

G-ETS CE 502x: **Teaching For Biblical Faith**

Tentative: subject to revision!

Online two-week intensive

January 11 – 22, 2021

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Teaching Assistant:

Course Description

As Christians, the Bible is our sacred text. Ways of understanding, interpreting, and teaching the Bible are as varied as the denominations in the Christian faith. It is also increasingly difficult to parse out how a text like the Bible can speak to our lives today. This course will focus on skills that ministers, educators, and leaders can use to open the Bible to laypersons in congregations. Students will discover and critically examine their own approach to the Bible, and will complete a teaching practicum. We will also consider a variety of cultural perspectives for reading the Bible, and will practice equipping laypersons to live out a Biblical faith in the 21st century.

This course meets the requirements for United Methodist professional certification in Christian Education, Youth Ministry, Music Ministry, Evangelism or Spiritual Formation. It is a foundational course in Christian Education for the M.A. and M. Div. degrees. Lay persons who teach in their congregations, pastors seeking to strengthen their teaching skills, and lay professionals seeking certification will find this course useful in their future ministry.

Course Goals:

- A. **Knowing:** To know practices and disciplines of Christian education and formation and to understand how these are affected by differing cultural contexts. This goal includes the following sub-themes:
1. To know major approaches to faithful teaching and learning.
 2. To understand learning theories – particularly liberative and transformative learning and multiple intelligences theory – and their pedagogical use.
- B. **Doing:** To examine, assess, and lead a variety of approaches to teaching and learning appropriate to a particular faith community. This goal includes experience or practice in the following:

1. To be able to read, evaluate and engage the culture of a congregation and its community with particular sensitivity to culture, race, class and gender.
 2. To teach Christian practices and faith in intentional ways to address the developmental and faith issues of people in congregations.
 3. To integrate practices of biblical and theological study into teaching and learning leadership in a congregation.
 4. To coordinate and lead a congregation in its educational ministry.
- C. **Being:** To be a theological educator who seeks to liberate and empower persons to be co-creators of the reign of God in our multi-cultural and multi-faith environment. This goal includes the following:
1. To be a reflective teacher and leader who can empower others in the congregation to be reflective and open to transformation.
 2. To be a Christian disciple who continues to engage in the practices that develop and deepen faith.
 3. To understand oneself as a critical and open participant in an ongoing theological tradition.

Required Texts: (Book prices were obtained from www.barnesandnoble.com)

- John Bracke and Karen Tye. **Teaching the Bible in the Church**. Chalice Press, 2008; ISBN-13: 9780827236431, \$23.60
- Jack L. Seymour. **Teaching Biblical Faith**. Abingdon Press, 2015; ISBN-13: 978-1630884307, \$14.25
- **NRSV Study Bible** – New Interpreters, HarperCollins, or Oxford Edition

Texts for Teaching/Learning Experiences

- Francis Taylor Gench. **Back to the Well: Women’s Encounters with Jesus in the Gospels**. Westminster John Knox Press, 2004; ISBN-13: 9780664227159. \$14.16
- Renita J. Weems. **Just A Sister Away**. Innisfree Press, 1988; ISBN-13: 978-0931055522. \$6.48.
- Jennifer Grace Bird. **Permission Granted: Take the Bible into Your Own Hands**. Westminster John Knox Press, 2015; ISBN-13: 9780664260408. \$18.00
- Elizabeth F. Caldwell. **I Wonder: Engaging a Child’s Curiosity About the Bible**. Abingdon Press, 2016; ISBN-13: 9781426799921. \$20.04
- Gregory C. Ellison, II. **Fearless Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice**. Westminster John Knox Press, 2017; ISBN-13: 9780664260651. \$14.00
- Henri Nouwen, **The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming**, Image Books, 2006; ISBN-13: 9780385473071. \$13.60
- Howard Thurman. **Jesus and the Disinherited**. Beacon Press, 1996; ISBN-13: 9780807010297; \$11.64
- Deborah Jian Lee. **Rescuing Jesus: How People of Color, Women, and Queer Christians are Reclaiming Evangelicalism**. Beacon Press, 2015.

ISBN-13: 9780807075074; \$19.95

- Walter Wink, **Jesus and Nonviolence**. Fortress Press, 2003. ISBN-13: 978-0800636098. \$6.38
- Dorothy C. Bass, **Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time**. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2000. ISBN-13: 978-0787956479. \$14.71

Navigating the Course

This course will be taught synchronously and asynchronously on-line. There will be face-to-face zoom meetings daily throughout the duration of the course.

This course will be delivered through the Moodle software Garrett-Evangelical uses, accessible through MyGETS and through Zoom links provided to the class. Please be certain you can log on to Moodle and Zoom before the course begins.

