



LE 701 Strategic Thinking, Learning, and Planning Spring 2026

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Course Dates: April 27–May 1, 2026
Course Delivery Method: Online

3 Credit Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an examination of the perspectives and processes necessary to establish and sustain momentum in an organization, utilizing best practices in doing strategic personal and organizational thinking, learning, planning and leading. The course will include strategic assessment, shaping, alignment, and delivery of a missional vision and strategy that is designed with a keen sense of need and with careful consideration of both the internal and external environments.

COURSE INTEGRATION

This course is designed to help students obtain new vision, perspectives, tools and commitments to ensure strategic and theologically infused ministry in their generation as follows:

- Have recommitted themselves to the service of Christ and His Church with an enhanced mission, strategy and meaning.
- Have refocused their priorities for the development of strategic steps toward increased intimacy and integrity in personal relationships with Christ and others enhancing their values, habits, style and impacts in the future.
- Have reviewed the biblical and theological foundations for strategic thinking, planning and action.
- Have observed, experienced, tested and applied new perspectives, strategies and skills most useful in strategic thinking and planning.

COURSE TEXTS

Batterman, Nancy. *The Nonprofit Manifesto: A Strategic Roadmap to the Business of Nonprofits*. Windermere Press, 2025.

Liebert, Elizabeth. *The Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015.

Mann, Rick. *Building Strategic Organizations: The First Five Tools of Strategy and Strategic Planning*. Nashville: ClarionStrategy LLC., 2019.

Moran, Brian P. and Michael Lennington. *The 12 Week Year: Get More Done in 12 Weeks Than Others Do in 12 Months*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2013.

Students are expected to refer to Briercrest Seminary's Format and Style Guides and Guide for Writing Research Papers, available as PDF documents here: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/documents>.

These texts are available in store and online at the Briercrest Bookstore: <https://www.briercrestseminary.ca/seminary-life/bookstore>.

Students are responsible for course materials and communication on Canvas (<https://briercrest.instructure.com>) and their myBriercrest.ca email account.

COURSE ARTICLES

In addition to reading the required course texts, you are required to read the following short articles.

Bridges, William. Getting Them Through the Wilderness: A Leader's Guide to Transition, <https://wmbridges.com/resources/transition-management-articles/getting-them-through-wilderness/>

Marks, Dave. The High Cost of Conflict, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/571fc0ea1d07c0fd6d72c167/t/639a1c09bbe09801c00b1055/1671044106932/the-high-cost-of-conflict.pdf>

Pietersen, William G. Strategic Learning: A Leadership Process for Creating and Implementing Breakthrough Strategies, https://eadn-wc02-8382956.nxedge.io/wp-content/uploads/pdf/Strategic_Learning.pdf

SEMINARY-WIDE OUTCOMES

Students will graduate:

1. Describing and demonstrating evangelical faith and values.
2. Preparing to serve God's kingdom in its diversity. Describe God, God's kingdom, and your calling (vocational sensitivity) within it, including the types of contexts and people you feel best prepared to serve.
3. Participating in the action of our Triune God through formation of the soul (i.e., virtue and spiritual integrity), mind (academic rigour), and strength (vocation).

COURSE OUTCOMES

A. COGNITIVE

- Students will be exposed to and appreciate the theological foundations of the strategic thinking process in Christian ministry.
- Students will become aware of useful models and processes for doing strategic planning.
- Students will understand and acquire the central skills of strategic planning.
- Students will understand the implications of each step in a strategic planning process.
- Students will become aware of and practice the strategies essential to overcoming barriers to executing a strategic plan.
- Students will acknowledge the importance of iteration, evaluation, and continuous involvement in strategic planning.

B. AFFECTIVE

- Students will come to appreciate the advantages of approaching personal and organizational life strategically.
- Students will grow in appreciation of strategic planning processes.
- Students will feel increased comfort in leading a strategic planning process.
- Students will delight in their personal growth in strategic planning competencies.
- Students will feel increased comfort in doing strategic thinking, learning and planning.
- Students will gain confidence as they observe God's activity in supporting and guiding the strategic planning process.

C. SKILL

- Students will develop initial competency in personal strategic planning.
- Students will practice the skills of leading groups in a strategic planning process.
- Students will advance the skills of moving institutions toward alignment and through a strategic planning process.
- Students will advance in the skills of executing and evaluating the strategic plan.
- Students will gain experience in listening prayer and discernment as part of strategic processes.

