Wesley Theological Seminary
Course of Study
Winter 2026 (online)
January (asynchronous) and February 20-21 (synchronous)

Syllabus

COS 123: Formation and Discipleship
Faculty: Dr. Sherri E. Wood-Powe
Primary E-mail: spowe@wesleyseminary.edu
Secondary E-mail: pastorsewp@gmail.com
Please use both email addresses above. NOTE: Communicating with me through Blackboard will likely have a delayed response since the Blackboard email is NOT connected to our Wesley email.

COS Orientation, Wednesday, December 17 at 10 AM
(ZOOM information to the provided by the WST COS Office)

ZOOM Office Hours: opportunity to meet and discuss assignments
Monday, January 5 at 6 PM – 7 PM (EST)
Saturday, January 10 at 12 noon (EST)

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

Objectives:
1. Articulate a theological basis for the Wesleyan emphasis on spiritual disciplines and practice them as 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.

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

2. Thompson, Marjorie, J., *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life,* revised edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014). ISBN 13: 9780664261153

Supplemental Texts:
3. CHOOSE ONE
    A. Campen, Tanya Marie Eustace. *Holy Work with Children: Making Meaning Together*. (Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2021). ISBN: 978-1725296209
    B. Crutchfield, Carmichael D. *The Formation of a People: Christian Education and the African American Church*. (Judson Press, 2020). ISBN: 978-0817018160
    C. Lytle, Julie Anne. *Faith Formation 4.0*. (Morehouse Publishing, 2013). ISBN: 978-0819228314
    D. Tye, Karen B., Christian Education in the Small Membership Church. (Abingdon, 2008). ISBN: 978-0687650996

Required Reference Document

The General Rules of the United Methodist Church
Discipleship Ministries | The General Rules (umcdiscipleship.org)

Technical Requirements

Microsoft Windows
- Windows 8 or higher
- Intel Core i5 or higher or AMD equivalent
- At least 16GB of free storage space

Mac OS/X
- OS/XMac OS X 10.14 or newer
- Intel processor and at least 4 GB of RAM

All Systems
- Up-to-date browser: Firefox, Chrome, Safari, Edge (click here for Blackboard browser checker)
- Up-to-date PDF reader (Adobe or FoxIt)
- Up-to-date version of Adobe Flash Player
- Up-to-date video player:
- Windows Media player or
- VideoLAN VLC media player
- Up-to-date Word processor and presentation package (Wesley Theological Seminary offers free Office 365 Basic for students click here for instructions on how to download)
- High speed internet connection

Other Technical Requirements
Student should have a web cam and microphone. USB headset and microphone may be beneficial to block out noise.

Assignment Instructions
All assignments should display a knowledge of and understanding of the book contents. References to the readings should be included throughout your assignments.

Please pay attention to the due dates for all assignments.

Please note that all assignments are in Blackboard under Course Content. <u>Follow the instructions</u> to complete the assignment. Instructions are also included for Navigating Blackboard and Tech Info. If you run into trouble, please contact edtech@wesleyseminary.edu for help.

If you are new to Course of Study at Wesley, please be sure to check Blackboard once you receive your login information from the IT department. It is the responsibility of the student to check Blackboard for posts.

Orientation: December 17 at 10 AM
The Course of Study Programs Office is offering an orientation. Participation is calculated as part of the course grade, so non-participation may impact your final course grade. The orientation will include a breakout session to review the syllabus and ask questions about the assignments.

Office Hours: January 5 at 6 PM, January 10 at 12 noon
This is an opportunity to meet with the course instructor and ask questions about the assignments. Participation in these sessions are NOT required.

Asynchronous Work

o   READ MATTHAEI, SONDRA HIGGINS, *FORMATION IN FAITH*.

Assignment 1: Communion of Grace Assessment (10)
Using the tables at the end of chapter 2 of the Matthaei book, assess the strengths and areas of growth for the congregation(s) you are currently serving. Please complete separate <u>tables</u> for each congregation you are serving. (NOTE: I prefer you submit this assignment formatted as a table. If you are unable to do so, please be diligent in providing a similar format – columns)
Due January 5

Assignment 2: Forming Faith Assessment (10)
Complete the table in Appendix IV of the Matthaei book. Please complete separate tables for each congregation you are serving. (NOTE: I prefer you submit this assignment formatted as a table. If you are unable to do so, please be diligent in providing a similar format - columns)
Due January 5

o   READ THOMPSON, MARJORIE J., *SOUL FEAST*.

