

## **EL3528: Adult development and Christian life**

Tuesdays, 1:10 to 4:00 pm

NW232

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### **Course description**

A study of the research on sociopsychological development of adults and how it relates to their learning and growth amidst communities of faith. In particular, students focus on learning to listen to adults, and nurturing their continued faith development.

### **Course goals**

- To introduce students to the literature of adult development, connecting it to challenges within religious education
- To provide a context in which students develop and nurture respect for the diverse ways in which adults (especially themselves!) learn
- To provide a context in which students critically reflect upon educational leadership, and their own role in facilitating such
- To nurture a learning community in which students can engage and reflect upon their own teaching and learning practices
- To nurture leadership in education for communities of faith more broadly

### **A note on course process**

This is the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and in our many contexts it is increasingly the case that adults have access to multiple ways to learn and grow. An essential understanding upon which this course has been built is that adults have the capacity to seek out responses to their questions, and will do so well if given the appropriate support.

Towards that end – and because each of you is an adult – 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. Each of you is an adult learner, and therefore this class – if it is successful – will place your own experiences at the heart of the learning. Towards that end, the course requirements may perhaps seem unfamiliar to you. I am asking that you do sustained work with a variety of texts, but that that work be done primarily in preparation for class in small groups. Rather

than specific short papers, or long research essays, I am instead asking for a course-long learning journal, one learning unit (which can be designed in collaboration with others) and a final portfolio. (More about these later.)

In addition, while I will provide 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 active physical presence (if not having childcare is the only reason you can't come on a given day, please feel invited to bring your child along). Diligent and thoughtful preparation is also crucial given the collaborative nature of our work together. If you have any specific learning challenges that require accommodation, please contact me early in the course so that we can make this learning space as generative as possible for you.

### **Required Texts:**

*How The Way We Talk Can Change The Way We Work*, Robert Kegan, Lisa Lahey

*In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan

*Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley

Choice of:

*Truly Present*, Lisa Dahill

*Body Prayer*, Doug Pagitt

Or an alternative chosen in consultation with the teacher

### **Recommended Texts:**

The following books will be useful at various points in the course, and two in particular (Vogel and Grothe) provide nice overviews of adult religious education.

*Teaching and Learning in Communities of Faith*, Linda Vogel

*Lifelong Learning: A Guide to Adult Education in the Church*, Rebecca Grothe

*Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach*, Jane Vella

*The Art of Theological Reflection*, Patricia O'Connell Killen

*The Art of Teaching the Bible: A Practical Guide for Adults*, Christine Blair

*To Know As We Are Known*, Parker Palmer

*The Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer

*Understanding by Design*, Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe

*Becoming a Critically Reflective Educator*, Stephen Brookfield

### **Course requirements**

Prepare for and participate in the small group assignments each week of the course.

Use one of the choice texts to explore forms of prayer that are new to you. Build at least 20 minutes into your daily routine for prayer that is open-ended and “listening” in character. The point of this assignment is to practice listening for and to God. This assignment is based on my conviction that an important part of supporting adult faith formation is supporting precisely this kind of practice with adults. Until you’re comfortable doing it yourself, it’s unlikely you’ll be comfortable helping others with it.

Keep a learning journal with at least one entry per week. I’ve provided (towards the end of this syllabus) a proposal for ways to prepare for our weekly sessions. You could include notes from your preparation in your learning journal, for example, as well as reflections on your practice of prayer, or your progress in revising and updating your portfolio.

Review the educational leadership competencies, and choose two or three to work on during this class. Update and present your learning portfolio at the close of the class. If you would like interim feedback on this portfolio, you may request it at any time during the course. (See the Brookfield handout for more information on this assignment, as well as instructions at the end of this syllabus.)

### **Weekly small group work**

Each week (after our first meeting), we will use ideas from the Kegan/Lahey process to consider and engage an identified set of challenges. Drawing from *In Over Our Heads* and *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*, one small group will be assigned to prepare a presentation for the class that identifies the specific challenge (this presentation might include a film clip, a poem, a cartoon, etc.), and a range of ways a community of faith might help adults to meet it.

If it is your group’s turn to present, please ‘check in’ with me at least two days in advance of the class meeting – email is fine.

If it is NOT your group’s turn to present, your assignment is to do the required reading for the week, and come to class prepared with examples of ways adults are meeting – or not – the challenge in question. Be creative! Film excerpts, songs, magazine articles, cartoons, and so on are especially invited.

