses in Practical Theology (PT500, PT505 and PT551[MDiv Only].) A successfully completed project proposal emerging from work in PT505, completes the work of TFE - *Exploration*, which is also a prerequisite for PT651 - *The Studio* and TFE – *Leadership in Practice*. Students cannot proceed to *The Studio* without a Field Education project proposal, approved by the Director of Theological Field Education. Students are advised not to register in *The Studio* while also registered in CPE or other field-based work. PT 551 can be taken concurrently to *The Studio*.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

1. Knowledge and practice in:

- *Fundamental leadership skills* such as listening, storytelling, communication, providing feedback and the assessment of context and people.
- *Essential leadership functions* including the development, participation in and leadership of a team, the ability to work collaboratively, to problem-solve, to plan, implement and evaluate progress toward a goal or project to exercise conflict-management effectively, to develop and deliver effective presentations, to make tough choices and to assess the relationship of one’s own gifts and calling to a particular project.

2. The *critical self-knowledge*, emotional and spiritual maturity necessary for effective leadership, including reflection upon one’s expression of key character attributes such as authenticity, integrity, courage, humility, and service.

3. The ability to appropriately *reflect on and communicate theological insights* and wisdom across sectors in collaborative pastoral and public settings. Ability to ‘read’ and ‘participate’ in the story of God.

4. The ability to conduct *contextual/critical analysis* to inform/guide exercise of adaptive leadership including executing of goals and direction arising from peer discussion on leadership situations, critical incidents and/or leadership situation reports.

5. The ability to articulate and follow *an ethical and theological framework* for decision-making and action.

FORMAT AND CONTENT:

The course is built on two interconnected arenas for learning:

1. **Field Site – TFE-P: Leadership in Practice:** Students will be engaged in a leadership practicum for 8-12 hours per week of the term (excluding Reading Week). The practicum will be in a site with a mentor, both of which will have been approved by the Director of Theological Field Education.
2. **The Studio:** Students meet in a class we describe as *The Studio* for presentations and discussions with faculty and peers.

The Studio is a 3.0 credit seminar course, and we will meet six times over the semester. It is synchronous, hybrid, and there is no asynchronous participation. There is a mandatory 3 day onsite (Thurs, Fri, Sat) intensive.

TEXTS:

*Specific readings, including other shorter readings, will be made available on Populi. **Studio texts have not been pre-ordered at the UBC Bookstore, although some may be available there. Students are advised to purchase online, from former students or access library reserve.***

If you intend to purchase your books online, please allow at least four weeks for delivery, and five weeks for the UK. Copyright law prohibits copying more than 20% of a book, no matter when the book is shipped or arrives.

Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead: Brave Work, Tough Conversations*. Whole Hearts Random House, 2018.

Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading*. Harvard Business Review Press, 2017 (2002).

Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Susan M. Shaw, *Intersectional Theology: An Introductory Guide*. Fortress Press, 2018.

Margaret Wheatley, *Restoring Sanity: Practices to Awaken Generosity, Creativity & Kindness*. Berrett Koehler Publishers Inc., 2024.

Esi Edugyan, *Out of the Sun: On Race and Storytelling*. House of Anansi Press, 2021.

Gareth Higgins, *How Not To Be Afraid: Seven Ways to Live When Everything Seems Terrifying*. Broadleaf Books, 2021.

Reference Texts:

Arthur Boers, *Servants and Fools: A Biblical Theology of Leadership*. Abingdon Press, 2015.

Ronald A. Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, Belknap, 1994.

John Kotter, *Leading Change*. Harvard Business Review Press. 2012 (1996).

Sharon Daloz Parks, *Leadership Can Be Taught*. Harvard Business School Press, 2005.

C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*. Berrett-Koehler, 2009.

