

INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH MINISTRY (CE 33-612)

Spring 2021

DRAFT

Professor: Dr. Reginald Blount

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Feel free to contact me via email to schedule a phone conversation or a Zoom video meeting. I am available via email from 8am Monday morning through 5pm on Friday evening. I will try to respond to your emails no later than 24 hours. I will not respond to emails on the weekends.

Course Description

What do we really know about the life and culture of today's youth? Who or what serves as contemporary socializing agents competing for the cultural identity of youth? What role is, can or will the church play in ministering to the spiritual yearnings of today's "Gen Z" generation? What role is, can or will youth play in transforming the church for the future? The aim of this course will be to broaden our understanding of Christian education and its role in engaging in the spiritual development and faith formation with youth. The course will explore the human development and culture of today's youth, the context necessary for spiritual development to take place, and various pedagogical models that can be used to guide youth from adolescence to young adulthood.

Class Goals and Outcomes:

1. **Knowing:** To know practices and disciplines of Christian education and formation and to understand how these are affected by differing cultural contexts.
2. **Doing:** To examine, assess, and lead a variety of approaches to teaching and learning with youth. In particular, to explore Christian practices and faith in intentional ways to address the developmental and faith issues of young people.
3. **Being:** To construct a critical, spiritually-grounded, practice-based self-understanding necessary for transformative faith formation

Course Texts

Douglass, Katherine A. and Richard Osmer, **Cultivating Teen Faith: Insights from the Confirmation Project**, Eerdmans, 2018; ISBN-10: 9780802876607; \$21.08

Powell, Kara and Brad Griffin, **Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love the Church**, Baker Books, 2016; ISBN-10: 0801019257; \$19.99

Siegel, Daniel, **Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain**, Tarcher Perigee Publishing, 2015; ISBN-10: 0399168834; \$16.95

Meyers, Jeremy P. **Liberating Youth From Adolescence**, Fortress Press (October 1, 2018); ISBN-10: 9781506433431; \$18.99

Wimberly, Anne E. Streaty and Sarah F. Farmer, **Raising Hope: Four Paths To Courageous Living for Black Youth**, United Methodist General Board of Higher Education, 2017; ISBN-10: 0938162349 \$24.99

Course Delivery Methods

This course will be taught online using Moodle. The class will primarily be asynchronous (meaning that you work on the course at the times you choose – but within the rhythm of the course and completing the required work weekly). You will be assigned to a group and will have to work collaboratively with the people in your group.

There will be three opportunities for each student to have individual 45 minutes engagement with the instructor around your learnings and any questions the course has raised for you. These times will be scheduled with the professor for February, March, and April.

Course Organization, Schedule and Assignments

Each Module will be available on Monday morning at 6 am central time and all assignments for that week will be due / must be completed by 11:59pm on Saturday night.

Sunday is sabbath time. Find time for worship, rest, and renewal.

Week of February 1st: Orientation and Introductions

- Post Personal Introductions
- Post an answer to the following questions:
 - *“What do you hope to learn from this class?”*
 - *“What was great for you about being a youth?”*
 - *What was challenging for you about being a youth?*
 - *What was your most memorable experience youth ministry experience (good or bad)?*

See Moodle for specific week activities and instructions

Week of February 8th: The WHY of Youth Ministry

During this week we will explore and discuss:

- The Importance of Understanding the WHY of Youth Ministry
- Your Definition of Youth Ministry
- Defining and Understanding Culture
- Understanding the Gen Z generation

See Moodle for specific week activities and instructions

Week of February 15th: The Human Development of Youth

During this week we will explore and discuss:

- The “messiness” of adolescent development
- Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain
- Why understanding adolescent human development is key to effective youth ministry

Reading: “Brainstorm”

See Moodle for specific week activities and instructions

Week of February 22nd and March 1st: The Seven Spiritual Yearnings of Youth

During these weeks we will explore and discuss:

- The Seven Spiritual Yearning of Youth
- Why understanding the spiritual yearnings of youth is key to effective youth ministry

Reading: “Liberating Youth from Adolescence”

Week of March 8th, March 15th and March 22nd: The Spiritual Development of Youth

During these weeks we will explore and discuss:

- Learnings from “The Confirmation Project” and its contribution to adolescent spiritual development
- Learnings from “The Youth Hope Builders Academy” and its contribution to adolescent spiritual development

Readings: “Cultivating Teen Faith “and “Raising Hope”

See Moodle for specific week activities and instructions

Week of March 29th: SPRING BREAK

Week of April 5th: A Vision for Youth Ministry

During this week we will explore and discuss:

- Again, the WHY of Youth Ministry
- Approaches to guiding youth from adolescence to young adulthood

Readings: “Growing Young”

See Moodle for specific week activities and instructions

Week of April 12th, April 19th, and Week of April 26th: Peer Teaching Sessions

See Moodle for specific week activities and instructions

Week of May 3rd: Integration

See Moodle for specific week activities and instructions

Course Requirements

Assignment 1: Immersion into Youth Culture: Spend 30 minutes per week watching, listening and/or reading what youth watch, listen to or read. Intentionally engage:

- What do you hear?
- What do you see?
- What did you learn?

Be prepared to share your experience in an online discussion with your group.

