SYLLABUS

Course Description

This course explores the vital role and function of pastors and educators as “theological educators” in the life of faith communities. We will focus on the interplay between theological reflection, teaching methods, and contexts within the life and mission of the church, and how the work of education and formation can facilitate transformative religious knowing and learning in ways localized and responsive to cultural and religious difference and diversity. Participants will also practice planning, assessing, and implementing a variety of teaching practices and curricular evaluation, guided by the principle that everything in the life of the church teaches.

Learning Goals

Knowing:
- To gain basic introduction to the disciplines and practices of Christian education and formation and to understand how these are affected by differing cultural-religious contexts.

Doing:
- To practice examining, assessing, and leading a variety of approaches to teaching and learning appropriate to communities in varying contexts.
  - This goal includes the following:
    ✓ To read, evaluate and engage the culture of a congregation and its community with critical analysis of the impact of social location (e.g., culture, race, class, gender) upon a community’s worldview and meaning-making.
    ✓ To “make accessible and manifest” the traditions and practices of the Christian faith in ways responsive to the developmental and faith issues of people in congregations.
    ✓ To integrate practices of theological study into educational leadership in a congregation.

Being:
- To reflect on what it means and what it would take to become a theological educator formed in community and collaborative engagement, who seeks to participate in the liberative and creative work of God in the world.
This goal includes critical and contemplative reflection upon what it means and what it would take:

- To support the empowerment and transformation of individuals and communities toward faithful living, witness, and action.
- To position oneself as a critical and open participant in an ongoing theological tradition.
- For one’s teaching and learning to be grounded in a life of discipleship and spiritual deepening.

Course Texts

Required texts


Required articles – in progress (will be available on course Moodle site)


For reference

Course Requirements

A. Attendance & Participation (10%)
This group independent study will be organized to meet more individualized learning needs and interests of participants, with a combination roughly four (4) Zoom meetings (days/times TBD with participants) and one-on-one check-ins with instructor. Readings, research, and writing assignments will be completed individually, with the requisite engagement specific and appropriate to the ministerial context of each participant.

B. “Listening to Laity” (5-6 pages, double spaced; 20%) DUE by final Zoom mtg
This assignment invites you to exercise “holy listening” (a la Dori Baker) to a group of persons in a congregational setting, to explore issues that are of primary (and primal) theological concern for their faith and life. Take this opportunity to engage either individuals whose experience, background, and/or social location is of contrast to yours; or individuals with whom you share similarities/affinity, but with whom you have yet to engage more deeply about questions of theology and faith. Think broadly, across the sociodemographic spectrum of your ministry setting (e.g., consider older children, confirmands, parents, young adults, new members, shut-ins…). Choose 3-5 persons for this exercise, for individual interviews or a small focus group. (If you interview, then consider 3 individuals; if you conduct a focus group, consider 4-5 individuals).

To prepare for this activity, create a list of about ten issues (topics or themes) that you think might come up in the conversation with your invited subjects. Take note of why you think these topics might be germane to the people. During the interviews or focus group, ask for permission to record the conversation and/or take notes. (See “Informed Consent” form on Moodle.) Afterwards, review your notes and original list of issues, and write a paper in which you describe and interpret what the people have shared with you. Do not simply report what was said; rather, weave the individuals’ response together.

into a cogent descriptive analysis of their faithful meaning-making, and draw out implications for the educational ministry of faith communities.

Some of the themes/questions you might want to consider for exploration include the following:

- How they understand God and the importance of Jesus for the Christian faith;
- How they understand the role of the church;
- What are authorities for faith—scripture, experience, and creeds;
- How Jesus is important for the Christian faith;
- What is the meaning of discipleship;
- How they define salvation;
- What it means living the new life of faith;
- What it means to live as a Christian;
- What we expect of church education, religious experience, authority, etc.
- Their understanding of how the Christians are to relate to members of other faith traditions.

C. Teaching Session (10+ pages) & Self-Assessment (4-5 pages, double spaced; 40%)

DUE by final Zoom mtg

For this assignment, you will design a lesson plan for a session (at least an hour long), teach it in a specific ministry setting, invite participants to complete a “Critical Incident Questionnaire” based on their experience of your session, review their responses and write a self-reflexive evaluation of the session based on insights gained from readings.

