

Methodist Theological School in Ohio Course Syllabus
ED145 The Church's Educational Ministry
Spring Semester 2007-08, Mondays 2:00-4:50 p.m., Gault 140
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I. Catalog Description

This course is designed to explore theory and practice integral to the church's educational ministry. Attention will be directed to such things as the historical and theological sources, context for teaching and learning in the church, the ways persons develop faith responses, and the resources and approaches that facilitate both teaching and learning. Students develop their self-understanding as educators and their own philosophy of church education.

II. Course Objectives

As a result of successfully completing this course students should be able to:

- A. Articulate an informed and critically reflective understanding of the educational dimensions of transforming ministry. Objective is assessed through the "Formative Figure in Religious Education" and the first section of the "Design for a Learning/Transforming Season" assignments.
- B. Understand and theologically reflect on congregational/community ecologies of formation and transformation, i.e. engage in practical theology. Objective is assessed through the "Study of Formation and Transformation in a Ministry Setting" assignment.
- C. Plan transforming ministries within congregational/community ecologies. Objective is assessed through "Design for a Learning/Transforming Season" assignment.
- D. Understand basic learning/transforming dynamics and utilize these in designing events. Objective is assessed through "Design of a Learning/Transforming Event" assignment.

III. Textbooks

Required

- Bruce, Barbara. *Our Spiritual Brain: Integrating Brain Research and Faith Development*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2002.
- Foster, Charles R. and Ted Brelsford. *We are the Church Together: Cultural Diversity in Congregational Life*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996. [reprint available in bookstore]
- Seymour, Jack. Ed. *Mapping Christian Education: Approaches to Congregational Learning*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997.
- Wimberly, Anne Streaty. *Nurturing Faith and Hope: Black Worship as a Model for Christian Education*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004.

IV. Course Requirements and Assessment

This course requires active participation, independent study, and learning from peers. Assessment of the learners' attainment of the goals of this class will be evaluated through their competency in various projects.

- A. **Participation (10%)** Preparation for, and active participation in, class is expected. Evidence of reading textbooks and other preparation for class is part of participation. Assessment will be based upon contributions to the overall learning community, contributions to one's small group, self-assessment of classroom contributions, and attendance.
 - 1. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE OVERALL LEARNING COMMUNITY: Education is more than individual growth—it is done in the midst of others and has a public dimension. Contributions to the learning community is as much about "hearing each other into speech" as about how verbal one is in class. Contributions include such things as coming with personal and critical reflections on reading and class dynamics, offering additional information and resources from additional research or experience, suggesting points of integration

across disciplines and contexts, challenging and supporting the learning of others. Reading the assignments is necessary to contribute to communal learning and it is part of each student's taking responsibility for their own learning. Each learner will share with the class at least one critique of an ED145 classroom session.

2. **CONTRIBUTIONS TO ONE'S SMALL GROUP:** Each student is responsible for constructive reactions to the work of other students in their group. Student work will be accessible through the class website. Reactions will be done via e-mail, course website, and small group discussion in class. Assessment will be through peer evaluation. The purposes of this expectation are to (1) experience the public nature of educational leadership, (2) receive constructive feedback on assignments, (3) develop learning community, and (4) develop skills for using the internet for collaboration.
3. **SELF-ASSESSMENTS:** Forms will be provided each student to give input on his or her classroom contributions and growth. Criteria will include sense of personal and professional growth, percent of assigned reading completed, level of preparation for class, and classroom contributions.

B. **Defining Religious Education Contribution (10 %)**. The purpose of this assignment is to develop awareness of models of religious learning and transformation that can inform the student's approach to learning and transformation. Each student will contribute to a wiki page on the course website:

1. A definition of religious education, or a description of the purpose and processes of religious education, from an author in the field of religious education. A list of such figures will be provided.
2. A description of the main theological assumptions in the above definition.
3. The social location of the author.