Assignment 3: Spiritual Disciplines and Faith Formation (10)
Respond to the question Thompson asks on page 15, "How do you understand the connection between inward growth and outward expressions of faith." In other words, how are spiritual disciplines relevant to Christian formation and discipleship?
Your response should be at least 1 page with evidence from required readings.
Due January 12

Assignment 4: Spiritual Hunger (15)
In chapter 1, Thompson writes about the factors contributing to spiritual hunger in our time. There are two different ways to interpret hunger. Be certain you understand which way she is using the term.

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 pages max)
Due January 19

Assignment 5: Works Righteousness (10)
If we are saved by grace, what is the role of spiritual disciplines? The concept of "works righteousness" says that we are saved because God approves of the good things we do, and if we do enough good things we get into heaven. 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? (2 pages max)
Due January 26

o CHOOSE A TEXT FROM THE SUPPLEMENTAL LIST ON PAGE 1 OF THIS DOCUMENT.

Assignment 6: Curriculum for Teaching the General Rules (15)
Develop a curriculum for teaching the General Rules OR base this assignment on an existing curriculum. If using an existing curriculum, please be sure to reference the curriculum. This curriculum should be developed using the required and supplemental readings for this course. Be sure to reference them **throughout** the assignment. This curriculum should be designed with the congregation AND community you are serving in mind. If you are serving more than one congregation, please select only one congregation for this assignment. (5 pages max)
The model should include the following:
o Organizational structure provided by Matthaei so a plan for persons new to the faith, maturing Christians, and mature Christians.
o Address spiritual hunger in congregation and community.
o Progression from information to transformation – process for assisting to incorporate learnings into daily living. (5 pages max)
Due February 2

Assignment 7: A Model for Christian Formation (20)
Develop a model for Christian Formation using the supplemental text you chose from the book list on page 1. The required readings should also be referenced. This model should be designed with the congregation you are serving in mind. If you are serving more than one congregation, please select only one congregation for this assignment. NOTE: This model is **not** necessarily based on current Faith Formation practices at your churches. This model **IS** something for you to implement at your churches to enhance/improve your current practices be incorporating learnings from this course. (5 pages max)

The model should include the following:
o Vision Statement – include the purpose of Christian formation from a biblical perspective, and understanding of the role of Christian formation in ecclesia life.
o Contextual Analysis – description of the congregation with demographic data, socio-cultural factors relevant to providing Christian Formation.
o Content – Scripture, doctrine, and resources.

- Curriculum – Selection of materials to meet the faith formation need in your congregation.
- Methods – Creatively incorporate a variety of learning opportunity opportunities sensitive to the population (children, adults, teens, hybrid, in person, virtual). What methods are you planning to use and how?
- Recruiting – outline strategies that reflect awareness of how to identify and motivate gifted teachers.
- Training – outline a training for the teachers that accommodates a variety of learning styles and provides training for specific contexts and age groups.

A rubric will be provided to assist you in developing a Christian Formation Model.

Attention should be given to creativity, usage of class resources, and grammar.

Due February 14

Synchronous ZOOM Sessions
February 20-21 Mandatory
Class Participation (10%)

Submission
Each assignment should be submitted in its entirety in electronic format through Blackboard by the deadline stated above.

Formatting
All assignments should be 12pt font, Calibri (or equivalent) font, double spaced, 1" margins, with inserted page numbers.

Footnotes
Parenthetical notations are preferred.

Grading:
Grades will be based on proficiency of assignments, preparedness for class, and class participation.

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.

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

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

A "D" means the individual needs to see me.

An "F" means the individual needs to see me immediately.

Grades may be reduced 5 points for assignments submitted after the due date.

<u>**Inclusive Language**</u>
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.

<u>**Plagiarism**</u>
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 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.
- The use of artificial intelligence (AI) without citation, presenting as one's own work.

Please refer to your Wesley Student Handbook (on-line) for more information about Wesley's academic policies, *especially regarding the use of artificial intelligence (AI)* or contact the Course of Study office.