Writing for the Church
Spring 2017

Christian Education (3 hours, general elective)
Professor: J. Bradley Wigger (bwigger@lpts.edu)
2:00-4:50 Mondays

General Description
This seminar concentrates upon the art and craft of writing for the Church (broadly understood). Students will practice various kinds of writing, for example, writing curriculum and devotional materials, Bible studies, poetry, pastoral letters, essays, fiction, blogs, and articles. Students will explore the role of written words in congregational life and educational ministry. Course readings will include reflections upon the challenges and discipline of the writing process as well as students' own work shared with the class. Local authors and those involved in denominational publications may also be invited, when appropriate, to discuss their experiences with the class. *The course is a general elective and does NOT fulfill the Teaching Ministry requirement for the MDiv. It does count towards a concentration in educational ministry however.*

Hopes
One of the Student Learning Outcomes for the MDiv program is: *Students will be able to talk intelligently and articulately about what they believe to others.* In this course, the focus will be upon the ways in which writing provides avenues for expressing belief to others.

To that end, through the course, students should be able to:
- reflect theologically on writing and words
- identify differences and similarities between processes for *writing* and those for *learning*
- become sensitive to various genres and contexts for writing
- find guidance for working through various obstacles to writing (such as fear, writer's block, or over-editing oneself)
- imagine the educational possibilities for writing (such as writing a congregation's Sunday school curriculum, Lenten devotions for home-use, or magazine articles)
- try writing for children and adults alike
- discover a deeper appreciation for the joys, hardships, disciplines, and power involved in writing
- discover their own strengths in and dreams for writing

Teaching and Learning Methods
This course will heavily utilize class discussions and writing exercises. Guest speakers, reading materials, and students' own writing will focus the discussions. Accordingly, class participation and preparation are crucial to the course. Guidance for assignments and the final project will be

given in class. Additional assignments not listed in the syllabus may be required but will be given adequate time and will be part of the "Reading and Notebook" grade.

Technology Policy
The primary form of technology needed for this course is a pencil or pen and paper. We will not use laptops or tablets during class time. Please turn off and stow out of view your phones or other gadgets that could interfere with your/our focus. 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. See also 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.

Assignments and Grading
The following criteria will be used for the course grade:

Reading and Notebook Assignments (50%) The notebook will include a reading log, as well as daily and weekly writing exercises in and out of class in light of speakers, readings, class discussions, and interests. The emphasis for the notebook writings will be upon engagement with the assignments, not whether the writing is publishable or not.

Book Review and Final Project (50%) Students will submit a final project in an area of writing the student would like to develop more fully. Examples: a full length article for a denominational magazine; the beginnings of a graphic novel; a short story or chapter of book or novel; a Bible study or devotional that congregations or households could use; a set of poems, prayers or songs; or other possibilities a student proposes. (Roughly 10 pages, 5 pages presented in class).

Students will write a book review (5 pages) of one of the following (or another if negotiated with the professor):

Barry, Lynda. *What It Is.* Montreal: Drawn &Quarterly Press, 2008.
Bradbury, Ray. *Zen in the Art of Writing*. Santa Barbara, CA: Joshua Odell Editions, 1990.
DeSalvo, Louise. *The Art of Slow Writing.* New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2014.
Elbow, Peter. *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.
Goldberg, Natalie. *True Secret of Writing: Connecting Life with Language.* Atria, 2013
King, Stephen. *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft*. New York: Scribner, 2000.
Miller, E. Ethelbert. *Fathering Words: The Making of an African American Writer*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.
Paul, Ann Whitford. *Writing Picture Books: A Hands-on Guide from Story Creation to Publication*. Cincinnati, OH: Writer's Digest, 2009.

