

**Wesley Theological Seminary Course of Study; New England Satellite School  
COS 123: Formation and Discipleship | April 17-18, 2020 and May 22-23, 2020**

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**This course will take place at the Rock Church in Plaistow, NH. Please check the Wesley website for location information.**

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

**Goals:**

1. Articulate a theological and historical basis for the practice of spiritual disciplines, with emphasis on the Wesleyan traditions.
2. Explain and discuss the General Rules and their applicability to spiritual formation in congregations.
3. Educate and resource a congregation in the disciplines of Christian formation
4. Equip individuals and congregations to discern their callings and gifts for ministry.

**Textbooks:**

To obtain textbooks or view the list go to **My Wesley** on the website (<https://www.wesleyseminary.edu/MyWesley>) and click on the button that says “Textbooks” From there select your program (Course of Study Summer Intensive), then select your course number. You may order books on-line directly from our e-store.

You may also order your books from Cokesbury 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

Blair, Christine Eaton, *The Art of Teaching the Bible: A Practical Guide for Adults*, (Louisville: Geneva Press, 2001). ISBN 0-664-50148-6

Nouwen, Henri, *The Living Reminder: Service and Prayer in Memory of Jesus Christ*, (HarperOne, 1977). ISBN 978-0-86683-915-0

2012 *Book of Discipline*

**Supplemental Texts:** (not required, but recommended)

*An Introduction to Christian Spirituality*, ed. Ralph Waller and Benedicta Ward, (London: SPCK 1999. ISBN 0-281-05226-3 (especially for chs. 6-7 on the place of Wesley in the history of Christian spirituality.) This book may be out of print, but is available used on Amazon.

Nouwen, Henri, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, (New York: Crossroad, 1989) ISBN 0-8245-0915-3

Merton, Thomas, *Life and Holiness*, (NY: Crown Publishing, Image Reprint 2013 of 1963 edition) ISBN: 978-0-385-06277-0

Wesley, John, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, Pantianos Classics, First published 1738.

Kalajainen, Larry R, *The Bible Says. . . How Good Is the Good Book?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013). I will have a supply of these available at class time at my cost( \$10) for any student wishing to purchase one. I will also send by email a set of study guides for use in a Bible Study group for anyone who wishes one. This book examines what the Bible is (or is not), how it came to be, what kind of authority it has, and how it may be legitimately be said to be “the word of God.”

**Assignments:**

**Written assignments—each written assignment should be 9-12 pages in length, double spaced with one inch margins and 12 point font (Times New Roman or Calibri).**

**Suggestions for the number of pages for each question are not fixed limits, but papers should not exceed 12 pages total.**

**Assignment Part 1 Due April 17, 2020**

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 and in your own life? What other factors do you see contributing to spiritual hunger? ( 1 pages)
2. Of the spiritual disciplines described by Thompson in chs. 2-8, write about your reactions to, and experience with, them—what drew you to those particular disciplines, how long have you practiced them, and what impact they have had on your life and your prayer? (2-3 pages)

3. Which of the disciplines have you not practiced or which you attempted but discontinued? What was it about those disciplines that you did not find helpful or which made you uncomfortable? Explore your reactions/experiences with those disciplines (2-3 pages)

4. Pick one of the spiritual disciplines explored by Thompson *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 (or not) this discipline as a means of grace? In what ways? Reflect on how might you introduce this discipline to a congregation? (2-3 pages)

Read Nouwen, Henri, *The Living Reminder: Prayer and Service in Memory of Jesus Christ*.

How do you respond to Nouwen's characterization of ministry as healing, sustaining, and guiding, and its relationship to prayer? (2-3 pages)

### **Assignment Part 2, Due May 22, 2020**

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

1. Answer the questions on page 16 under "Personal Experience in the Church." (1 page)

2. 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 understandings of how persons grow in faith assist you in designing a program for Christian formation in your congregation? (2-3 pages)

4. In ch. 4, Matthaëi mentions Maria Harris's use of the term "curriculum" as a useful way to envision the "whole church" or "enculturation" model of personal and congregational formation. Using that model, reflect on how you might apply it in a congregational setting—either the congregation you're now part of, or one you envision serving. (2-3 pages)

4. Complete Appendix 1 on page 109 (1page)

Read Blair, Christine, *The Art of Teaching the Bible*.

1. Which of the four models of biblical interpretation in ch. 1 is/are you most familiar with in your experience of studying the Bible in church? Which is/are unfamiliar to you?(1 page)

2. What is your reaction to Blair's discussion in ch. 2 of the variety of ways adults learn? Which of them speaks to the way you prefer to learn? (1 page)

3. How useful is her discussion in ch. 3 about the method she calls "the Five Rs" of Bible Study? What is appealing to you or not about this method? (2 pages)

4. Do you find her metaphor of the Three Primary Colors more or less appealing and useful than the Five Rs, and why or why not? (2 pages)

### **Items we will cover during the course:**

- Education and formation in the local congregation: The pastor as resident theologian and spiritual guide for the local congregation
- 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 3<sup>rd</sup> rule.
- Becoming a “proficient” or “regular” Christian
- “Enculturation” or the whole-church model of spiritual formation
- Human development and faith development
- Paying attention to how your church welcomes outsiders
- The worship service(s) as means of teaching and forming a communion of faith
- 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. You are expected to use correct grammar and correct spelling. (I prefer use of the Oxford comma—“google” it if you don't know what it is.) Unless your grammatical usage is abominable, minor mistakes will not detract from your grade, but I will mark them for your own edification.

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.

An “F” means the individual needs to see me immediately.

### **Inclusive Language**

In both oral and written contributions to the course, students are expected to be conscious of the power of language in theology, especially in relation to gender identity and what we commonly call “race.” In fact, there is no biological or genetic basis for race in the sense that we commonly use the term; it is a socially-constructed notion, which often is used by one group to discriminate against or exercise power over another. There is only one true race—the human race.

There is a (not fully understood) biological component in gender, but not a strictly binary male/female one, as previously imagined. We now know that gender is a spectrum, and deeply tied to one’s psycho-sexual self-understanding and identity which are, at least partly, socially-determined as well. Sensitivity to these issues in speaking and writing is part of bringing justice to theological discourse. In the interests of good writing style it is preferable when using the personal pronoun to alternate between he/him and she/her when the pronoun is not specifically referring to a particular man or particular woman.

### **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 form of plagiarism or dishonesty:

- Copying from another students 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.