COURSE OUTLINE AND CONTENT**Notes:**

- We will meet via Zoom for this class.
- All times are in Central Standard Time (CST), GMT-6.
- This is a tentative schedule that will be adjusted according to student needs and interests.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00	Welcome Overview Introductions	Scripture Reflection Prayer	Scripture Reflection Prayer	Scripture Reflection Prayer	Scripture Reflection Prayer
10:15	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:30	Introduction to Strategic Thinking, Learning and Planning	Five Strategic Foundations The Planning Process	Leadership and Facilitation Skills	Strategic Disciplines	Review, wrap- up and closing thoughts
12:00	Break	Break	Break	Break	Adjourn
1:00	Biblical and Theological Foundations	Personal Strategic Planning	Systems and Culture	Strategic Disciplines	
2:15	Break	Break	Break	Break	
2:30	Prayer, Listening & Discernment	Personal Strategic Planning	Social Discernment Cycle	Strategic Disciplines	
3:45	Sharing & Next Steps	Sharing & Next Steps	Sharing & Next Steps	Sharing & Next Steps	
4:00	Adjourn	Adjourn	Adjourn	Adjourn	

ASSIGNMENTS

Please submit all written assignments to Canvas.

Pre-Course Assignments:

1. Integrative Reading Report

Students will read the three Course Articles and write an integrated reading report that has a summative introduction and conclusion. For each article, they will summarize key concepts, memorable insights, integration and application, as well as some insights on how the resources interact with each other. In the conclusion, students will summarize their top three key insights gained and describe potential next steps that are specific to their unique practice of strategic thinking, planning and learning.

Course value: 20%

Length: 5-7 pages (1250-1750 words)

Basis of grade: Demonstrated understanding, selection of memorable insights, thoughtful adoption or adaptation to live forward, and reflection on the values of each and the collective set of resources.

Due date: April 20, 2026

2. Contextual Analysis/Evaluation

If students are currently leading, working, or serving within an organization, they are to outline that organization's mission, vision, and values, and conduct a SWOT-C Analysis of that organization. In the case that students are not working or serving in an active role, they will choose an organization, department, or church for this assignment and interview 2-3 key leaders to gather the information and conduct the analysis. Students can reference the Course Text *Building Strategic Organizations* for direction, and use the following SWOT-C Analysis framework for this contextual evaluation:

S – Strengths

- What are you doing well?
- What sets you apart?
- What are your good qualities?

W – Weaknesses

- Where do you need to improve?
- Are resources adequate?
- What do others do better than you?

O – Opportunities

- What are your goals?
- Are demands shifting?
- How can it be improved?

T – Threats

- What are the blockers you're facing?

- What are the factors outside of your control?

C – Constraints

- What are your personal and organizational constraints that place limits on your ability or desire to grow your strengths and opportunities and mitigate your weaknesses and threats?
- Are any of your opportunities inconsistent with your personal or organizational values and goals?

Students will then write a reflection report that summarizes what they discovered about this specific organization, including mission, vision, values, and evaluation from the SWOT-C Analysis. In their conclusion, students will briefly summarize three recommended goals/outcomes for this organization to consider in a strategic planning process, and why they have identified these as most important.

Course value: 15%

Length: 3-5 pages (750-1250 words)

Basis of grade: Suitability of organizational choice, breadth and depth of discovery within the organization, and depth of strategic thinking with relevant recommendations.

Due date: April 20, 2026

Mid-Course Assignments:

3. In-Class Participation

Throughout this online modular intensive, students will be evaluated on their attendance, engagement with class discussions and learning activities, and supportive interaction with classmates.

Course value: 15%

Basis of grade: Punctuality, engagement in class discussions and group work.

Post-Course Assignments:

4. Personal Strategic Plan

Students will choose a tool offered in the course reading or class work to develop a personal life plan. This plan should serve to guide living for the next 3-5 years and should be “total life” in its orientation. The assignment should include personal mission, vision and values statements, rhythms and practices, desired outcomes, practical action steps, target dates, and iterative evaluation. This assignment may be single-spaced and in bullet form. It may also include graphics, charts and diagrams.

Course value: 20%

Length: 2-4 pages (1000-1250 words)

Basis of grade: Relevance of adoption or adaptation of class-discussed process to personal life, engagement and awareness of stakeholders, balanced holistic approach, depth of awareness and insight regarding personal needs and drives.

Due date: May 29, 2026

5. Organizational Strategic Plan

Students will prepare a strategic planning process proposal for a ministry or non-profit organization (the organization that was examined in the pre-course assignment is preferred but not required). This 'plan to plan' should address all the relevant stages of strategic planning or emergence and explicitly choose, adapt, and integrate models from coursework and class discussion. The process should respond to organizational and leadership realities and lay out a reasonable, practical process for engaging relevant stakeholders as they move into the future.

Course value: 30%

Length: 8-10 pages (2000-2500 words)

Basis of grade: Clarity of outline and flow of thought, understanding and integration of course material, relevance of approach to proposed organization, clear introduction and conclusion.