Technology

You will need to be certain you have sufficient technological ability to access and participate in this course. **It is the student's responsibility to have sufficient technology to access and participate in the course.** The instructor will assume this and is not obligated to take technological difficulties into account when assessing the student's work.

Minimum Technological Requirements

- *Web Browser* – You will need the latest version of the web browser you are using. Note that not all browsers work equally well with Moodle, so you may need to experiment with them if you have difficulty using all the functions on the site.
- *Operating System* – In order to use the latest browser, you will need to have an operating system that is up-to-date enough to handle it. Please be certain you have such an operating system.
- *Internet Connection* – You will need a high-speed internet connection that is sufficient to run streaming video with no difficulty. Usually cable and dsl connections can do this; dial-up cannot. If your home internet connection is not sufficient to provide this kind of connection, you will need to find access to a computer that does have this connection.
- *Hardware* – Bear in mind that you will need sufficient computing power in terms of memory, speed, audio, and video for the different aspects of this course to work well. Make certain that you have all of these in place so that you can run the necessary software and fully participate on-line.

Ground Rules:

All written work should follow rules of good scholarship, using proper English grammar, spelling and punctuation. Any sources used, including internet sources, should be carefully cited using the Garrett guide. (A copy will be provided on Moodle.) Papers are to be completed in an inclusive manner, sensitive to issues of sexism, racism, and ageism in the English language. References to God should consider carefully the use of gendered pronouns. **All assignments must be completed to receive a passing**

grade for the course. Assignments that are not completed on time will receive a deduction in their grade.

This class is an intensive learning community that requires your full attention. You will be reading three books and many articles in two weeks. Please be prepared, and it helps to read ahead!

A Community Covenant for our class:

I believe it is important for a learning environment to be a place where all manner of topics can be discussed freely, without fear of one's words and actions being taken out of the context of the classroom (even an e-classroom like ours) and distributed to peers, friends, and others. For that reason, I ask that students covenant together as a class to not share outside the e-classroom what others say or write without asking the express permission of each other, even if it is something positive and encouraging. As expressed in *Covenants of Presence*, "We want to create an atmosphere of open and honest exchange. What is said in the space stays in the space. What is learned in the space can leave the space."¹

Course Organization, Schedule, and Assignments: Subject to revision!

Active class participation and reading of assigned literature. All students should read all of the required texts. In addition, you will pick one of the recommended texts to read and use as the basis of your teaching session. Class members are expected to have completed all readings by the class session for which they are assigned. **A list of the readings (both required and recommended) and what percentage you have carefully read is due on the last day of class. I rely on your honest reporting of this.**

Monday January 11: 2:00 – 4:00 pm CT Zoom: Introduction to the class

- Personal introduction: In a paragraph or two, share with the class your name, degree or enrichment program, where you live, and what you are hoping to learn from this class
- Going over the syllabus and class structure
- Online postings due by midnight, Monday January 11:
 - View the documentary video *Won't You Be My Neighbor** and the accompanying articles posted in moodle. The film is available online via Amazon (watch for free with ads or order DVD); online via iTunes (rent for 3.99); and a physical copy is on reserve at Styberg Library. In a paragraph

¹ Adapted Touchstones used in the Center for Courage and Renewal Circle of Trust Retreat and Forum for Theological Exploration Christian Leadership Forum, adapted by Ashe Living LLC, and newly adopted by the Inclusive Climate Committee (ICC) of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.

* Please note – this is NOT the Mister Rogers film starring Tom Hanks!! This is a documentary film about Mister Rogers!

or two, reflect on the ministry described in the video. Do you believe Mr. Rogers was doing Christian education with his television show? In what ways is he educating theologically, or not? How can you envision Christian education as like or different from Mr. Rogers's approach?

- Read *Teaching Biblical Faith*, Intro and chapters 1-2. Answer the following questions: Why do we educate in the church? Whom do we educate in the church? What does "teaching for Biblical faith" mean?

Tuesday January 12: 2:00 – 3:00 pm CT Zoom: Teaching and Christian Education

- Online postings due by midnight, Tuesday January 12:
 - Offer a short (one paragraph) response to another person's reflection on *Won't You Be My Neighbor*. Remember that whenever you respond online to another person, tone is sometimes missing. All responses in this class are to be constructive and engaging, not inflammatory or antagonistic. It is okay to disagree with someone, but respect is mandatory.
 - Offer a short response to another person's answers to the Teaching Biblical Faith questions
 - Read *Teaching the Bible in the Church* and post a 1-2 paragraph response.

