

Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study
March 17 &18, 2017; April 22, May 13, 2017
Held at the Comfort Inn of Exton, Pa and the UMC of West Chester

COS 123PH: Formation and Discipleship

Faculty: Rev. Dr. Truman Brooks, UMC of West Chester, 129 S. High St., West Chester, PA 19382
610-692-5190 tbrooksumcwc@gmail.com

Objective:

This course grounds the student in the theology and core practices of personal and congregational formation and discipleship.

Goals:

1. Articulate a theological basis for the Wesleyan emphasis on spiritual disciplines and practice them as a means of grace.
2. Explain and implement the General Rules and the practices of small groups in a congregation.
3. Educate and resource a congregation in the disciplines of Christian formation
4. Organize congregations to help people discern their callings and gifts for ministry.

Textbooks:

You may also order your books from Cokesbury, Amazon, or any other bookseller or borrow from friends.

Required Texts:

Matthaei, Sondra Higgins, *Formation in Faith: The Congregational Ministry of Making Disciples* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008). ISBN 978-0-687-64973-0

Thompson, Marjorie, J., *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995). ISBN 0-664-25548-5

2012 *Book of Discipline*

Supplemental Texts:

Tye, Karen, *Christian Education in the Small Membership Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008). ISBN: 978-0-687-65099-6

The two supplemental texts by Barbara Bruce (below) both discuss the theory of multiple intelligences; one applies the theory to teaching adults, the other to teaching children. It is not necessary to read both. I recommend students pick the age group which they feel the least comfortable teaching, and read that book.

Bruce, Barbara, *7 Ways of Teaching the Bible to Adults: Using Our Multiple Intelligences to Build Faith* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000). ISBN 978-0-687-09084-6

or

Bruce, Barbara, *7 Ways of Teaching the Bible to Children* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996). ISBN 0-687-02068-9

Assignments:

Pre-course assignment:

Read *Christian Education in the Small membership Church* and prepare to discuss during first weekend.

Written assignments—each written assignment should be 10 pages in length, double spaced with one inch margins and 12 point font (Times New Roman or Calibri).

Assignment Part 1 Due April 22, 2017

Read Matthaëi, Sondra Higgins, *Formation in Faith*.

1. Answer the questions on page 16 under “Personal Experience in the Church.”
2. Complete the table on page 17 (no more than two pages)
3. In your own words, summarize and contrast the different models of how people grow in faith explained in chapter 2. Which of these best fits with your personal experience? How might these models assist you in designing a program for Christian formation in your congregation?
4. Complete Appendix 1 on page 109.

Assignment Part 2 Due May 13, 2017

Read Thompson, Marjorie J., *Soul Feast*.

Please note that question 3 requires you to practice an unfamiliar spiritual discipline for at least a week before writing about it. Give yourself time to complete the assignment.

1. In chapter 1, Thompson writes about the factors contributing to spiritual hunger in our time. Which of these factors do you see at work in your congregation and community? What other factors do you see contributing to spiritual hunger?
2. If we are saved by grace, what is the role of spiritual disciplines? What would you say to a member of your congregation who complains that emphasizing spiritual disciplines such as fasting and prayer is a form of works-righteousness?
3. Pick one of the spiritual disciplines explored by Thompson. Please pick a discipline that is new to you, or the one that is the least familiar. Spend at least one week intentionally practicing it and write a reflection on your experience. Did you experience this discipline as a means of grace? In what ways? How might you introduce this discipline to a congregation?

Go to <http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-assessment> and take the Multiple Intelligences Self Assessment. Record your results and be prepared to discuss them during the course.

Items we will cover during the course:

- Theology of Christian education and spiritual formation
- What’s Wesley got to do with it?

- The General Rules and the means of grace – why “stay in love with God” doesn’t really capture the 3rd rule.
- “Enculturation” or the whole-church model of spiritual formation
- Human development and faith development
- Learning styles and multiple intelligences
- Curricula selection: the good, the bad, and the ugly, and how to tell them apart
- Designing accessible formation programs: learning differences, disabilities, illiteracy, and other issues.

Grading:

The instructor assumes 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 review their work to identify strengths and problems.

A “B” means that the basic elements of the assignment have been faithfully included, the argument is internally coherent, and clearly articulated.

A “B+” means the assignment is also well crafted.

An “A-“ means that the assignment is not only well crafted, but it also 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 prior knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject. In other words, it shows the student’s imagination at work; it has a creative edge.

A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus, tends to reveal more the writer’s opinions than the results of the writer’s analysis, and lacks reflective insight into the issues being discussed.

A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and/or class discussions to engaging them with issues being discussed; it may indicate inappropriate or misuse of data and readings.

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

Inclusive Language

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology. Inclusive language respects both gender and racial diversity, and students should demonstrate awareness that language about persons and God expresses values and impacts theological ideas in the details of race and gender connotations. Both gender and race are socially-constructed categories, and changing language is part of bringing justice to theological discourse.

Academic Policies

Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes in their entirety. Faculty members have the authority to set attendance policies for particular courses and those policies will be included in the course syllabus. Deviation from the attendance policy may result in reduction of grade or loss of credit for the course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is regarded as a serious offense and will result in substantial penalties, including the possibility of academic dismissal. The faculty regards the following as forms of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- Copying from another student's paper
- Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance to or from another student during an examination
- Using unauthorized material during an examination
- Borrowing or presenting as one's own (i.e. without proper attribution) the composition or ideas of another.

Please refer to your Wesley Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley's academic policies or contact the Course of Study office 202-885-8688 or coshelp@wesleyseminary.edu.