The completed wiki page will be the assigned reading for the February 18 class session. These contributions will serve to inform the student's personal approach to educational dimensions of transforming ministry. **Due February 11.**

C. **Study of Formation and Transformation in a Ministry Setting (30%)** The purposes of this assignment are to (1) provide a starting point for raising basic questions about educational aspects of ministry, (2) create awareness of formative ecologies in a ministry context, (3) develop practical theology skills, and (4) reflect on leadership of transforming ministries. The assignment will involve observations and interviews within a ministry setting seeking to describe the formative ecology and culture of the setting. Observations of worship and learning events are required and observation of one other event (education/discipleship committee meeting, social function, small group meeting other than church school, or service project) is recommended but optional. Interviews of the person primarily responsible for formation/discipleship/education and a teacher are required and the interview of a pastor or lay leader is recommended but optional. Reviews of the physical grounds of the congregation, newsletters, websites, bulletin boards etc. are required. Specific observation and interview questions are provided in the assignment guidelines found on the course website. Students will submit a six-page single spaced description of the culture and theologies of the congregation or community, primary ways formation and transformation take place, and what kind of faith is formed. The paper should let the voice and feel of the setting come through. **Due March 3.**

D. **Design for a Learning/Transforming Season (30%)** The purpose of this assignment is to develop skills for working with the overall formative ecology of a ministry context. Students will develop a three-month (one quarter) learning/transforming plan that is appropriate for the context engaged in the "Study of Formation and Transformation in a Ministry Setting" assignment. The plan should creatively make use of regular activities/classes, special events/classes, worship, publications, etc. to take advantage of the season to nurture the faith of individuals and the congregation/organization as a community. The design will have the following sections:

1. Student's approach to learning and transformation. This will include the student's overall approach, understanding of purpose, and use of processes/methodology in transforming ministry. The statement of approach is to reflect the student's own philosophy but it must be a public, critically reflective statement and be informed by required readings and formative figures reports. It should make use of at least two religious education sources. Explicit connections to key theological concepts that impact one's approach must be included.
2. Needs and goals for learning, growth and transformation in the context.
3. Opportunities that the season offers for addressing the needs of the context.
4. Outline of the plan for the season.

See course website for guidelines. **Due March 31.**

- E. **Design of a Learning/Transforming Event (20%).** The purposes of this assignment are to (1) gain experience in planning a learning/transforming event and (2) gain experience in leading such an event. Each student will develop a plan with a 30 minute and a 60 minute format. The student will lead the 30 minute plan in class followed by a debriefing and critique of the session by the class. Specific guidelines will be presented in class. **Students will sign up for a class or an arranged time to lead. A draft of the event plan should be posted by April 14 for comment from the student's small group. The final event plan is due on the day the student leads the session.**

All written work should be done with the awareness that it will be publicly accessible via the course web page. Written work is expected to be **uploaded to the course website**, typewritten, fully proofread (spelling, correct vocabulary, and grammar), use inclusive language, and have masters level content. Form and style should conform to either Chicago (Turabian) or APA standards. Work with substandard grammar and spelling will not receive any credit. Work using sources that are not fully and properly referenced will not receive credit.

A "Outstanding Work:" Key adjectives include creative, integrative, initiative, and thorough. General description– Work is clear, engaging, original and focused. The learner integrates theoretical and theological concepts, critical analysis, experience, and practical applications. The learner considers various perspectives, shows open and mature responses to criticism of work, and takes initiative for contributing to the learning of others. Written work– Ideas and content are richly developed with details and examples. Organization and form enhance the central idea and theme; ideas are presented coherently to move the reader through the text. The voice of the writer is compelling and conveys the learner's meaning through effective grammar. Oral Communication– Leadership of classroom sessions involve appropriate use of a variety of methods, clear organization and flow, significant content, and evocative engagement with class members.

B "Good Work:" Key adjectives include clear, substantial, responsible, and ample. General description– Work is reasonably clear, focused, and supported. The learner's integration of theory, critical analysis, experience, and practical application is underdeveloped in the area of critical analysis. The learner recognizes various perspectives, accepts criticism of work, and contributes to the learning of others when required. Written work– Ideas are adequately developed with details and examples. Organization and form are appropriate, and ideas are generally presented in a coherent manner. The voice of the writer contributes to the writer's meaning through appropriate grammar. The form of presentation does not interfere with understanding or distract from meaning. Oral Communication– Leadership of classroom sessions involve appropriate use of limited methods, functional organization and flow, solid content, and interaction with class members.

