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G-ETS CE 502: **Teaching For Biblical Faith**  
**Tentative: subject to revision!**

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**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 21<sup>st</sup> 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](http://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
- Maria Harris. **Teaching and Religious Imagination**. Harper and Row, 1991; ISBN-13: 9780060638405, \$10.45
- Mai-Anh Le Tran. **Reset the Heart: Unlearning Violence, Relearning Hope**. Abingdon Press, 2077; ISBN-13: 9781501832468, \$32.39
- **NRSV Study Bible** – New Interpreters, HarperCollins, or Oxford Edition

**Texts for Teaching/Learning Experiences** (Students should choose two books from this list. Each student will teach from one of these books.)

- 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
- J. Nicole Morgan, **Fat and Faithful: Learning to Love Our Bodies, Our Neighbors, and Ourselves**. Fortress Press, 2018. ISBN-13: 9781506425221. \$18.99

### **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 Style 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.**

### **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 and distributed to peers, friends, and others. For that reason, I ask that students covenant together as a class to not share outside the 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."<sup>1</sup>

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

**Active class participation and reading of assigned literature.** All students should

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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. You are required to read at least one of the other recommended books as well. Class members are expected to have completed all readings by the class session for which they are discussed. **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.**

Participation in class presupposes not only doing the required reading but engaging critically and thoughtfully with the readings and engaging in in-class discussions and activities.

### **Week 1:** Introduction to the class

- Going over the syllabus
- Personal introductions: Prepare to share with the class your name, degree or enrichment program, where you live, and what you are hoping to learn from this class
- Discuss *Teaching and Religious Imagination*.

### **Week 2:** Teaching and Christian Education

- View the documentary video *Won't You Be My Neighbor*. The film is available online via Vimeo; online via other streaming services; and a physical copy is on reserve at Styberg Library. Come to class prepared to discuss the following questions: 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?
- Discuss supplementary article on Moodle:  
[https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/how-mister-rogers-faith-shaped-his-idea-of-childrens-television?fbclid=IwAR0is38GNKXvb0r2jx2NA61uA5h1HSV4qDADjAXub4L\\_7mTBMcLpENrNVmQ](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/arts/how-mister-rogers-faith-shaped-his-idea-of-childrens-television?fbclid=IwAR0is38GNKXvb0r2jx2NA61uA5h1HSV4qDADjAXub4L_7mTBMcLpENrNVmQ)
- Discuss *Teaching Biblical Faith*, Intro and chapters 1-2. Be prepared to discuss the following questions: Why do we educate in the church? Whom do we educate in the church? What does "teaching for Biblical faith" mean?
- Sign up for groups and which book you will be using to teach from the list of additional books. More about this in class.

### **Week 3:** Teaching Biblical Faith

- Discussion of *Teaching Biblical Faith*, Ch. 3 – 12

- Writing a Teaching Plan. Details regarding teaching plans and upcoming teaching sessions will be provided throughout the course via Moodle and through course discussion.

#### **Week 4: Biblical Hermeneutics and Faith**

- Discuss excerpt from *Educated* by Tara Westover posted on Moodle
- Assignment due:
- Complete the Biblical Hermeneutics Self-Inventory (found on Moodle). Write 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). Please email your paper to the instructor and bring a copy (either hard copy or electronic) to class for discussion.

#### **Week 5: Teaching the Bible in the Church**

- Discuss *Teaching the Bible in the Church*
- Choosing a curriculum resource

#### **Week 6: Curriculum Fair**

- **Assignment:** Review and present a curriculum resource – Print, media, or online
  - Research the creation of the resource. You can do this by trying to contact the writer and/or publisher; go to publisher's website and assess their need for the resource. Questions to guide your presentation: How does the resource address challenges of congregations? How does the resource fit with denominational identity (if there is one)? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum?
  - Write a 5-6 page analysis paper of the resource answering the above questions as well as utilizing the four evaluative categories in *The Church as Learning Community* (posted on Moodle).
  - Prepare a one-page handout and presentation for the curriculum fair. Be creative! More on this in class discussion.

#### **Week 7: Thinking Creatively about Ministry**

- Mission Possible Class Game – BRING YOUR BIBLES TO CLASS!

#### **Week 8: Reset the Heart**

- Discuss *Reset the Heart*

- Discuss *Teaching Biblical Faith* Ch. 13-14

**Week 9: Teaching Sessions Begin**

Assignment Due:

- Thoughtfully reading the book you have chosen (from the list of recommended texts)
- In groups of 2-3, Plan and execute a 45 – 60 minute Bible study to be taught to the group. 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 based on our discussion of teaching plans and using examples provided. Your teaching plan is due to the instructor the DAY BEFORE YOUR TEACHING SESSION.
- Prepare of a one-page handout to give to the class offering a brief summary of the book and information about the teaching session.
- Bring handouts and teaching plans to class to share with your participants.

**Week 10: Continuation of Teaching Sessions**

**Week 11: Continuation of Teaching Sessions**

**Week 12: Continuation of Teaching Sessions**

**Week 13: Wrapping Things Up**

- Assignments due:
  - A statement about the percentage of the readings you completed for the course, including the second book you chose from the list of teaching texts.
  - 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 and your group as teachers, using the feedback from your classmates. What did you learn about your strengths and your weaknesses?

- Use our 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.**

**Final Paper due One Week after Last Class:** A statement (6-8 pages, 12-point, dbl-spaced) of your understanding of the task of teaching the Bible in the Church, particularly considering the Jesus you will teach. 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? This paper should reflect your dialogue with the texts of this course as well as learnings from online discussions/forums and the other recommended book you read from the list of teaching texts.

**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 in Arial or Times New Roman 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 assignments.
- All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

**Accommodations:**

Garrett-Evangelical is committed to providing a quality theological education and will provide reasonable accommodations for documented conditions. Students requiring specific assistance such as classroom changes, alternative ways of note-taking, different classroom procedures, or alternative testing formats are urged to request the appropriate accommodations from the director of academic studies/registrar. The director of academic studies/registrar can advise students on other support services and resources, for example, diagnostic testing. Students must complete a request for accommodations using the form available from the director of academic

studies/registrar or through MyGETS documenting their condition(s) through appropriate verification methods.