CE1515: Education I

Mary Hess
Summer term 2003
June 16-20
9:00 am – 3 pm
NW232

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Course description:

This course is intended primarily for students in the Master of Divinity program, and is a prerequisite for all of the Education II core electives. Students explore three dimensions of Christian education: identifying the congregation as a learning community, equipping people for their teaching/learning tasks, and connecting the learning community with vocation in the world.

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.


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.

Some notes on process:

Given the intensive nature of this course, and the short time period we have to work in, I have structured our time based on the following assumptions. First, a half course at Luther generally assumes 18-20 hours of contact time. Second, some of you will want to complete this course entirely within the week available, and others will choose to spread it out over the rest of the month. Given these assumptions, each day we will meet in two large group time periods. We will begin at 9:00 am and work until we break for chapel.
Then, we will meet again from 10:30 until 12:30 pm. At 12:30 we will break for lunch. After lunch we will meet in small groups, with specific assignments to be completed. Generally I am assuming that these groups will meet for 60 minutes, from 1:30 to 2:30 pm, but you could choose to incorporate a meal into your time together or choose a different time/place to meet. In general, however, the assumption is that each day your group will work together for 60 minutes. This schedule adds up to 3 hours of large group meeting, and one hour of small group meeting, each day for a total of 20 contact hours over the course of the week.

In addition, the general Luther assumption about individual preparation would add 8 hours of work (that is, 2 additional hours for each one hour of class contact) to your day. Clearly that’s ridiculous to imagine you could complete (if you tried, you’d be working nonstop until 11:00 pm!). Let me just state up front that I recognize that it is unreasonable to expect that you could complete all of the reading for this course in one week, let alone find ways to engage it well. I still believe, however, that these books are important resources that you should own and have available. In an effort to be responsive to our time constraints, however, I’ve made the integrative assignment due on June 30th, and I have completely gotten rid of the final project this course usually requires. We’ll work from here and see how it goes. Please feel free to “think out loud” with me about ways to make the course more effective, given the time constraints we are living with.

**Required Books:**

*To Know As We Are Known*
Parker Palmer
HarperSanFrancisco, 1993

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

*The Church as Learning Community*
Norma Cook Everist
Abingdon, 2002

*Practicing Our Faith*
Ed. by Dorothy Bass

*Nurturing Faith*
A reproducible resource from Augsburg Fortress.

*Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*
Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley
Jossey-Bass, 1999

**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 all small group work). There are very few excuses that make sense for missing class since we are only meeting for one week. On the other hand, I also understand that life sometimes intervenes in creating its own learning opportunities. Please contact me via e-mail as soon as you know you cannot be present in class. Please feel welcomed to bring children to class if they would be the only reason you could not attend (as will I).

2. Development of personal learning goals for the course, to be outlined in two paragraphs or less, and handed in on June 17. You can find a form for doing this at the end of the syllabus.

3. There is not enough time in one week to adequately integrate the ideas we’ll be working with. For that reason, in order to try to enhance your work with the course texts, you need to choose an integrative project. One choice would be to write a learning autobiography (cf. http://www.luthersem.edu/mhess/ce1515/autobio.html), which is my standard assignment in the online version of this course (minimum eight pages). Another choice would be to write four 2-3 page reflection essays (roughly one per book, you choose which books), which is my standard assignment in the six week version of this class. Yet another choice would be to propose an alternative form of integrative work. There are questions embedded in the syllabus that should give you some ideas to begin from. My hunch is that it would be best to work on this every day, handing in one short essay each morning, or adding a section to your autobiography every day. That being said, given the intensive nature of our time together, you may also hand in integrative work up until June 30.

3. Participation in two small group presentations. The first is an exercise utilizing Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences, and will need to be ready for class on Wednesday. The second explores curriculum evaluation, and will need to be ready for Thursday’s session.
Course schedule:

Monday, June 16: Who are we? What is our context? Where do we begin?

Introductions to each other
Orientation to course rhythm
Context issues

Small group work:

Introduce yourselves to each other by talking about your previous experience with small groups. Come up with a list of “rules” to support small group facilitation, and a sense of the pitfalls you’d like to avoid.

Questions to keep in mind while reading Palmer for tomorrow:

What is your preferred learning style?
What kinds of learning goals are appropriate for your work in this course?
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)

Tuesday, June 17: Nurturing communities of truth and learning (purpose, epistemology)

Read for class today:
Parker Palmer, To Know as We Are Known

Please bring to class the form with your learning goals for the class on it (be sure to make a choice about your final required assignment).

Small group work:

Prepare the multiple intelligences exercise (cf. Appendix 1)
Questions to keep in mind while reading Cook for tomorrow:

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?

Wednesday, June 18: Engaging communities of learning…

Read:
Norma Cook Everist, *The Church as Learning Community*  
and
*Nurturing Faith*, a curriculum resource from Augsburg Fortress

Multiple intelligences exercise presentation

Small group work:

Choose a curriculum resource available in class, and assess it using the Boys grids and the Vella principles.

Questions to keep in mind as you read Cook:

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?

Thursday, June 19: Engaging communities of learning, part two…

Continue to read Norma Cook Everist, *The Church as Learning Community*

Small group presentations on curriculum evaluation.
Small group work:

What is your best working definition of religious education? What are the content areas you believe you’d like to work on as you move through the rest of Luther’s curriculum? What are the three most important educational leadership challenges pastoral leaders need to address in today’s context?

Questions to keep in mind while reading Bass and Anderson/Foley:

What does it mean to “practice one’s faith”? To what extent does a “practices” notion fit with Lutheran understandings, or pose contrasting frameworks? How does this book support or challenge your emerging understanding of your own role in creating and nurturing learning environments? What narratives are Christian educators having to engage in media culture? What rituals provide support for Christian education, what rituals detract from it? How would you know? What does a missional congregation look like? How might Christian education support Christian mission? In what ways can educators support the intricate process of “interweaving the Divine and human narratives”?

Friday, June 20: Wisdom from practice and wisdom from scholarship (hands-on contextualization issues and curriculum assessment)

Read:
Dorothy Bass, *Practicing our Faith*

Read:
H. Anderson and E. Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*

An exhibit of previous faith fair presentations, poster presentations, and PPT examples. Challenges of the postmodern context (an example: engagement with the Lord’s Prayer).
Appendix 1:

**An exercise in working with multiple forms of intelligence**

Your small group is working on _______________________

Using the story of Jonah 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]: 