Primary Bibliography

Clark, Roy Peter. *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer.* New York: Little,
      Brown, and Company, 2008.
Lamott, Anne, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life.* New York: Doubleday,
      1994.
Paterson, Katherine. *The Invisible Child: On Reading and Writing Books for Children.* New
      York: Dutton Children's Books, 2001 (sections).
Perry, Susan K. *Writing in Flow: Keys to Enhanced Creativity.* Cincinnati: Writer's Digest, 1999
      (sections).
Walker, Frank X. *Affrilachia.* Lexington, KY: Old Cove Press, 2000.
Zinsser, William. *Going on Faith: Writing as a Spiritual Quest.* New York: Marlowe &
      Company, 1999.

<div align="center">

School Policies

</div>

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/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

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. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating 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.

Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, based on these guides:

      Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations,* 7th ed. Chicago:
      University of Chicago Press, 2007.
      The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

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

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 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.

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

(Working) Calendar

I (2/6) *Course introduction: In the Beginning…*

Homework for next time:
Find: a sketchbook or notebook to work with for the semester.
WWW: Read 3 **Walker** poems; Read Intro plus 5 chapters of **Writing Tools**; Free**Write** for 10 minutes 3 to 5 times per week (40-50 total for semester). This is a steady assignment throughout the semester.

Read: Lamott, xi-73.
Write: a 3 minute fiction (under 600 words)

II (2/13) *Serious Play and School Lunches*

Homework for next time:
WWW
Read: Lamott, 95-161
Write: a letter to someone (alive or dead) who has been significant for your faith. Let them know how they have mattered to you.

Identify: Your "broccoli" and bring to class something that represents it.

III (2/20) *Faith and Broccoli*

Homework for next time:
WWW
Read: Lamott, 162-237
Write: Broccoli assignment (given in class)

IV (2/27) *Writing for Teaching (which is the reason I designed this course in the first place)*

    Homework for next time:
        WWW
        Read: Zinsser, 1-64
        Write: Create your own assignment in light of something from any of the reading.
        Incorporate smell into whatever it is.

V (3/6) *Playing with Poetry*

    Homework for next time:
        Read Zinsser, 65-108; 120-136
        WWW
        Write: 5 poems—giving yourself different rules for each (e.g. Haiku, Rhyming, no rules,
        etc.) Consider sharing one in class.

3/13 **Research and Study Week** (consider reading your book review book)

VI (3/20) *Grant Writing (because bad, messy writing often means bad, messy ideas and bad, messy projects; while good, clear writing often means good, clear ideas and good, clear projects—and good, clear-headed people who give away lots of money notice the difference)*

    Homework for next time:
        WWW
        Read Paterson, *Invisible Child,* pp. 3-24. (Reserve Shelf/CAMS)
        Perry, *Writing in Flow,* chapter 1, pp. 6-14 (Reserve Shelf/CAMS)
        Read Zinsser, 109-119
        Write: Look over notebook and re-work something to be either for a church newsletter, a
        newspaper article, or a devotional. **Or** Write a two page introduction to a grant proposal.

VII (3/27) *Magic wrapped in mystery surrounded by wonder*

    Homework for next time:
        WWW
        Read Zinsser, 137-209
        Write: Something for children (e.g. devotional, prayers, story)

VIII (4/3) *The Writing Life*

   Homework for next time:
      WWW
      Write: for one hour on your final project. If you don't know what it is, try free writing about it, or just take a stab at something to see whether anything generates energy for you.
      Read: work from others.

IX (4/10) *First Presentations—5 pages of a writing project. (Yes, you really have to present 5 pages of your final project to the class and even though this is scary, I know the class is going to treat you and your writing with the utmost respect.)*

   Homework for next time:
      WWW
      Write: work on final projects and book review
      Read: work from others.

X (4/17) *Presentations*

   Homework for next time:
      WWW
      Write: work on final projects and book review
      Read: work from others.

XI (4/24) *Presentations*

   Homework for next time:
      WWW (you should finish Walker, Clark, and freewrites, if you haven't already)
      Write: work on final projects and book review
      Read: work from others.

XII (5/1) *Publishing 101 and Wrap Up*
Turn in notebooks

Monday, 5/8 5 p.m.
Turn in Revised Project and Book Review