



## DMN608 *The Theological 'Making' of Disciples* June 2016 Advance Assignment (Syllabus will come later)

---

### Course Information

#### Instructor Information

Instructor: Robert K Martin, Dean and Prof of Christian Formation and Leadership, Wesley Theological Seminary

Office and hours: Deans Office; contact by email or phone (202-885-8667)

Email: [rmartin@wesleyseminary.edu](mailto:rmartin@wesleyseminary.edu)

### Course Description

This course reconceives the conventional understandings of “Disciple-Making” by locating the subject of Christian formation within a trinitarian-incarnational-sacramental framework and expanding the notion and process of education for redemptive transformation. We will explore the educational potential of students’ DMin projects in order to raise their significance and impact.

#### Introductory comments:

To prepare for our in-person class sessions, the advance assignments are divided into 3 themes, each of which is essential to the overarching theological principle: discipleship is cultivated through the practices of being disciples. Most of us have a pretty good sense of what it means to be a disciple or to ‘make disciples’. But have we ever investigated whether our understanding of disciple-making actually is consistent with the fundamental doctrines of the faith (Trinity, Incarnation) and with the fundamental practices (Baptism and Eucharist). This course will explore the power and promise of these doctrines and rituals to constitute the most basic and central patterns of living as the image and likeness of God, right here and now.

In fact, by the end of our class sessions, I hope that you will find that these doctrines and rituals are far from esoteric and abstract, but rather they are the MOST practical and powerful of all Christian practices to shape our lives by the fundamental pattern of the Divine Life. It is in this context that we will talk about Christian formation, faith formation, and spiritual formation (3 similar ways of naming the process of discipling one another). “Christian Education” has been one way of talking about the process of *growing in faith as an activated disciple*, but CE as a discipline has fallen out of favor because it has been associated too much with Sunday School, with educating children and not adults, and about learning facts and data rather than learning to live the habits/habitus of the Christian life.

You might think that education and formation are not pertinent to your interests and DMin project. I believe just the *opposite*: each of you as DMin students have been working on ideas and projects that will inevitably necessitate getting others to learn and grow into different patterns of activity that are more spiritually healthy and missionally effective. This course is ALL about how to involve people in that type of learning process.

So, the advance assignment is oriented to 3 themes (return to these themes over and over; write them on your foreheads and forearms and post-it notes; keep these themes before you constantly):



1. The present context demands that we constantly *learn*, and that we design our communities as learning organizations.
2. If we will reconceive Christian education or faith formation as *learning holistic patterns of practice by DOING THEM*, then all of your DMin projects need to include the dimension of educating people in the patterns and practices of discipleship.
3. The most fundamental patterns of the Christian life are hidden in the most central practices of Christian worship: Baptism and Eucharist. To understand the patterns of the Divine Life within those rituals will provide the template for living as the image and likeness of God.

## Course Objectives

- ❖ To love God and neighbor through our study, ministry, and practice.
- ❖ To form a collaborative learning community as a spiritual discipline.
- ❖ To critically engage the course resources so that one's thinking and writing are more clear, precise, sophisticated, and effective. Understanding this practice as a spiritual discipline.
- ❖ To understand better and articulate clearly a eucharistic and incarnational approach to ecclesiology, the practices of spiritual formation, and ecclesial leadership.
- ❖ To frame and develop the DMin project as a spiritually formative process.
- ❖ To orient and construct the DMin project as an exercise of religious/spiritual teaching and/or community organizing.

## Text Books and Course Materials

Many of the course resources are provided to students via scanned materials in pdf form on the Blackboard site. There are some texts you will need to purchase, but you will choose only a few from a list. All of the texts for the course are listed within the assignment descriptions

## Recommended Readings

Listed and provided to you in pdf form or in a bibliography (in "course documents" in Blackboard)

## Technical Requirements

### Microsoft Windows 7 or Higher

- Windows 7, Windows 8, 8.1, or 10 (10 is due out summer 2015)
- Intel Pentium 4 2.33 GHz or faster CPU and at least 4 GB memory is recommended
- Up-to-date version of [Adobe Flash Player](#)
- Up-to-date Word processor and presentation package (Word and PowerPoint 2010 or newer)

### Mac OS/X

- Mac OS X 10.8x or newer
- Intel processor and at least 4 GB of RAM
- Up-to-date version of [Adobe Flash Player](#) (or see VLC below to play Adobe Flash FLV/F4V files)



- Up-to-date word processor and presentation package (Mac Office 2011 or new or iWorks 09 or newer – must be able to save documents as .doc file)

