

## **Christian Education with Children**

Louisville Seminary: CE 304 (3 hours)

Fall 2019, Monday/Wednesday 4:30-5:50, Schlegel 121

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 course fulfills a framework elective for the area of Building Communities and Nurturing Relationships in the MDiv curriculum. For students under the previous MDiv curriculum, the course fulfills the teaching ministry requirement. 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, 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 9<sup>th</sup>. Some students may present the interview portion to the class. Final projects are due December 11<sup>th</sup>.

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

#### **1. 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. See for further assistance, <http://www.lpts.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-support-center/online-writing-lab/avoiding-gender-bias>.

#### **2. 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 the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

#### **3. 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.

#### 4. 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.

#### 5. 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. Missing  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the course may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

### Primary Resources

#### Books

Armstrong, Thomas. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom* (4th edition), Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, 2018.  
Brueggemann, Walter. *The Creative Word: Cannon 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:

Barrett, Justin L. *Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief*. New York: Free Press, 2012.  
Wigger, J. Bradley. *Invisible Companions: Encounters with Imaginary Friends, Gods, Ancestors, and Angels*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2019.

## 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 Tt

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



RI of Children  
Pre-formatted.docx

## 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.

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.

*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](http://www.terabithia.com) (questions/answers with Katharine Paterson)

[www.childrensdefense.com](http://www.childrensdefense.com) (Children's Defense Fund)

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

<http://www.institute4learning.com/resources/articles/multiple-intelligences/> (Armstrong/MI)

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

<https://www.illustratedchildrensministry.com/churches/> (Illustrated Children's Ministry, an online curriculum resource with a home component)

### Calendar 2019 (subject to minor changes)

September 9

Read Sasso, 2005

#### Course introduction

Assignments and expectations

Final Project

Devotion sign up

September 11

*Ruby Bridges*

View: "Robert Coles Speaks of Ruby Bridges"

[YouTube Link](#)

September 16

#### Childhood as Pilgrimage

Who is God to Ruby Bridges?

Who is God to her parents?

Who is God to her church?

Read Wigger, 2019 "Religious Imagination"  
work on Paterson

September 18  
*Bridge to Terabithia* discussion  
Insights from children's literature  
Growing up and the challenges of existence

Read Paterson (all)  
Assignment

*From this point on, readings/assignments due Mondays*

September 23-25  
**Listening to Children**  
*The Spiritual Life of Children*  
Psychological and philosophical insights  
Attending to children well  
Representations

Coles, Intro., chs. 5-8  
Assignment

September 30-October 2  
**Educational Ministry**  
*The Creative Word*  
Canonical dynamics  
Law, Prophets, and Wisdom  
Curriculum as "The course to be run"

Brueggemann, chs. 1-4  
Assignment

October 7-9  
**Advocating for Children**  
*Children's Sabbath*  
Justice, righteousness, redemption  
What do children need to thrive?

Edelman, all  
Assignment  
*Progress Report (10/9)*

October 14-18  
**Research and Study**

October 21-23  
**Cognition**  
Cognitive psychology and religion  
Do children think like we think they think?  
Imagination, play, and learning

Gopnik, TBD  
Assignment

October 28-30  
**Cognition** cont. Gopnik, TBD; Wigger, MI  
Assignment

November 4-6 Read Armstrong, chapter 1-7, and 11. Look through/skim the rest.  
**Multiple Intelligences** Assignment  
Preparing Teachers  
Talking to children

November 11-13 Fuchs-Kreimer, prologue-ch. 8  
**The Formative Power of Home** Assignment  
Formation, education and attention  
Parenting by grace

November 18-20 Fuchs-Kreimer, remainder  
**Home (continued)** Assignment  
Liturgy and everyday life

November 25-27 Assignment  
No class, but an assignment (due 25<sup>th</sup>)

December 2-4  
**Interviews and Stories** Coles, chs. 3, 9-11  
Sharing interviews/projects Interviews/Assignment  
Wrap-up

**December 11, 5 p.m. Final projects due**