

## **Christian Education with Children (working syllabus 1.27.2022)**

Louisville Seminary: CE 304 (3 hours)

Spring 2022, Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:50,

Remote: [Zoom Link](#) (full invitation at the end of syllabus)

In person: Schlegel 121

Google Shared Drive: [LINK](#)

Instructor: J. Bradley Wigger, Ph.D. ([bwigger@lpts.edu](mailto:bwigger@lpts.edu))

### **Course Description**

This course explores the church's educational ministry with children. Insights from the human sciences, theology, biblical studies, and the arts will be used to help address such questions as: How is the life of faith passed on from one generation to the next? What is a family's role in Christian nurture? What is a congregation's role? How do children think and learn? How do spirituality and raising children relate to one another? What is going on in childhood cognitively, developmentally, morally, socially, or culturally? These questions, among others, will be pursued with particular attention to the educational and formational dimensions of ministry. The primary focus will be on children under thirteen years, though there will be implications for all ages.

*The course fulfills a framework elective for the area of Building Communities and Nurturing Relationships in the MDiv curriculum. For MFT and MAR students, the course is a general elective.*

*The course also contributes to the course work for the MDiv concentration in educational ministry (see the professor for more information).*

### **Goals**

The overall goals for the course are for students to:

- Gain and/or sharpen a vision of the educational ministry of the church;
- Be able to develop strategies and practices for implementing such a vision;
- Understand and interpret the situation of childhood (including for example, cognitive, developmental, moral, and existential challenges);
- Deepen respect for, and be able to better connect with, children—in their particularity—through listening;
- Be able to articulate why education matters in the life of faith.

### **Requirements**

To meet these goals, the seminar relies heavily upon class discussions of readings, reflective exercises, and presentations. Accordingly, class participation and preparation are crucial.

Guidance for weekly assignments and the final project will be given in class.

*Weekly Assignments*

Every week, students will submit work based upon the reading (for example, 300 words, picture, poem, collage). Late papers/assignments will not ordinarily be accepted—in rare cases they may be, with prior permission, but the grade will be lowered at the teacher's discretion.

*Class participation*

Because of the seminar style of this course, weekly attendance and class preparation are very important. In addition, we will begin each class session with a brief devotion, a picture book chosen and read by students (five minutes maximum). Each student will lead twice if possible.

Weekly assignments will be combined with overall class engagement for 75% of the grade. Attendance and active participation are assumed. Unexcused absences and other manners of nonparticipation (e.g. using gadgets in class) will result in a lowering of the course grade at the professor's discretion.

*Final project*

Ordinarily students would interview a child (and write about it) for the final project. But this may not be feasible during the pandemic. Therefore, students will design their own final projects, with various options. The projects must be of obvious relevance to the course. The work involved should be roughly the equivalent of the time and energy involved in a 20-page research paper, but practice-oriented projects are highly valued as well. The time could be spent teaching, writing, interviewing, organizing, creating, or providing resources for your project. (Typically, a 20-page paper is calculated at approximately 20 to 30 hours of work.) Some possibilities are:

*Write a curriculum for an educational setting*

(E.g., 6-week study that could be used in a parent-child group; a weekend retreat for children or families; a faith and children's literature course; a parenting workshop)

*Write a research paper on a relevant subject*

(E.g., some aspect of cognitive development in childhood (perhaps inspired by Alison Gopnik); the role of narrative in identity formation; the role of play and imagination in child development)

*Conduct qualitative research*

(E.g., interview Sunday school teachers, parents, grandparents, or children; interview children's book author)

*Write or begin a book*

(E.g., write the first three chapters of a children's book of fiction; create a set of biblical devotions for children; write a chapter of a book on a theological theme for children)

*Other*

(Use this opportunity to design a project uniquely suited to your interests or gifts)

Students will turn in a brief progress report on March 24th. Some students may present interviews or projects to the class. Final projects are due May 10<sup>th</sup> for graduating seniors, May 12<sup>th</sup> for everyone else.