## **ADVANCE ASSIGNMENTS**

- Read the materials thoroughly so that you ‘master’ them. Do NOT skim.
  - Take good notes so that you would be able to teach from them.
  - Follow the directions carefully! ..... Really.
1. Orient your DMin project to “Learning”.
    - a. **Read** excerpts from Peter Vaill, **Learning as a Way of Being**.  
In pdf; Blackboard. Vaill was a stellar professor of business management who just happened to be spiritually attuned. His coined phrase “permanent white water” aptly describes the constant transformation that so defines the present age.
    - b. **Read** Maria Harris, **Fashion Me a People**, all of Part I and Part III. [Louisville: Westminster / John Knox Press, 1989; Amazon **ISBN-13**: 978-0664240523]  
[Please don’t get turned off by the unfortunate elementary cover design; this is a very important text in the Education/Formation discipline) Choose 1 of the activities in Part II (Liturgia, Diaconia, Kerygma, Koinonia, Didache) that would be most central or important or appropriate to your DMin project; read that chapter thoroughly and think about your project in light of it.
    - c. **Discussion Board Interaction on Blackboard May 10 – 17**.  
For the 7 day period, you will post and respond to one another every 2 days. The 7 days will be divided into 2 day increments in which you will respond to a question and you will respond to each other. Closer to the time, I will post directions. Make sure you are available and ready to engage the material, having read thoroughly the Vaill and Harris texts above. You will need to carve out at least 4 hours within every 2 day period. [This exercise will constitute the online engagement that contributes to the total 45 hours of instruction needed for this course.] This exercise will prepare you to write the paper (next).
    - d. **Write a paper**. Due **May 25**. Upload to Blackboard. About 2500 words (approximately 10 double-spaced pages). Taking into consideration the discussion on Blackboard, and critically engaging Vaill and Harris, write a paper with the following components that relates the texts to your DMin interests and/or project (page length is suggested for each item to help you plan the paper):
      - ½ page: Describe your interests/project.
      - 2 pages: From Vaill and Harris, lay out the arguments and their rationale that most directly relates to your interests/project. Allow the authors to guide and challenge your thinking.
      - 1 page: What is educational/formational in your project? How could your project be improved by Vaill or Harris’ approach?
      - 1 page: In light of the comprehensive nature of Harris’ proposal, which dimension of ecclesial life will you focus on? Explain the reason.
      - 5 pages: Thinking imaginatively, broadly, and without much attention to the pragmatics of your particular situation, with Harris and Vaill guiding you, how might you reimagine the educative/formative processes within your project, even if education/formation are NOT currently part of your project? Be specific. Don’t be



too limited by the particulars at this point. Brainstorm. Imagine maximal educative/formative effect. Stay close to the texts; let them guide you.

- ½ page: Given the changes in your thinking/planning, what do you need to know? what do you need to learn in order to construct your project better? How will you learn it?

2. Orient yourself to a Eucharistic-Baptismal Approach to Discipling One Another.

- **Read Martin**, chapters 1-3 (pdf on Blackboard), then look over these documents:
  - “Sacramental pattern synopsis”
  - “Example of a liturgically organized activity-trustees mtg”
  - “Eucharistic Blueprint of the church”

This material will prepare us for the first few days of the class session. It is important that you come to the class sessions having read and digested the material.

### Writing Guidelines (follow carefully)

- Save your paper (title the file) with YOUR last name as the first word. E.g., “Martin-first paper.doc”
- Write your name and page number on EVERY page.
- NO title page.
- The paper should be single-spaced in MS Word. If you use another program, save the document either as a Word (.doc) or .rtf.. For your reference: a double-spaced page is approximately **300 words**
- Upload papers to the course website and email paper to instructor ([rkmartin@kc.rr.com](mailto:rkmartin@kc.rr.com)). Late papers will suffer a reduced grade.

- **Do NOT write to me**, as the prof. Instead, pretend that you are addressing a leadership group in your ministry setting (e.g., church council, trustees, leadership team, etc.) who are ready to learn from the material. *Identify the audience at the top of the paper.* They have not read the material, so you have to be mindful of them so they can understand what you are saying. Pretend that there are a few in the group who will be skeptical of everything that you say, so you need to provide evidence and good reasoning for your claims. However, do not put a lot of fluff in the paper. Write succinctly and substantively; don’t ‘dumb down’ the material. The main purpose of the paper is to critically engage the texts, even though you will be writing to an intelligent but uninformed audience.
- **Allow the texts to inform and guide you.** Because academic papers are exercises in clarifying and refining your thinking, make sure that you recognize when the resources are challenging your ‘default’ theological understandings. Clarify similarities and distinctions between course texts and your perspective. For the sake of the exercise, let the texts mentor you. Strive to understand each text as a whole. Try to avoid only getting from the text what you think you need (approach the text as if it is going to teach you something you didn’t know you needed to know).
- **Critically engage the texts:** It is best to assume that the texts’ perspective IS DIFFERENT from your perspective so you need to listen carefully to THEIR meaning. Understand and use the terms accurately and precisely. Understand the text as a whole, its overarching thesis, its perspective. Then, understand each part of the text in terms of the whole. Identify limitations and weaknesses of it. Strive to avoid projecting your understandings upon the texts; draw upon the texts accurately. Also, the resources above do not all agree. Strive to compare and contrast them in order to better refine theological thinking as a spiritual discipline. If you do not understand what ‘critical engagement’ is, let me know by email, and I will send you some guidance. These are NOT reflection papers.



- The primary purpose of an academic paper is to hone the skills of analysis and explication: to think more clearly, more disciplined, more informed, and to communicate your thinking more fully.
- Do not just read the texts for what you think you will need to know now, for your circumstances will change. Strive to open yourself to the texts, especially those that are difficult or are different from your perspective. Read the texts thoroughly so that you can absorb the information, and store the information for later so you can retrieve it 10 years from now, to use when you are in a completely different context.
- If you have ANY questions about this assignment or about the writing protocol, write an email to me. Really. Do it. I'm happy to talk with you!

**Criteria for Assignments:**

- a) Is your expression **coherent**? Are there well-formed ideas? Do the ideas flow logically?
- b) Is your expression **informed**? Does it appropriate the presentations, readings, discussions, and observations within the course? Is it guided by the resources? This is important: the assignment should demonstrate an appreciative and critical understanding of the course materials.
- c) Is your expression **thoughtful**? Does it reveal an ability to think carefully and critically about ideas, situations, practices, and yourself?
- d) Is your expression **constructive**? Does it reveal an ability to think creatively and practically?
- e) Does your expression have **integrity**, making proper attribution when other sources are used?
- f) **Praxis**: does the assignment demonstrate an ability to relate ecclesiology to situations creatively, constructively, and critically.

Note: the Final Assignment will be described in the syllabus, as it is released in the next 2 weeks.