

LANCASTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Doctor of Ministry Program
DSEM1 (H) Listening as an Act of Love
Professor: Rev. Dr. Marty Kuchma

OPENING COURSE CONFERENCE CALL

We will begin our journey together with a **two-hour conference call** from noon until 2:00pm (ET) on Monday, October 1.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Over a decade ago, Dean David Mellott conceived of this Seminar and became the first professor to lead it. His introduction from back then remains relevant still and is offered here:

“Is there anything we – theologians and pastoral ministers – can learn by asking our Christian companions about their everyday lives, about what they consider to be their spiritual practices, and about the ways in which they understand and interpret those practices in their own contexts? Yes, there is much of considerable importance we can learn from studying the lived experience of practicing Christians. In fact, this course proposes that asking our Christian companions about what they consider to be their spiritual practices and about the ways in which they understand and interpret those practices in their context is a *theological act*.

When we theologians and pastoral ministers enter into conversation with people of faith and share the details of our daily lives and the ways in which we have experienced God, something more than knowledge retrieval is happening. This is most striking when the people we are inviting into conversation have been asked to keep silent about the very ways they have experienced the grace of God. By inviting others into conversation, we are creating a space together, a space charged with, in Robert Orsi’s words, “...an attitude of disciplined openness and attentiveness...” Here, the theologian and pastoral minister sets aside the hierarchical constructs that so often govern the relationships between pastor and parishioner, clergy and layperson, trained theologian and casual spiritual seeker. The point of the conversation is not to evaluate the extent to which the practitioners are doing what they should be doing or the extent to which they have become the people they are supposed to become. The point is to create a context where the reality of their lives and ours can emerge, without the threat of condemnation or obliteration. When this happens, lives and relationships are transformed. This is a theological act.”

FIRST TWO BOOKS IN ORDER OF ASSIGNMENT

Isay, *Listening Is An Act of Love*
Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*,