Online Discussion Guidelines

Throughout the semester, we will have discussions which will compose a large part of our engagement with each other in this online learning space. For these discussions to be meaningful conversation spaces, we all need to take responsibility for consistent and substantial participation. Instead of grading discussions based on number of words posted or on frequency, we will assess discussions based on the degree to which you substantially engage in the conversation each week.

Over the course of a conversation, substantial engagement means:

- A. Extend the conversation - creatively and critically push the conversation forward, do not just regurgitate what has already been said. If 1 or 2 other students have already responded directly to instructor provided prompts for the week, do not simply write another response to the prompts unless it adds something new to the conversation. You need to extend the conversation by adding an additional or different insight from the course materials, by asking a new question that stems from one of the posts already offered, by offering a related and contextualized example of the issue being discussed from your own experience, or by creatively integrating your own perspective with what has already been posted.
- B. Ask contextualized questions - situate your questions within the discussion by referencing the course materials and other parts of the conversation thread that inform your inquiry. Give us a little background as to why this question matters to you and how it relates to the course.

- C. Engage others in the course - thoughtful engagement with other students in the course and with the instructional team.
- D. Engage the course materials - thoughtful engagement with readings, lectures, student presentations, and any other materials related to the course. Referencing and citing course materials in your posts where appropriate is encouraged.

Each post need not do all these things, but your overall participation in each conversation should demonstrate all of these components. You might have several short posts and a handful of longer posts in a week or you might have only a few strategic substantial posts. Either way, your overall participation in each conversation will be evaluated for substantial engagement. The goal of this discussion design is to encourage and reward interchange, so post often and engage each other with meaningful questions that open to other questions.

(Adapted from Dr. Michael Hemenway's "Translating the Classroom Online" course.)

Write a critical reflection paper (5-7 pages, double spaced) placing in dialogue one of your Immersion Experiences with what we've read, and thoughts offered in your discussion group. (Due March 14th)

Assignment 2: Peer Teaching Session: Complete a teaching session as well as a written evaluation. The assignment includes:

- Preparing a 30-minute Bible study targeted for youth or adults that incorporates learnings from one or more of your immersion experiences.
- Preparing for class a one-page handout offering a brief summary of your approach.
- Writing an individual evaluation paper **(5-7 pages; due week after teaching)**. The evaluation should address the following:
 1. Assessment of the strengths and weaknesses from biblical/theological and educational perspectives.
 2. Assessment of yourself as a teacher, including what you learned about your strengths and weaknesses.
 3. As you write these papers, use the vocabulary we develop together in class drawing on readings.
 4. United Methodist students will find using the *Board of Ordained Ministry Bible Study Guide* will enhance their preparation of documents for meeting with the Board of Ordained Ministry. Other denominations may have a similar guide which can be used.

Assignment 3: Final Project-A Vision for Youth Ministry (Due May 9th)

In a **10 page double spaced page paper**, reflect on the current model of youth ministry taking place in your local congregation or another youth ministry context you know best. Drawing from your assignments, readings, class discussions and personal reflection, offer your theological and educational vision for guiding youth from

adolescence to young adulthood, and a model for implementation in a local church or other youth ministry context. Your vision and model should be offered in such a way that demonstrates you have engaged in dialogue with the authors we have read as well as class discussions.

Course Policies

1. **Cheating and Plagiarism:** These are serious breaches of academic integrity, involving claiming credit for the work that someone else has done. Don't do this! If you are uncertain in any way as to what is entailed in these activities, talk with the instructor.

2. **Excellence in Writing:** Even though this is a Christian Education course, everything you have learned about good writing style still counts! Obtuse or inelegant writing in your essays will be reason for a reduced grade. If you need help with your writing, please talk with the instructor.

3. **Intellectual Virtue:** We are striving not only to learn about a subject but also to sharpen our abilities to think critically. To do this, we must practice intellectual virtue by being open-minded, straightforward, and thoughtful in our spoken and written work. We show our scholarship not only by considering issues and questions that are central to our faith, but by being careful and respectful in our treatment of the authors of our texts, the ideas we discuss, and the thoughts of our fellow classmates.

4. **Late Work:** The instructor is under no obligation to accept late work. It is the instructor's discretion whether to accept late work, and under what conditions to accept it if it is to be accepted. As a general rule, late work is unacceptable.

5. **Disability Accommodation Statement:** Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing equal access to its programs of graduate professional education for all qualified students with learning, physical, medical, or psychological disabilities. The Seminary aims to provide reasonable accommodation for qualified individuals with a disability (based on clinical documentation) to ensure their access and participation in Seminary programs. For details, see "Disabilities Policies and Procedures" in the Student Handbook.

Grades

It is assumed that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a "B" grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members identify the strengths and problems in their written work. The syllabus has provided detailed information on each assignment to limit the amount of "guess work" by students about what needs to be included and addressed in the assignment.

A "B" means that the basic elements of the assignment are in place.

A "B+" means that the assignment is also well crafted.

An "A-" means that the assignment is well crafted and probes the issues with considerable insight.

An "A" means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student's knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject.

A "B-" means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus. It tends to explore issues superficially.

A "C+" means that the assignment lacks clarity and focus, tends to be superficial, and lacks personal insight into the issues being discussed.

A "C" means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and class discussions to engaging them with the issues being discussed.

A "C-" means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.

A "D" is a grade of grace.

An "F" indicates that the assignment has not been fulfilled at all points.