

CE1515: Education I

Mary Hess
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Tues/Thurs 9:05 am to 12:30 pm
NW230

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Course rationale:

The general field of education, and the more specific and distinct landscape of religious education, is undergoing a renaissance as new voices and visions from multiple contexts and cultures are heard. This course provides a basic introduction to Christian education in the U.S. context, as well as an overview of relevant issues and practical strategies for providing educational leadership in the congregational context.

Course goals:

1. Provide an intellectual and experiential context in which the encounter with God in the midst of educational praxis is respected, honored and critically engaged.
2. Provide conceptual and experiential connections between scholarly conversations about Christian education, and the praxis of Christian education in various contexts.
3. Investigate various pedagogical strategies for nourishing growth in Christian faith.
4. Provide resources for identifying and critically engaging one's own praxis as a Christian educator.
5. Identify pressing educational challenges faced by specific communities of faith, and locate resources that can engage those challenges constructively.

For whom is this course intended?

Participants in Education I are typically diverse, coming from many parts of the world and from varying denominational and educational backgrounds. This course is designed to support at least the following two groups of people:

1. People new to Christian education who are interested in an orientation to the field, and an entry point into historical context and pressing contemporary issues.
2. People with significant experience in Christian education who wish to deepen and/or widen their understanding of the field, and who desire to cultivate their skills in research and theorizing.

Some notes on pedagogical process:

This course is designed to facilitate an integration of the scholarly materials under consideration with experiences and ideas that come out of your own contexts. While I will provide substantive class presentations that direct our explorations and structure our collaboration, it is up to each of you to prepare appropriately for our work together, and to engage in respectful and constructive dialogue. Towards that end, class participation is vital, and requires not only physical presence, but diligent and thoughtful preparation. It is also crucial that you have a contextual site in which you can situate your reflections and other exercises. If you are not currently in a contextual education site, please contact me to discuss alternative possibilities.

Required Books:

To Know as We are Known
Parker Palmer
HarperSanFrancisco, 1993

Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions
Mary Boys
Sheed & Ward, 1993

Fashion Me a People
Maria Harris
Westminster/John Knox, 1989

Practicing Our Faith
Ed. by Dorothy Bass
Jossey-Bass, 1998

Nurturing Faith
A reproducible resource from
Augsburg Fortress.

Highly Recommended Books:

How the way we talk can change the way we work
Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey

Kids, parents and power struggles
Mary Sheedy Kurcinka

Course requirements:

1. Engaged and constructive participation in all class sessions (including any group presentations that may be assigned). There are very few excuses that make sense for missing class since we are only meeting eight times. On the other hand, I also understand that life sometimes intervenes in creating its own learning opportunities. Please contact me via e-mail or voicemail if you cannot be present in class. Please feel welcomed to bring children to class if they would be the only reason you could not be present.
2. Development of personal learning goals for the course, to be outlined in two paragraphs or less, and handed in on January 15. You can find a form for doing this at the end of the syllabus.
3. There is never enough time in a half course to adequately discuss the books and ideas we will be encountering. To try to enhance your work with these texts I am asking you to write five 2-3 page reflection essays (roughly one a session, you choose which sessions). There are questions embedded in the syllabus that you could work on, or you can simply pick up on ideas from the readings and extend them with your own reflections.
3. Participation in two small group presentations. The first is an exercise that explores classic expressions of religious education, and will be due either the 17th or the 22nd of January, depending on which group you are in. The second is an exercise utilizing Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. This will be due in class on the 24th of January.
4. Your choice either of the presentation of a "Faith fair" exhibit (details in Appendix 1), due in class on January 29th; a "poster presentation" (see Appendix 2), due in class on January 29th; a final paper (12-15 pages) due January 31 (details in Appendix 3), or a final exam offered the week following the class. You should make a choice of assignment based on your learning goals. Keep in mind that if you think you'll be interested in pursuing graduate study and you'll want a reference from me, a final research paper would be an appropriate assignment. Your initial learning goal statement should make your choice of assignment explicit.
5. Submission of a final one-page statement of your learning in the course, due January 31. This should include the following: your learning goals and any revisions you made in them, what you learned from any responses to your work, and what you think you learned overall from the course (including what elements of the course facilitated and hindered your learning).

Course schedule:

8 January: Who are we? What is our context? Where do we begin?

Introductions to each other
Orientation to course rhythm
Context issues

Questions to keep in mind:

What is your preferred learning style?
What kinds of learning goals are appropriate for your work in this course?
What is education? What is Christian education?
What will you need to know to shape teaching and learning in your contexts?

Assignment of small groups for the classic expressions exercise.

Learning resources treasure hunt exercise handed out today will be due on January 15.

10 January: Class plenary cancelled due to Convocation.

Please pursue the writing of your learning goals, work on reading assignments, begin to write, and finish the treasure hunt exercise. If you are attending convocation you should feel invited to reflect upon your experience in one of your short papers. You can also use this time to prepare for your classic expression group exercise.

