**EL4522: Foundations of Educational Leadership**

Fridays, 10:40 am to 11:45 am and 12:05 to 1:30 pm  
NW231  
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**Course description**

This course, intended primarily for students in the master of arts program specializing in educational leadership, provides a substantial introduction to the foundational questions of religious education and to the dynamics and improvisational nature of providing leadership for learning within communities of faith.

**Course goals**

- To introduce students to the depth and breadth of literature in religious education, particularly its conceptual frameworks, historical trajectories, methodologies and leading edges
- To provide a context in which students critically reflect upon educational leadership
- To provide a context in which students can responsibly select and refine a central research question to pursue for their graduate study area of concentration
- 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 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 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.
Required Texts (all are on reserve in the library):

“Seeing ourselves through our student’s eyes,” Chapter Five of Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher

To Know As We Are Known, Parker Palmer
Educating in Faith: Maps and Visions, Mary Boys
The Child in Christian Thought, Marcia Bunge
The Evolving Self, Robert Kegan
The Art of Teaching the Bible, Christine Blair
Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals, Anderson and Foley

And then choose one of the following:

Reclaiming Goodness: Education, and the Spiritual Quest, Hanan Alexander
The Church as Learning Community, Norma Cook Everist
Christian Religious Education, Thomas Groome
Fashion Me a People, Maria Harris
Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method, Mary Elizabeth Moore
Soul Stories, Anne Wimberly

Course schedule

Introductions and orientation...

12 September

Who are we? Where have we come from? Where do we find ourselves now?
What are we on about in this class? Why should we care about educational leadership in the religious context?

Stephen Brookfield, “Seeing ourselves through our students’ eyes,” Chapter Five of Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher (available on course reserve in the library).

The Brookfield essay gives very useful information about learning journals and learning portfolios. It will be the base upon which we will build for those two elements of our work together.
Part One: Central concepts and definition of terms

19 September

What does it mean to know? And hence to learn?

Parker Palmer, *To Know As We Are Known*

What are some of the central concepts, definitions, etc. that we need to engage in exploring religious education, and preparing to provide educational leadership?

- knowing, knowledge, education, instruction, training
- religion, faith, belief, spirituality
- leadership, organizational dynamics
- what of a biblical imagination helps us here?

These are just a few of the issues we’ll discuss, but think of this week as an introduction to the “whole,” as we will return to these concepts throughout the term. You might want to identify particular terms in your learning journal that you want to attend to over time, or note definitions that you find particularly descriptive.

Part Two: What are the historical trajectories of religious education?

26 September

What can we learn from those who have gone before us, particularly in the U.S. context?

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

This week we’ll spend the first hour of class working on the central “map” of the book together, then we’ll break into four groups for the second hour and people will prepare to present a particular “classic expression” in the third hour of class.

In your learning journal you might also enjoy reflection upon your own religious autobiography. You may have written something in preparation to admission to Luther, or candidacy, that you could revisit here. Perhaps you can jot memories of your most vivid religious education experiences.
3 October

What can we learn from those who have gone before us, particularly in theological terms?

Marcia Bunge, *The Child in Christian Thought*

With this book, each of us will sign up to be responsible for presenting one chapter of the book to the rest of the class. Your presentation should include a five minute oral elaboration of the thesis of the chapter and important supporting evidence. You should also prepare a handout that your colleagues could return to to refresh their understanding, and bring enough copies of it to class for everyone. (I will tell duplicating services that you have permission to make copies for this purpose.)

10 October / Integration Pause

At various points throughout the term we will pause for integration and reflection and to give you the opportunity to fulfill the outside learning requirements. These include visiting at least one innovative program in children’s ministry, and participating in one adult learning event.

This week of the term we will not meet together. Some of you may want to come to Des Moines, IA to participate in the multi-synod “Write Stuff” event on learning designs in communities of faith. Others of you will find other events useful, or will use this time to balance other events in which you’ve already participated. The requirement to write in your learning journal remains in place this week!

Also, please hand in your portfolios – in “interim” format – by Monday, October 13 (cf. Brookfield for more information).

Part Three: What are the central methodologies of the field?