C "Work Meets Minimum Standards:" Key adjectives include vague, general, withdrawn, and uneven. General description– Work has some focus and support; theoretical information is limited and large generalizations are made. The learner does not attempt integration and critical analysis is absent with over dependence on opinion.

The learner does not consider various perspectives, struggles with criticism of work, and is only concerned with one's own learning. Written work– Ideas and content are developed with limited details and examples. The work may be somewhat disorganized. The voice of the learner is generally absent; basic sentence structure and limited vocabulary convey a simple message. Presentation errors may reduce understanding and interfere with meaning. Oral Communication– Leadership of classroom sessions involve adequate but limited methods, awkward or distracting organization and flow, marginal content, and little interaction with class members.

D "Substandard but Passing Work:" Key adjectives include unfocused, subjective, isolated, and fragmented. General description– Work has little focus and development. The learner fails to use critical analysis and often engages in sharing a rambling of experiences without theoretical context. The learner is resistant to various perspectives, defensive about criticism of work, and works in isolation of others. Written work– ideas and content are supported by few details or examples. The work lacks direction and purpose. The tone of the work is flat. Awkward grammar and vocabulary interfere with understanding. The form of presentation makes the work difficult to understand. Oral Communication– Leadership of classroom sessions involve inappropriate methods, dysfunctional organization and flow, inferior content, and no interaction with class members.

V. Course Schedule

- (1) Jan 28 Introductions and review of syllabus and necessary skills
 Group building and initial assumptions
 Relationship between theory, practice and context—practical theology, terminology
 Formative ecologies-initiate contextual studies
 Approaches to religious learning
- (2) Feb 4 Local cultures and formative ecologies
Assignment: E-Reading Ammerman et al., "Culture and Identity in the Congregation;"
 Harris, "Church: A People with an Educational Vocation"

Models of Formation and Transformation

- (3) Feb 11 Educational dimensions of formation and transformation models
 Significance of theological assumptions for educational dimensions of ministry: revelation, human nature, faith and belief, the Church, conversion, maturity and culture
Assignment: Read Seymour chapters 2-6; Review educational glossary on website in "Resources...Practical Theology"
Defining Religious Education Contribution DUE on wiki page
- (4) Feb 18 Approaches to religious learning
Assignment: Read Defining Religious Education Contributions on course wiki page

Forming and Transforming Contexts

- (5) Feb 25 Formative ecologies in three congregations
Assignment: Read Foster and Brelsford, chapters 2-4
- (6) Mar 3 Planning, formation and transformation in congregations
Assignment: Read Foster and Brelsford, chapters 5 and 6
Study of Formation and Transformation in a Ministry Setting Due
- (7) Mar 10 Worship in the formative ecology
Assignment: Read Wimberly, chapters 1-11
- Mar 17 **Holy Week Recess**

Personal Dimensions of Formation and Transformation

- (8) Mar 24 Designing learning and transforming events
 Small group discussion of ministry setting study and options for season design
 Sign up for leading an event lab
Assignment: E-Reading Armstrong, "MI and Curriculum Development"
- (9) Mar 31 Learning factors, learning styles and multiple intelligences
 Methods workshop
Assignment: Read Bruce pp. 15-91
Library reserve reading: Armstrong chapters 1, 2 & 4;
Design for a Learning/Transforming Season
- (10) Apr 7 Learning factors continued and dynamics of transformation
Assignment: Read Bruce pp. 92-142; Hoehn, "Coming to Awareness"
- (11) Apr 14 Faith and general developmental issues—identity formation
Assignment: E-Reading Fowler, "Faith Development Theory and the Human Vocation"
On-line Discussion of Learning Event Design Drafts
- Apr 21 **Mid-Term Recess**
- (12) Apr 28 Learning Event sessions (some will meet at regular class time and others by arrangement)
- (13) May 5 Learning Event sessions (some will meet at regular class time and others by arrangement)
- (14) May 12 Process learnings from semester and closure of course
Post on course discussion board learnings from the semester