You may design the lesson for any specific setting in the church (Sunday school study, seasonal study, church council or choir, special interest group, youth retreat, confirmation class, spiritual discernment group, etc.). You may choose any topic/theme and biblical text, so long as the lesson presents an explicit theological reflection upon real-life issues. Please follow the “Lesson Planning Rubric” as a guide for your lesson plan.

At the end of your session, please collect the CIQs from participants, review them, and write a self-assessment using the following questions as guide:

1) Why did you choose this topic?
2) What learnings did you hope to see in and to gain from your learners? How would you compare/contrast desired learnings and what actually unfolded?
3) How was the lesson plan regarding theological content, age group appropriateness, process, leadership, and engagement of the students?
4) What were learnings gained from the CIQs?
5) What were some surprises in your implementation of the lesson? What went well? What would you change and why? What insights have you gained about preparation and “failing well”?
6) What insights have you gained about the process of curriculum development, based on this experience of writing and implementing a lesson plan? (Even if you have done a lot
of lesson planning and curriculum writing, what was the qualitative difference in this experience?)

D. “Theological Education in the Church” (5-6 pages, double spaced)
   **DUE no later than July 31**
   Drawing on the aggregate of literature, resources, and group conversations, present your emergent position/view/perspective on the nature and tasks of theological education in the congregation and of yourself as a theological educator. Focus on the meaning of theological education in the lives of persons, its role in your ministry, and how you support persons to recognize themselves as theologians.

   *Consider a variety of creative forms beyond prose!* Try a combination of original poetry, song, pictorial collage, multimedia montage, web blog entries, a series of pastoral letters. Together, the form and content should reflect who you are as theological educator, and your own spiritual dispositions as disciple and “leading learner” on a journey in community.

**Grade Breakdown**

   A. Attendance & Participation = 10%
   B. “Listening to Laity” = 20%
   C. Teaching Session & Self-Assessment = 40%
   D. “Theological Education in the Church” = 30%

* Note: All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for the course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROPOSED GROUP MEETING DATES:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zoom Meeting #1: Monday, June 18, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introductions, overview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoom Meeting #2: Friday, June 22, 2018</td>
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<td>Discussion of readings</td>
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<td>Zoom Meeting #3: Thursday, June 28, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion of readings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoom Meeting #4: Monday, July 23, 2018</td>
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<td>Report on field engagement (“listening to laity” &amp; teaching sessions)</td>
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Other Course Information

Grades

The Letter Grade Option
Five grades will be possible with plus (+) designation for B, C and D, and minus (-) designation for A, B, C and D:
A -- for exceptional work at a graduate level; demonstration of comprehensive knowledge of the field; work of near publishable quality; fully integrative.
B -- for solid work at a graduate level; a sound grasp of the field; articulate communication of ideas; evidence of good integration.
C -- for average work at a graduate level; adequate knowledge of the field; comprehensible expression of ideas; acceptable integration.
D -- for inferior work at a graduate level; some basic knowledge of major ideas; marginal communication of ideas; minimal integration.
F -- for inadequate work at a graduate level; little evidence of a grasp of the field; unclear expression of ideas; little evidence of integration.

The Pass/Fail Option
This option will allow for two conclusions:
1. Pass: indicates that the student has done satisfactory work at a graduate level; would be at least a grade of “C” on a letter grade basis;
2. Fail: indicates unsatisfactory work at a graduate level; little evidence that the student has accomplished the class goals.

The following are desirable values for written work:

1. The submitted work addresses the given assignment.
2. The work demonstrates:
   a. Critical analytical/interpretive/integrative skills;
   b. Broad and deep grasp of the readings and class materials;
   c. Thoughtful and conscientious engagement with contexts (depending upon the assignment).
3. The work coheres in content, and adheres to proper citational styles (APA, MLA, CMS).
4. The work reflects creativity and thoughtfulness in analysis and expression.

Academic Integrity
“Garrett-Evangelical takes the question of academic integrity and plagiarism very seriously. All incoming students are required to complete an online tutorial designed to help them identify and avoid plagiarism” (HDBK 1718, 69f). Please refer to the seminary’s Academic Handbook and online tutorial for additional information and support. https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/

*Note: This syllabus is subject to change according to instructional need.*