15 January: Nurturing communities of truth and learning (purpose, epistemology)

Read:
Parker Palmer, *To Know as We Are Known*
Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People*

Please bring to class a written statement of your learning goals for the class (no more than one page).

Questions to keep in mind:

What does it mean “to know”?
How would you describe the process of learning something? Of teaching something?
How might you distinguish between “education” and “religious education” or “Christian education”?
What is the subject of religious education?
Why should someone want to be involved in religious education?

What do you know about religious education in your specific community of faith? (either locally, or at large in your denomination)

17 January: Mapping the history and contexts of Christian education over time (context, history)

Read:

Mary Boys, *Maps and Visions: Educating in Faith*

Questions to keep in mind:

What do you know of the history of religious education?

What is your own history of religious education?

What are the central dynamics of educating in faith?

Where does religious education occur? When does it occur?

How has music carried your religious identity (if at all)?

What might be specifically Lutheran about religious education, historically?

What is a “classic expression” of religious education?

What are some core questions Boys raises?

Small group exercises based on classic expressions of religious education (small groups to be assigned in the first meeting of the class).

Evangelism and Christian education groups will present this session.

22 January: Mapping the history and contexts of Christian education over time (context, history) continued

Further small group exercises. Religious education and Catholic education groups will present this session.

Towards the end of this session we will divide into different small groups, and you will need to prepare to present on January 24 an exercise using one form of multiple intelligence. More details are available in Appendix 4.

24 January: Curriculum and learning principles (social science theories, ways to support learning)

Read:

Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach

Jane Vella

Nurturing Faith

Augsburg Fortress

Small group exercises on multiple intelligences.

Your small group should come to class prepared to present their multiple intelligences exercise resource (see Appendix 4).

Questions to keep in mind:

How can theories from social science support our work?

What are your own convictions about the utility (or lack thereof) of developmental theory?

What could and should “curriculum” look like in your religious contexts?

What questions do the social scientists neglect to ask?

What questions do the social scientists raise that the theologians, or other religious educators we’ve engaged, ignore?

29 January: Curriculum and learning principles (social science theories, ways to support learning)

Faith Fair exhibits are to be presented today (see Appendix for details). Poster presentations are also due today (see Appendix for details).

Highly recommended reading but not required (at least one of the following):

How the way we talk can change the way we work

Robert Kegan and Lisa Lahey

Kids, parents and power struggles

Mary Sheedy Kurcinka

Questions to keep in mind:

How would you characterize the kinds of learning that Kegan and Lahey, and/or Sheedy, are trying to foster?

What might be the most pressing learning tasks that adults face in our cultures?

How might religious educators support adult learning?

How do these ideas interact with Vella's?

31 January: Wisdom from practice and wisdom from scholarship (hands-on contextualization issues and presentations)

Read:

Dorothy Bass, *Practicing our Faith*

Questions to keep in mind:

What does it mean to “practice one’s faith”?

How does this book support or challenge your emerging understanding of your own role in creating and nurturing learning environments?

A final statement of your learning goals, with critical self evaluation, is due today. Final papers are due today.

The date of the final exam, if you've chosen that option, will be announced today. (It will be sometime in the week following this class, most likely on a Tuesday or Thursday morning).

Appendix 1:

A "Faith fair" is a lot like a science fair: it's an attempt to share what you've learned and are learning on pertinent topics. In this case, I'd like you to focus on your contextual education site. Choose some part of your site's educational program (remembering Harris' comment that a church doesn't 'have' an educational program it 'is' an educational program), and use it as the centerpiece of your exhibit. You should find a way to highlight what is excellent about this opportunity for teaching/ learning, and also point out at least one growing edge. Keep in mind that when you've finished this assignment, it could be a nice gift to give back to your contextual education site. In any case, assume that it will have a public venue of some sort.

An example: perhaps you've chosen your church's small group ministry. Your exhibit might describe that ministry, highlight some particularly good aspects of it (using Vella's or Boys' principles as criteria for this excellence is especially welcomed), and include photos of people involved with it, contact information, etc. etc. You might point to a growing edge such as the need to help the ministry move from community-building to mission and outreach.

Another example: perhaps your church is particularly good at supporting parents in their efforts to nurture their child's faith at home. Your exhibit might explain how your community goes about doing this, and provide rich examples and interactive exercises showcasing this kind of family ministry. The growing edge might be a pragmatic suggestion aimed at helping this family ministry support media literacy.

Your exhibit should utilize a three-fold cardboard base (available via many office supply and arts/crafts stores), and include some form of interactivity. There are many sites on the Net that help kids work on science fair exhibits. You might visit them for ideas on your Faith Fair exhibit (eg.

<http://school.discovery.com/sciencefaircentral/scifairstudio/handbook/display.html>, <http://www.ipl.org/youth/projectguide/presentation.html>, and so on).