17 October

This week we will work with some representatives of the best contemporary thinking in religious education. We need to have at least one person read each book, but beyond that you can choose (within reason, it probably doesn’t make sense to have ten people reading one book). The assignment in preparation for class, besides reading the book, is to prepare a short (three paragraphs or less) book review of the book that you will publish at Amazon.com (and you must publish it there, although you can wait until after class to do so).
The six books that we will use (in alphabetical order by author) are:

Hanan Alexander, *Reclaiming Goodness: Education, and the Spiritual Quest*

Norma Cook Everist, *The Church as Learning Community*

Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education*

Maria Harris, *Fashion Me a People*

Mary Elizabeth Moore, *Teaching from the Heart: Theology and Educational Method*

Anne Wimberly, *Soul Stories*

**24 October**

This week we will explore theories and conceptual frameworks drawn from other fields in more detail, particularly ideas drawn from developmental psychology that religious educators often draw on as we shape learning environments. We focused on children earlier in the term, so this week we will focus more directly on some of the characteristics of adult learners.

Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self*

Augsburg press, *Nurturing Faith*

In preparation for this class, please prepare a brief learning unit that explores the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth in *Luke* (particularly Mary’s song, also known as the magnificat). Your unit should be prepared in support of the particular developmental stage you were assigned last week. So, for example, if you are working with three year olds, you will want to make sure you’re not requiring them to read anything! It is entirely appropriate to choose from pre-published materials, or to develop something original. The point is to find some tangible ways to engage people at the developmental stage you were assigned.

**31 October**

Working with biblical resources in adult learning contexts.

Please bring to class one adult bible curriculum with which you are familiar.

Christine Blair, *The Art of Teaching the Bible*
7 November / Integration Pause

We won’t meet in class this week, due to the Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education (APRRE) and Religious Education Association (REA) annual meetings.

This is a good week to make sure you’ve fulfilled the requirements of visiting an innovative children’s ministry site, and participated in at least one adult learning event.

Interim portfolios are also due next Monday (November 10), so this is a good time to work on analyzing what you’ve got so far, and integrating additional materials into your portfolio.

Part Four: Leading edges of the field....

What are some of the leading edges of the field? Where is God leading us? Some possibilities:

- digital technologies / instructional design
- digital technologies / digital cultures
- environmental pedagogies / religious pedagogies
- critical pedagogies
- music and art in religious education
- family-community centered learning
- children in mission
- working across cultures
- working with special learning needs
- supporting adult faith in postmodern contexts
- working in interfaith contexts

14 November

This week we will move into more direct consideration of the leading edges of religious education, particularly those edges that you have chosen to place at the heart of your own scholarship.

This week we’ll use the ideas of Anderson and Foley to work with a contemporary understanding of the interwoven nature of narrative and ritual.

Anderson and Foley: Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals
21 November

We will meet via the web this week, due to the American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature (AAR/SBL) meeting. If any of you are particularly interested in digital technologies or distributive learning issues, this would be a good week to present your ideas.

Beginning on the 5th of December and continuing into the 12th of December as well, we will share time amongst us based on different people sharing what they have learned as they have explored one of the issues from the list above, or whatever other issue you have chosen to be at the heart of your master’s work at Luther. As we come closer to this date, I will have more information on how we will parcel out these two last weeks.

5 December

Further work on leading edges.

12 December

Final portfolios due.

Closing rituals, conclusions to be shared with each other.

Please bring along something to eat or drink to class today, with enough to share with your colleagues. We’ll have a little bit of a celebration as our learning community concludes its time together.

Course requirements

Writing a critical incident inquiry report every week at the end of class.

Maintaining a learning journal throughout the term, summary reports of which should be placed in the learning portfolio prior to each time you hand it in.

Fully preparing for and participating in the various individual and group presentations scattered throughout the term (including: the history small group work, a chapter presentation from Bunge’s book, the review of a religious education book, presentation of your own work).

Visiting at least one innovative children’s ministry program and commenting on it in your learning journal.
Attending at least one adult faith education event and commenting on it in your learning journal.

Developing a proposal for your master’s work final project, thesis, or two papers. This proposal must include a bibliography and initial outline. For those of you brand new to the program, think of this as a “dry run”! For those of you in other degree programs (MDiv, or MTH, for instance), we will work out an appropriate assignment.

Preparing and presenting a learning portfolio at two interim points (October 13, November 10) and in conclusion at the close of the class.