There is a page of notes on preparing for this work towards the end of this syllabus.

## Course schedule

### **February 7 / Introductions and orientation to course / Reasoning by means of sympathetic identification – and turning to empathy**

Introductions, review of past education ideas, orientation to course and to small group work.

*How the way we talk can change the way we work* is a prerequisite reading for this week, as are the following two web articles:

*Multi-layered leadership*, Scott Cormode  
(<http://www.christianleaders.org/JRL/Fall2002/cormode.htm>)

*Evaluation as collaborative inquiry*, Craig Dykstra  
<http://www.christianleaders.org/MS360/evaluation.htm>

### **February 14 / Life journeys: challenges and opportunities: Parenting**

Chapter 3 ("Parenting: Minding our children") from *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan

Chapter 4 ("Welcoming the child") from *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*

Additional references:

*Kids, Parents and Power Struggles*, Mary Sheedy Kurcincka  
*Real Kids, Real Faith*, Karen-Marie Yust

The Youth and Family Institute maintains a lovely catalog of books for sale that support faith amidst family (<http://www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org/>)

### **February 21 / Life journeys: challenges and opportunities: Forming and sustaining partnership**

Chapter 4 ("Partnering: Love and consciousness") from *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan

Chapter 5 ("Preparing for marriage") from *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*

Additional references:

*Real Chastity*, Lauren Winner

Resources on faith and sexuality can be found online in the syllabus for PC6530 (<http://www.luthersem.edu/rmartins/PC6530/syl01.htm>).

### **February 28 / Life journeys: challenges and opportunities: Finding meaning and vocation**

Chapter 5 ("Working: On seeking to hire the self-employed") from *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan

Chapters 1-3 ("The power of story-telling, Ritualizing our stories, Connecting divine and human narratives") from *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*

Additional references:

Vocation book by Marc Kolden  
Centered Life stuff  
Buechner  
Brueggemann

Resources on aging can be found in the course syllabus for PC3522 online (<http://www.luthersem.edu/jramsey/PC3522/syl.htm>).

### **March 7 / Life journeys: challenges and opportunities: Health and well-being / brokenness, illness and death**

Chapter 7 ("Healing: the undiscussed demands of psychotherapy) from *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan

Chapter 6 ("Encountering death") from *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*

Additional references:

*Tuesdays with Morrie*, Mitch Albom  
"Calm from the chaos" Jan/Feb 06 issue of *Utne Reader*  
*White Awareness*, Judith Katz

Resources for spiritual resiliency in later life can be found online in the syllabus for AG4525 (<http://www.luthersem.edu/jramsey/AG4525/syl.htm>).

Resources on forgiveness and healing can be found in the syllabus for PC4510 online (<http://www.luthersem.edu/jramsey/PC4510/syl.htm>).

Resources on wellness and aging can be found online in the syllabus for AG4515 (<http://www.luthersem.edu/jramsey/AG4515/sylFA05.htm>).

Resources on the challenges of mental illness can be found online in the syllabus for PC3519 (<http://www.luthersem.edu/jramsey/PC3519/syl.htm>).

**March 14 / Life journeys: challenges and opportunities: Learning and growth (recap and closing)**

Chapter 8 ("Learning: The teacher wants us to be self-directing") from *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*, Robert Kegan

Chapters 7-9 ("Creating new rituals, revitalizing rituals with stories, Reconciling stories and rituals") from *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals*

Additional references:

*Multi-layered leadership*, Scott Cormode  
(<http://www.christianleaders.org/JRL/Fall2002/cormode.htm>)

Virginia Finn  
Elizabeth Dreyer  
Patricia O'Connell Killen

Resources on aging and the humanities can be found online in the syllabus for AG4540 (<http://www.luthersem.edu/jramsey/AG4540/syl.htm>).

## **Using Kegan/Lahey to explore adult learning challenges**

One of the things I've learned over time, is that my own preferred mode of learning – which relies heavily on fluidity, synthesis and lack of enforced structures (yes, I'm "INFP" on the Myers-Briggs framework) – is not at all comfortable for many people. In the following paragraphs I'm providing a proposed structure for working your way through the class materials each week. I provide this as a guide – not a mandatory process. If you have a process that works better for you, please use it and share it with your colleagues, for some might find it very helpful.

Each week we will ask some specific questions about the learning challenges we are engaging, and we will draw on at least some of the same resources.

Here is how I imagine you could prepare for this part of our work together.