Your exhibit should include a short paper (3-5 pages) that presents your case for the excellence of the learning/teaching program or event that you are sharing. This paper should make reference to materials we've covered during the course. When we present the exhibits in class on the 2nd, be prepared to make a short presentation alongside your exhibit.

Appendix 2:

A “poster presentation” is similar to what is done at many scholarly guild meetings when more work needs to be presented than there is time available in which to present. The first part of the task is to choose a resource from the Wabash Center Bibliography (<http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/buchanan.html>). Once you’ve read (or otherwise engaged, as appropriate) the resource, then you need to distill it into a set of concise statements, and embed them either into a poster (approx. 3’ by 5’), a web site, or a brief powerpoint presentation. You should include a 3-5 page paper accompanying your visual presentation, and be prepared to entertain questions in class.

Appendix 3:

Please note: final papers are a way to work on a question or concern, a theory or a theology that we have not covered well in class. It is expected that you will do research and use materials beyond those from class. Here are some ideas that might get you started:

Choose a curriculum currently in use in your contextual ed setting and utilize the Boys grid and the Vella principles to identify its theological commitments, pedagogical choices, and so on. Describe your setting. In what ways does the curriculum meet the needs of your context, and in what ways does it not? What would you suggest by way of improving the curriculum and its implementation in your setting? Make sure that your suggestions have some corroboration and grounding in the educational literature.

Design a survey for your contextual ed site that seeks to determine what kinds of questions people would like to explore in the context of Christian education and/or faith formation in general. Give the survey to at least 15% of the congregation in your site. Choose a method for interpreting the data, and develop an analysis that would be appropriate to share with the congregation. Your “write-up” must explain your methodological choices, as well as the conclusions you come to.

Choose a resource from the Wabash Center bibliography (available on line at: <http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/resources/buchanan.html>) and engage in a conversation with it from your own context/situation. In what ways do you find the resource’s ideas compelling and evocative in your situation, and in what ways does your location provide a trenchant critique of its ideas? Be sure that you have identified the main arguments of the resource, and commented on them directly. You should also provide enough information describing your setting to ensure that I can grasp your arguments.

Appendix 4:

An exercise in working with multiple forms of intelligence

Before you can do this exercise, you will need to read the short chapter I hand out in class. You will have the last hour of our class meeting on January 22nd to prepare, as well as whatever other time your group arranges. Your group will present in class on January 24th.

Your small group is working on _____

The other members of your group are:

Using the story of the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:1-20) as your central topic, prepare a learning event for a specific group of people that deliberately engages the form of intelligence you've been assigned. You will have to specify what group you're preparing for (include the number of people involved, their age range, their cultural backgrounds, church affiliations, and so on), the amount of time you expect this event to require, and the kinds of practical preparations necessary (what kinds of materials do you need on hand, how will you set up the physical space in which the group meets, and so on). Part of your planning should include a clear description of what you hope to accomplish, and you should use Vella's principles as checklist.

Your group will have five minutes to describe the event you've prepared. Given the constraints of time, please develop a handout that describes the characteristics of the form of intelligence your group is working on, that describes your planned event, and that summarizes the necessary preparations. After this session I will copy these handouts and give each of you a complete set. Please make sure that yours is legible and that you cite appropriately any published materials you propose that people use.

Contact Information and Learning Goals Sheet

Name_____

E-mail address (or phone if you don't do e-mail)_____

My learning goals for this course are as follows (please provide some rationale to accompany them):

I will do the following final assignment (Faith Fair, poster presentation, final paper, final exam, etc.). [Please note: if you are choosing to do a final paper, please give me some idea of the topic]:

Signature:_____

A treasure hunt to explore Luther Seminary's learning resources

The answers to the following questions are available by engaging the rich learning resources available on Luther Seminary's campus. The Learning Resource system includes the library, the regional resource center on the lower level of Gullixson, electronic resources, and many other elements of our campus. Feel free to work on this exercise with a partner or two, and make sure you keep track of what you learn (not just in terms of answers to these specific questions, but of your own experience of the process).

When and where did Martin Luther say "marriage is a hospital for sick souls"?

What is the last verse of "a hymn from TFBF:"?

What Thomas Groome's definition of religious education?

What are the three kinds of curriculum Elliott Eisner speaks of?

Find a liturgy to support a congregation that wants to help families grieve for miscarried pregnancies.

What would be a good basic job description for a Christian education director? (make sure you note the size of congregation for which the job description was written)

Name one author's description of the general characteristics of GenerationX, and how that generation conceives of itself spiritually.

Name a contemporary pop film that would help open up the problem of disproportionate access to and consumption of natural resources.

What is standard Lutheran practice in using the American flag during military funerals?

What is a common place of pilgrimage on the Luther Seminary campus?

When was the Oswego church built, and when was it moved?

How does a student at Luther go about setting up a personal web page at Luther?