*Grading*

Weekly assignments/class participation 70%

Final project 30%

Letter-grades will be provided for each assignment, valued as follows:

A (4.0)

A- (3.66)

A-/B+ (3.5)

B+ (3.33)

B (3.0)

Etc.

*Electronic Technology Policy (in class)*

Ordinarily this is a low-to-no technology course during class time—minimal use of laptops/tablets/phones. For note taking, a paper notebook will be sufficient, if not better. See the research by Mueller, P. and Oppenheimer, D., "The Pen Is Mightier than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand over Laptop Note Taking," *Psychological Science*, June 2014 vol. 25 no. 6 1159-1168. [Link](#). If we are in person and there is an overwhelming need for an exception, please request permission from the professor.

*Covid19 Measures: Social Distancing and Face Masking*

In accordance with LPTS's Covid19 mitigation policies, everyone meeting on campus and in the classroom must practice social distancing and wear a face mask (covering nose and mouth) at all times, including when speaking.

## Primary Resources

### Books

- Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* (4th edition), Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, 2018.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education*, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), Minneapolis, Fortress, 2015.
- Coles, Robert. *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1990.
- Edelman, Marian Wright. *The Measure of Our Success: A Letter to My Children and Yours*. William Morrow Paperbacks, 1993.
- Fuchs-Kreimer, Nancy. *Parenting as a Spiritual Journey*. Jewish Lights, 1998.
- Gopnik, Alison. *The Gardener and the Carpenter*. New York: Picador/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016
- Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*. Harpertime, 1977. (any edition)

### Suggested Books:

- Barrett, Justin L. *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief*. New York: Free Press, 2012. (For more on the cognitive science of religion.)
- Wigger, J. Bradley. *Invisible Companions: Encounters with Imaginary Friends, Gods, Ancestors, and Angels*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019. (For more on children's imaginations.)

### Articles

- Sasso, Sandy. "The Role of Narrative in the Spiritual Formation of Children." *Family Ministry* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 13-26.



Sasso-Role-of-Narrative-SFofChildren-1

- Wigger, J. Bradley. "Multiple Intelligences: Understanding the Many Ways We Learn, *The Thoughtful Christian*. Embedded here:



Multiple Intelligences\_FREE T

- Wigger, J. Bradley, "The Religious Imagination of Children Project: An Initial Research Report," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 2019  
DOI: 10.1080/1364436X.2019.1652572



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Wigger, J. Bradley, “A Rocking Chair: Kidlit goes to Seminary,” *Eerdmans Books for Young Readers Blog*, May 18, 2015. <https://eerdlings.com/2015/05/18/a-rocking-chair-kidlit-goes-to-seminary/>

### Other Resources:

Edelman, Marian Wright. *Faith, Families & Congregations Conference Plenary Address*. Louisville: Louisville: Center for Congregations and Family Ministries, November 14, 1997.

*Listening to Children: A Moral Journey with Robert Coles* (DVD). PBS Home Video, 1995.

Henig, Robin Marantz. “Taking Play Seriously.” *New York Times Magazine*. 2/17/2008. [link](#)

Morris, Van Cleve, and Pai, Young. *Philosophy and the American School (Second Edition)*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

Moss, Otis III. *That Was Then, This Is Now* (DVD). Washington: Children’s Defense Fund, July 20, 2005.

Phelan, Thomas W. *1-2-3 Magic: Managing Difficult Behavior in Children 2-12* (DVD). Glen Ellyn, IL: ParentMagic Inc., 2004.

Paterson, Katherine. *Growing Up as a Spiritual Journey I and II*. Louisville: Center for Congregations and Family Ministries, November 12-13, 1999.

*Ruby Bridges* (DVD). Walt Disney Home Video, 1998.

Sasso, Sandy. “The Role of Narrative in the Spiritual Formation of Children.” *Family Ministry* 19, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 13-26.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Adam & Eve’s First Sunset: God’s New Day*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Light Publishing, 2003.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Cain & Abel: Finding the Fruits of Peace*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Light Publishing, 2001.

\_\_\_\_\_. *In God’s Name*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Light Publishing, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Noah’s Wife: The Story of Naamah*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Light Publishing, 2002.