1. Begin by reading the assigned chapters of *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* and *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*. Then, using the grid outlined in the Kegan/Lahey book, identify the central big "assumptions" and "competing commitments" that emerge from these chapters. Choose at least one such dilemma and then continue to the next steps of this preparation.
2. Spend time listening to your own experiences. What resonates with the reading? What contradicts it? What kinds of resources do you already know about that could be useful in engaging this dilemma?
3. Spend some time pondering the biblical metaphors and stories that emerge for you in the context of these challenges. What does a biblical imagination bring to the task of engaging this dilemma?
4. Spend some time pondering other religious resources – hymns, rituals, forms of prayer. Again, what resources does a community of faith offer for engaging this dilemma?
5. Finally, outline the ways in which your specific community of faith confirms the reality of this challenge, contradicts the dominant meaning surrounding the challenge, and/or provides continuity for adults in moving from a narrow or constricted way of engaging the challenge to a more open and faith-filled, faithful process.

## **Preparing to lead the class**

If your small group has been assigned to lead the class, you will need to do some additional preparation. My assumption is that each small group will have four members, but obviously you can adjust the following suggestions as you need to, to accommodate the actual number of people in your group.

First, each of you should go through steps 1 -4 above, and then gather (either electronically or in person) to plan.

1. Collate your grids from Kegan/Lahey – where do you agree? Where do you disagree? Come to consensus on this part of the exercise and assign one of you the task of making a handout that lays this out.
2. What kinds of examples of this learning challenge can you think of from popular culture? Is there a DVD excerpt (from a film or tv show)? A song? A storyline from a novel? Choose one or more that will illustrate well the issues for your classmates. Assign one of you the task of preparing the relevant materials (if you need technical help on media, contact me well in advance of the class session).
3. How ought communities of faith support adults in meeting this challenge? Draw up a list of resources (biblical, liturgical, adult ed, etc.) from the community of faith that would be useful in this context. Assign one of you the task of collating this into a bibliographic handout for your classmates.
4. How will you present these materials to your classmates? What would be the best way to walk through the assigned readings with them? to utilize the handouts you've developed? to illustrate the challenges? to suggest appropriate responses and resources? Assign one of you the task of leading your small group's presentation to the class.



## **Classroom Critical Incident Questionnaire**

Please take about five minutes to respond to each of the questions below about this week's session on the carbonless form I will provide. Don't put your name on the sheet – your responses are anonymous. When you have finished writing, put one copy on the table by the door and keep the other for yourself (you will find it useful as you write in your learning journal). At the start of next week's class, I will be sharing some of the responses of the group. Thanks for taking the time to do this. What you write will help me make this class more responsive to your concerns.

1. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?
4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you).

Taken from "Understanding classroom dynamics: The critical incident questionnaire," in Brookfield (1995), *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), p. 115

## **Learning Journal**

First, please read p. 97 and following from the Brookfield handout.

Second, understand that this learning journal is your primary means for reflecting in writing with me about the ongoing learning taking place in the class. Whereas in many of your classes you did such work via short reflection papers, or longer research papers, in this class I am trusting that you will find a way to reflect upon your reading, your integration of ideas from the class meetings, and other issues that arise for you in the course of the class in this journal.

I will expect you to reflect upon your critical incident reports – particularly, after a few weeks, what you are learning about your engagement in the learning processes of the class.

I will expect you to reflect on the readings – both the “theory” pieces, as well as the choice book – but also to weave in, if you find them useful, pieces from other classes that you are working with.

I will expect you to note questions that occur to you, but you don’t need to answer them.

I will expect you to note things you would like to follow up on when you have the time (grant me the optimism of believing you may someday have the time to return to these ideas).

Finally, as Brookfield himself notes, I do not want to force this process into a “confessional” mode (in either sense of that word!). So please understand that rather than handing in the entire journal, you are welcome to summarize your learning from the journal process to hand in at the end of the course.

## **Learning Portfolio**

First, most if not all of you will have already begun a portfolio in earlier classes. This assignment is to *build upon* that portfolio, not begin anew.

Second, please read p. 102-106 in the Brookfield chapter. I would like each of you to add a section to your portfolio that is unique to this class, and that works off of his list of components. I am particularly interested in your advice to next year’s students, and so on.

That being said, I will also be pleased to accept whatever other elements of your portfolio that you want to include. Remember that these can be done in forms other than print. Images, collages, music clips, etc. are greatly appreciated and encouraged.