COURSE POLICIES

1. **Attendance** For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For an intensive course, VST requires 100% attendance.
(If course is run both on campus and as distance, it's helpful to specify further for each status; for example: "For **on-campus students**, this means attending class on time with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason. For **distance students**, this means attending class through Zoom synchronously with class with no more than 2 allowable absences for any reason.")
2. **Reading and assignments** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **Inclusive language** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
5. **Assignment and Course Evaluation**
 - Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is "Not Approved") including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.
 - Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.
 - For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.
6. **Late assignments**
Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional, and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the

dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

7. Limitation on use of social media

Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.

8. Limitation on use of class material and images

No material from Zoom classes, including screen capture pictures of their fellow students, professors, and CTAs cannot be posted to Facebook or any other social media without the express consent of the affected individuals.

9. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

CALENDAR

COURSE DATES FOR FALL 2026:

This course will be on Monday 2pm – 5pm (PT) meeting six times over the semester plus an onsite 3 day intensive.

- September 14 & 28, October 19, November 5-7 for onsite intensive, November 16 & 30, and December 7.
 - **Onsite Intensive Hours:**
 - Thursday 6pm – 9pm
 - Friday 10am – 5pm
 - Saturday 9am – 2pm

PT652 follows this course in Spring 2027 and, together with PT651, these two courses and concurrent field work fulfill two units of Theological Field Education (TFE-P: *Leadership in Practice*).

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

The Studio is a 3.0 credit seminar course, and we will meet six times (plus an onsite intensive) over the semester. It is synchronous and hybrid. ***There is no asynchronous participation***

1. In addition to spending 8 – 12 hours in your leadership practicum each week, you are expected to be physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually present for *The Studio* session and with other participants. Students are required to participate in *The Studio* onsite or through synchronous distance – there is no asynchronous participation in the course.

2. Attend 80% of the Studio sessions and give advance notice of and reason for absence.
3. Students will be expected to work in small groups often during this seminar course. In these groups, students will reflect with each other on leadership situations and provide feedback. Please be prepared to be in conversation in small groups and with the whole group.
4. There will be a mix of oral and written presentations/assignments:
 - a) Learning Goals and Learning Covenant Form: signed and submitted to appropriate assignment in Populi:
 1. TFE-P1: Field Education: Leadership in Practice – Term 1.
Due: Friday, September 25
 - b) Students will present orally during the *Studio Onsite Intensive*, on an aspect of a **Leadership Situation** in which they are involved. This assignment includes a one-page summary (250-350 words) of the situation as per the format outlined. More details will be discussed in class.
 - c) During the course, students will write **Responses to four** of the assigned book readings (200-350 words each). These are not ‘book reviews’ but rather your response to the reading – did you like it or not (and why); agree with some of it, not much of it (and why). Did it make you think of elements of your leadership, theological, or other understanding.

The student decides on the 3 Book Responses to write and must be submitted by the relevant deadline. You are also required to read one of either *Out of the Sun: On Race and Storytelling* or *How Not to Be Afraid: Seven Ways to Live When Everything Seems Terrifying*. See due dates in syllabus.

You are required to post in two places in Populi:

1. Populi Discussions – a thread will be created for each book; you are encouraged to interact with each other in the discussion thread.
 2. Populi Assignments – There will be assignments labelled ‘Reading Responses’ #1-4.
- d) Throughout the weeks of the term in *The Studio*, write a personal journal capturing the important elements of your learning as the weeks go by (capturing reflections from both *The Studio* and your field placement). This journal, **which does not need to be submitted**, will be a contributing text to the **End of Term Paper**.

e) **End of Term Paper: Leadership at the Intersection**

Students will write an integrative, reflective, and fully referenced paper (citing required readings and other readings as appropriate) of 2,000-2,500 words (8-10 pages), excluding bibliography, considering “Leadership at the Intersection.

Leadership at the Intersection considers four areas of your theological field education experience:

- *Story of Self*
- *Story of Place* – the ministry/leadership site platform
- *Story of Context* – the society in which this leadership/ministry occurs
- *Story of God* – *missio Dei*

Due: Friday, December 11

5. **TFE-P1 Mid-year Evaluation:** Due Friday, December 11, upload to ‘TFE: P1: Field Education: Leadership in Practice – Term 1’ assignment folder in Populi Course.