Due date: June 26, 2026

SEMINARY CALENDAR

Students are expected to be aware of the policies that govern course work at Briercrest Seminary, all of which are published in the current [Seminary Calendar](#).

Attendance Policy

In order to benefit fully from a seminary education, to be good stewards of time and finances, and to be considerate of their classmates and faculty members, students must be in class at every opportunity.

Modular Courses

Students are expected to attend 100 per cent of each modular for which they register. If this is impossible due to extenuating circumstances, arrangements must be made with the course professor before the first day of class. If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending class, a maximum of one (1) full day of class can be foregone. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Online Courses

If extenuating circumstances prevent a student from attending scheduled meeting times, then up to 20% of meeting time can be foregone. Students missing scheduled meeting times should make every effort to inform the course professor prior to any time missed. If additional time is missed, the student will fail the course unless they first request to withdraw from the course or move the course to an audit.

Semester-Based Courses

All students missing more than two full weeks of a particular course from registration to the last day of classes will receive an automatic fail (0%). A student may appeal a course failure due to excessive absences. Successful appeals will be granted only in rare cases where all absences are clearly beyond the student's control. Appeals must be made through the Academic Appeal Process.

Modular Course Schedules

Modular classes begin at 9:00 a.m. on Monday morning and run a minimum of 30 hours through the course of the week. The schedule is determined by the course professor. Students should check the syllabus for specifics. When the syllabus does not state class times, students are responsible to check with the professor prior to making travel plans.

Assignment Submission

All assignments must be submitted no later than eight weeks after the last day of class as stated in the syllabus. The correct due dates will be clearly noted in the syllabus and each faculty member will state in their syllabus how assignments should be submitted. Assignments submitted within a week after the due date will be accepted with a 10 per cent penalty. For additional information refer to the late assignment policy or the extension policy in the [academic calendar](#).

Return of Graded Assignments

Professors are expected to return graded assignments within six weeks of the due date. If they fail to do so, students may submit an inquiry to the [Seminary](#). If an extension is granted, the professor is no longer obligated to meet this deadline.

Academic Honesty

As members of the Briercrest learning community, students have a responsibility to conduct themselves with integrity and honour. Students who cheat on exams, plagiarize, inappropriately collaborate, or use generative AI without instructor authorization violate the trust placed in them by their instructors, fellow students, and the seminary. Any such actions constitute a breach of academic honesty and will result in serious consequences, such as failure of an assignment, failure of a course, or expulsion from the seminary.

Plagiarism, whether intentional or involuntary, is the submission of the work of others, published or unpublished, in whole or in part without acknowledgment or proper documentation. All information, ideas and/or direct quotations taken from other primary or secondary sources must be documented appropriately.

Generative AI is an umbrella term for a type of machine learning and a group of algorithms that can create new content, such as text, code, images, videos, music, or a combination of all these formats. Generative AI produces output in response to a query or prompt using generative models such as Large Language Models (LLMs) that rely on large datasets. Generative AI features are also often embedded within tools such as Grammarly, allowing these tools to generate new content, such as the rewriting, paraphrasing, or summarizing of existing text. The generated responses of these tools are probabilistic, which can result in errors and biases in responses.

The use of generative AI to create audio or visual media, to produce outlines, to generate partial or complete drafts of assignments, to answer questions on quizzes or exams, or to edit the grammar of assignment drafts is considered unauthorized unless it is explicitly permitted by the course instructor in writing. All use of generative AI tools must be properly documented.

Students are responsible for ensuring they are using their sources and completing their assignments with transparency and honesty. For more details, consult the [Seminary Calendar](#) and

the Briercrest Format Guide. In addition to being familiar with these pages, instructors assume that you have completed the Briercrest Academic Integrity course on [Canvas](#) and understand the information contained in it.

Academic Accommodations

Any student with a disability, injury, or health condition (mental or physical) who may need academic accommodations (permanent or temporary) should contact the ARC Coordinator in person (L234 in the Library), by phone (1-306-801-6159), or by email (arc@briercrest.ca). Documentation from a qualified practitioner will be required (i.e., medical doctor, psychologist, etc.). It is recommended that students meet with their professors to discuss the requirements of their accommodations (i.e., how the student will receive lecture notes, or how the professor wants to receive extension requests).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barton, Ruth. *Pursuing God's Will Together: A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups*. Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

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- Saffold, Guy s. *Strategic Planning for Christian Organizations: Finding God's Direction for Your Ministry*. Langley: Independently published, 2020.
- Skoog, Ryan, Peter Greer and Cameron Doolittle. *Lead with Prayer: The Spiritual Habits of World-Changing Leaders*. New York: FaithWords Hachette Book Group, 2024.
- Watkins, Jane Magruder and Bernard J. Mohr. *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer, 2001.