

Christian Education with Children

Louisville Seminary: CE 304 (3 hours)
Fall 2016, Tuesday/Thursday 1:30-2:50, Gardencourt 206
Instructor: J. Bradley Wigger, Ph.D.

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 and concerns 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.

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, students' writing, and presentations. Accordingly, class participation and preparation are crucial. Guidance for weekly assignments and the final project will be given in class.

Electronic Technology Policy (in class)

This is a low-to-no technology course during class time. There will rarely, if ever, be a need for using laptops, tablets, phones, or any other technology that takes attention away from the classroom. Please turn off and stow phones so they are neither visible nor accessible. For more information and research regarding the ways even the visible presence of a phone inhibits learning see Sherry Turkle's *Reclaiming Conversation* (Penguin, 2015). You may however bring an electronic book version of required reading.

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 there is an overwhelming need for use of a laptop, please request permission from the professor.

Grading

Weekly assignments/class participation 50%

Final project 50%

Weekly Assignments

Every week, students will turn in work based upon the reading. Except for *Bridge to Terabithia*, these will be short assignments (for example, 300 words, or picture, poem, collage) provided each week by the teacher. 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 at least once.

Weekly assignments will be combined with overall class engagement for 50% 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

Students will need to have a congregation with which to work (for example: field placement, where you worship, home church, a friend's church). The final project will involve an **interview** with a child and parent(s). All students will also do a **curriculum inventory**, and an **interview** with someone who chooses curriculum materials. Guidance for these projects will be given in class. You will be asked to interpret the situation of the child, as well as the educational ministry of the congregation, in light of course materials.

Students will turn brief progress reports on October 6th. Some students may present the interview portion to the class. Final projects are due December 15th.

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*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

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*. 8th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

The Chicago Manual of Style. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

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. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

Primary Resources

Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom (3rd edition)*. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, 2009.

Barrett, Justin L. *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief*. New York: Free Press, 2012.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Creative Word: Cannon as a Model for Biblical Education, 2nd 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.
Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*. Harperten, 1977.

Articles

Henig, Robin Marantz. "Taking Play Seriously." *New York Times Magazine*. 2/17/2008. [link](#)
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-13-26

Wigger, J. Bradley. "See-through Knowing: Learning from Children and Their Invisible Friends." *Journal of Childhood and Religion* 2 (May, 2011) [link](#)
Wigger, J. Bradley. "Multiple Intelligences: Understanding the Many Ways We Learn, *The Thoughtful Christian*. Embedded here:



Multiple Intelligences_FREE T

Other Resources:

Edelman, Marian Wright. *Faith, Families & Congregations Conference Plenary Address* (VHS/audiocassette). Louisville: Center for Congregations and Family Ministries, November 14, 1997.
Listening to Children: A Moral Journey with Robert Coles (VHS). PBS Home Video, 1995.
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.
The National Observance of Children's Sabbaths (VHS). Children's Defense Fund, 1998.
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* (VHS/audiocassette). 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

www.terabithia.com (questions/answers with Katharine Paterson)

www.childrensdefense.com (Children’s Defense Fund)
www.flooritime.org (The Floortime Foundation, resource for autism and related issues)
http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.htm (Armstrong on MI)
<http://www.scottlondon.com/articles/coles.html> (bibliographic essay on Robert Coles’ work)

Calendar (subject to minor changes)

September 8

Course introduction

Reading/homework is due Tuesday of each week.

September 13/15

Read Coles, Intro, and ch 5.

Listening to Children

assignment

Ruby Bridges

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

Stories and children

The Doctor

September 20/22

Read all of Paterson
(longer) assignment

Childhood as Pilgrimage

Bridge to Terabithia, discussion

Insights from children’s literature

Growing up and the challenges of existence

Devotion sign up

September 27/29

Read Coles, chs. 6-8
assignment

The Spiritual Life of Children

Psychological and philosophical insights

Attending to children well

Representations

Educational Ministry

Brueggemann, chs. 1-4
assignment

The Creative Word

Canonical dynamics

Law, Prophets, and Wisdom

Curriculum as “The course to be run”

October 4/6

Edelman, all
assignment
progress report

Advocating for Children

Children’s Sabbath

Justice, righteousness, redemption

What do children need to thrive?

October 11/13 Barrett, Intro, chs. 1-5; 10-11; Wigger, 2010
Cognition assignment

Cognitive psychology and religion
Do children think like we think they think?
Imagination, play, and learning

October 17-21
Research and Study

October 25/27 Fuchs-Kreimer, prologue-ch. 8
The Formative Power of Home assignment

Formation, education and attention
Parenting by grace

November 1/3 Fuchs-Kreimer, remainder
Home (continued) assignment

The liturgy and everyday life

November 8/10 Armstrong, TBA; Wigger MI

Classrooms
Assignment Teaching and Learning
Strategies and Models

November 11/5/17 Armstrong, TBA
Multiple Intelligences Assignment

Preparing Teachers
Talking to children

November 22
TBA

November 29/December 1 Coles, chs. 9-11
Interviews and Stories Interviews/Assignment

The power of children's literature
Sharing interviews

December 6/8 Coles, chs. 3 and 13
Seeing Face to Face Interviews/Assignment

Sharing interviews
Wrapping up

December 15, 5 p.m. **Final projects due**