### Supplemental Websites

<https://katherinepaterson.com> (Katherine Paterson)

<http://www.childrensdefense.org> (Children’s Defense Fund)

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/floortime-0> (The Floortime Foundation, resource for autism and related issues)

<https://www.institute4learning.com/resources/articles/multiple-intelligences/> (Thomas

<http://www.scottlondon.com/articles/coles.html> (bibliographic essay on Robert Coles)

**Calendar 2022** (subject to change in light of Covid protocols)

Feb. 3 (Thurs)

**Course introduction**

Assignments and expectations

Final Project

Devotion sign-up (picture books)

Tuesday Feb. 8

**Listening to Children**

*Ruby Bridges* (film)

Read Coles, Intro and ch. 5

Read Wigger [Link](#)

Shared Drive Test (see Canvas)

Thursday, Feb. 10

Who is God to Ruby Bridges? Her parents? Church?

*The Doctor*

Stories and children

Read Sasso (Canvas)

No written assignment

*From this point on,  
Readings/assignments are due Tuesday of each week.  
Assignments will be posted on Canvas.*

Feb. 15-17

**Childhood as Pilgrimage**

*Bridge to Terabithia* discussion

Insights from children's literature

Growing up and the challenges of existence

Read Paterson (all)

Assignment

Feb. 22-24

***The Spiritual Life of Children***

Psychological and philosophical insights

Attending to children well

Representations

Read: Coles, chs. 6-8; Wigger, "Religious Imagination"

Assignment

Mar. 8-10

**Educational Ministry**

*The Creative Word*

Canonical dynamics

Law, Prophets, and Wisdom

Brueggemann, chs. 1-4

Assignment

Mar. 14-18 *Research and Study*

Mar. 22-24

**Advocating for Children**

*Children's Sabbath*

Justice, righteousness, redemption

What do children need to thrive?

Edelman, all  
Assignment  
*Progress Report* (Thursday)

Mar. 29-31

**Cognition**

Cognitive psychology and religion

Do children think like we think they think?

Imagination, play, and learning

Gopnik, TBD  
Assignment

Apr. 5-7

**Cognition** cont.

Gopnik, TBD; Wigger, MI  
Assignment

Apr. 12

Read Armstrong, chapter 1-7, and 11. Look through/skim the rest.

**Multiple Intelligences**

Preparing Teachers

Talking to children

Assignment

Apr. 19-21

**The Formative Power of Home**

Formation,

Education and attention

Parenting by grace

Fuchs-Kreimer, prologue-ch. 8  
Assignment

Apr. 26-28

**Home (continued)**

Liturgy and everyday life

Fuchs-Kreimer, remainder  
Assignment

May 3-5

**Listening to Children**

Sharing interviews/projects

Wrap-up

Coles, chs. 3, 9-11  
Projects/Assignment

**Final projects due May 10, 5 p.m. (seniors)/May 12, p.m. all else**

## **School Policies (Excerpted from the *Faculty Handbook*)**

### **Use of Inclusive Language**

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site with information for current students.

### **Academic Honesty**

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For more information, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

### **Special Accommodations**

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center during the first two weeks of a semester (or before the semester begins) and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

### **Citation Policy**

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides: *American Psychological Association. Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 7th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2020.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.



Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.  
See also the library's citation help page:

<https://lpts.libguides.com/digitalresources/citingsources>

### **Attendance Policy**

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Three or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Topic: Christian Education with Children

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://lpts-edu.zoom.us/j/87591311939?pwd=MjNXaW4zZGFNZEd0bXhDRTgyQXkydz09>

Meeting ID: 875 9131 1939

Passcode: 927934

One tap mobile

+13126266799,,87591311939# US (Chicago)

+19292056099,,87591311939# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 929 205 6099 US (New York)

+1 301 715 8592 US (Washington DC)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 6833 US (San Jose)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

Meeting ID: 875 9131 1939

Find your local number: <https://lpts-edu.zoom.us/u/kdGznCpufS>