Wednesday January 13: 2:00 – 3:00 pm CT Zoom: Biblical Hermeneutics and Faith Assignment due by midnight, Wednesday January 13:

- Complete the Biblical Hermeneutics Self-Inventory (found on Moodle). Send a 2-page reflection paper on what you learned about your understanding of the Bible through the Self-Inventory (paper should be double spaced, 12-point font). This assignment is to be sent to the professor, not posted in the Moodle group posting forum. Please send it to the professor at Jennifer.moe@garrett.edu.
- Teaching plan for teaching sessions. Details regarding teaching plans and teaching sessions will be provided throughout the course via Moodle and through course discussion.
- Read *Teaching Biblical Faith*, Ch. 3-7 and post a 1-2 paragraph response, indicating which teaching plan/style(s) you are most interested in or drawn to.

Thursday January 14: 2:00 – 3:00 pm CT Zoom: Teaching the Bible in the Church

Online postings due by midnight, Thursday January 14:

- Complete the chapter readings (4) posted on Moodle from *From Lament to Advocacy: Black Religious Education and Public Ministry*. Watch the panel discussion of authors posted on Moodle. Post a one or two paragraph reflection on what you learned from the panel and/or what resonated with or challenged you regarding the role of Christian/Religious education?

Friday January 15: 2:00 – 3:00 pm CT Zoom: Discussion, catch-up, and preparation for next week's teaching sessions

Monday January 18: No Class, MLK Holiday

Tuesday January 19 – Friday January 22: 2:00 – 4:30 pm CT Zoom: Teaching Sessions

- Teaching session: The assignment includes:
 - Thoughtfully reading the book you have chosen (from the list of recommended texts)
 - Planning a 30-minute Bible study to be taught to the group via Zoom. You may also choose instead to record a 30-minute webinar-style Bible study to be uploaded to Moodle and watched asynchronously by the class. Select a scripture that will be the focus of the study. The book is to be used as a resource, not the focus of the study. Prepare a teaching plan, **due Midnight the night before your teaching session.**
 - Preparation of a one-page handout offering a brief summary of the book and information about the teaching session that you would hand out to your participants, to be posted on Moodle and/or emailed to the class.

Online postings due by Midnight after each class Zoom session:

- Using the session evaluation forms available on Moodle, send feedback via email to the teachers of the day. This is very important as everyone will need to rely on each others' feedback to write your evaluation paper on your teaching session.
- Online postings due by Midnight, Wednesday January 27:
 1. A statement about the percentage of the readings you completed for the course.
 2. Write an individual evaluation paper (6-8 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced) of *your* teaching session. The evaluation should address the following:
 - Assessment of the book author's model(s) of Jesus and its usefulness for helping teach for Biblical Faith. Consider strengths and weaknesses from biblical, theological, and educational perspectives.
 - Assessment of the approach to interpreting the Bible used by you in the session, its strengths and weaknesses from biblical and theological perspectives, and how it is informed by the book you read.
 - Assessment of your planning process.

- Assessment of yourself as a teacher, using the feedback from your classmates. What did you learn about your strengths and your weaknesses?

Use our online discussions to guide your thinking. Use the vocabulary we've learned throughout the course. Draw on material from readings. **Ultimately, the evaluation should focus on what you learned about yourself as a teacher and what you learned about how people learn. Send your evaluation paper via email to Jennifer.moe@garrett.edu.**

Final Paper Due February 19: A statement (6-8 pages, 12-point, dbl-spaced) of your understanding of the task of teaching the Bible in the Church. Please address the following questions: What is the Bible? What is your view of biblical authority? What theological assumptions and educational assumptions inform your approach to the Bible or use of the Bible in your ministry? How does your social location inform your approach to teaching the Bible? How do your answers to these concerns affect the way you do Bible Study? What implications do your assumptions have for the way you preach, teach, engage in mission, and lead a congregation? How will you seek to empower laity to read, engage, and teach the Bible? What Jesus will you teach – meaning, how is the life, teachings, and purpose of Jesus as heart of the Christian faith reflected in your Christian Education content? This paper should reflect your dialogue with the texts of this course as well as learnings from online discussions/forums/readings and your teaching text.

Important statements about grading.

- All papers need to be typed in an accepted academic style. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Cite all your sources carefully!
- All papers need to be 12-point type and double-spaced (except the handout for class).
- All papers, presentations, and conversations need to be sensitive to and inclusive of issues of language in relation to gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, age, and so forth.
- Incompletes will be granted only for reasons beyond the control of the student.
- Grades will be reduced for late papers and postings. Postings more than 5 days late are subject to be given a grade of "F".
- All assignments must be completed to pass the course.