**EL1515: Education I**

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Fall term 2003  
651-641-3232  
Monday evenings  
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm  
GH107  
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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.

3. Investigate various pedagogical strategies for nourishing growth in Christian faith in the midst of a learning community.

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 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.
Required Books:

To Know As We Are Known
Parker Palmer
HarperSanFrancisco, 1993

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

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

Choice of either:

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

Or

The Church as Learning Community
Norma Everist
Abingdon, 2003

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 six 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 (as will I).

2. Personal learning statement, to be produced in an introductory form on September 15, and then to be revised and handed in during the last session of the class. There is more information on this assignment in Appendix 1.

3. There is never enough time in a half course to discuss adequately the books and ideas we will be encountering. To try to enhance your work with these texts I am asking you to write three 2-3 page reflection essays. 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 is due on September 22. The second is an exercise utilizing Gardner’s theory of multiple
intelligences (see Appendix 5). This will be due in class on September 29.

4. Your choice either of the presentation of a “Faith fair” exhibit (details in Appendix 2), due in class on October 6; a “poster presentation” (see Appendix 3), due in class on October 6; a final paper (12-15 pages) due October 13 (details in Appendix 4), 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 statement should make your choice of assignment explicit.

Course schedule:

8 September: 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.

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

Read:
Parker Palmer, To Know as We AreKnown
Boys (the chapter your group is going to be working with)

Please bring to class your initial learning statement (be sure to make a choice about your final required assignment).

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)

Towards the end of this session we will divide into small groups to work on your small group presentations for next week.

Please also be sure to pick up the multiple intelligences handouts in preparation for next week.

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

Read:
Mary Boys, Maps and Visions: Educating in Faith
Also make sure you’ve read the multiple intelligences handouts given out the previous week.

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 presentations based on classic expressions of religious education (small groups were assigned in the first meeting of the class).

Towards the end of this session we will divide into different small groups, and you will be given time to prepare for the 29 September exercise using one form of multiple intelligence. More details are available in Appendix 4.

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

Read the Nurturing Faith handout published by Augsburg Fortress

and one of the following:

Maria Harris, Fashion Me a People

Or
Norma Everist, *The Church as Learning Community*

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?

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

**6 October: Wisdom from practice and wisdom from scholarship (hands-on contextualization issues and curriculum assessment)**

Read:
Dorothy Bass, *Practicing our Faith*

Faith fair presentations (if you’ve chosen to do one) are due today. Poster presentations (if you’ve chosen to do one) are due today.

Questions to keep in mind:

How do you assess whether and how a curriculum might be appropriate for a specific community?
What have you learned from our time together that might provide categories for assessment?
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?

**13 October: Leading into the future...**

Read:
Anderson/Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*

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”?
A final statement of your learning goals, with critical self evaluation, is due today. Final papers (if you’ve chosen to write one) are due today.

The date of the final exam, if you’ve chosen that option, will be announced today.

Appendix 1:

Learning Statement

It’s said that “people teach the way they’ve been taught.” One of my key goals for this class is that you become more reflective about your own learning journeys – both “from whence” you’ve come, as well as where you’re going. What I’d like in a learning statement is some sense as you begin the course of what you’d like to accomplish. I can’t promise that we’ll get to everything (in fact, part of why I ask for these is to try and see what people’s expectations are and where I might be able to better meet them), but I can promise that I will try to provide opportunities for you to meet your own goals.

At the beginning of the term, the first time you hand this in, simply write – in no more than one page – what some of your hopes and dreams are for this class in terms of your own learning. Then, at the end of the class, revisit that statement and see how you feel about where you are. You might have met your initial goals, you might have tossed them out in favor of other ones, you might be very conscious of what you’d still like to learn.

There is no “right” or “wrong” set of expectations, but I do have the hope that intentionally asking these questions might help you to become more active in your learning.

It will help me if your initial learning statement explicitly tells me what you plan to do for your final assignment (Faith Fair, poster presentation, final paper, final exam, etc.). It will also help me if in your final statement you include some sense of what elements of the course facilitated or hindered your learning. The first statement should be no more than one page, and the final statement should be no more than two.

As always, if you have any questions about any this – please ask! E-mail is a particularly good way to catch me: mhess@luthersem.edu.
Appendix 2:

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).

Appendix 3:

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 to be shared in class on October 6.
Appendix 4:

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. These papers are due on October 13. 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 5:

An exercise in working with multiple forms of intelligence

Before you can do this exercise, you will need to read the handouts. You will have some time on September 22 to prepare, as well as whatever other time your group arranges. Your group will present in class on September 29.

Your small group is working on ______________________

The other members of your group are:

Using the story of a father and two sons (Luke 15:11-24) 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.
Grading Rubric
Mary Hess / Luther Seminary / 2003-04 Academic Year

(Most of the following is drawn from the scoring rubrics in place at the Crosswinds Middle School, http://www.emid067.net/Crosswinds/Details/GradingRubric.html)

Failing -- Level 1
Minimal achievement in terms of stated objectives, and the student requires nearly continual support.

Failing -- Level 2
Very limited achievement in all the learning objectives. The student has difficulty in understanding the required knowledge, attitudes, and skills and is unable to apply them fully in normal situations, even with support.

Failing/Marginal -- Level 3
Limited achievement in most of the learning objectives, or clear difficulty in some areas. The student demonstrates a limited understanding of the required knowledge and skills and is only able to apply them fully in normal situations with support.

Marginal/Passing -- Level 4
A good general understanding of the required knowledge, attitudes, and skills, plus the ability to apply them effectively in normal situations. There is some evidence of the skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The student fulfills all of the requirements of the lesson.

Passing -- Level 5
A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge, attitudes and skills, and the ability to apply them in a variety of situations. The student generally shows evidence of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation where appropriate and occasionally demonstrates originality and insight. The student produces work of consistent quality and works independently.

Grade of B -- Level 6
A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge, attitudes and skills, and the ability to apply them in a wide variety of situations. There is consistent evidence of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation where appropriate. The student generally demonstrates insight, produces work of quality, meets the expectations of the lesson at a high level, and shows some evidence of originality.

Grade of A -- Level 7
A consistent and thorough understanding of the required knowledge and skills, and the ability to apply them almost faultlessly in a wide variety of situations. There is consistent evidence of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation where appropriate. The student consistently demonstrates originality and insight and always produces work of high quality. The student is able to teach necessary skills to another student. The student works beyond the expectations of the lesson, and uses original ideas and concepts.