

Writing for the Church

CE 4103

January Intensive 2020

Christian Education (3 hours)

Professor: J. Bradley Wigger (bwigger@lpts.edu)

Class meeting: 8:30-5:00 January 6-10. In addition, there is preparatory and follow-up work.

Location: Schlegel 121

General Description

This seminar concentrates upon the art and craft of writing for the church (broadly understood). Students will be introduced to and will practice various kinds of writing, for example, curriculum and devotional materials, Bible studies, poetry, pastoral letters, essays, church newsletters, fiction, and writing for denominational magazines or newspapers. Students will explore the role and place 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. *The course is a general elective and does NOT fulfill the Teaching Ministry requirement (old curriculum) for the MDiv without special permission from the professor. It does count towards a concentration in educational ministry and/or a framework elective in CR (Building Communities and Nurturing Relationships).*

Hopes

One of the Student Learning Outcomes for the MDiv program is: *Students will acquire the knowledge and skill sets necessary for the practice of Christian ministry.* One of the Student learning Outcomes for the MAR program is: *Students will be able to interpret Scripture critically and imaginatively.* In this course, the focus will be upon the ways writing is a skill for the practice of ministry and provides avenues for interpreting Scripture.

To that end, through the course, students should be able to:

- reflect theologically on writing and words in relation to ministry,
- 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),
- practice writing for children and adults alike,
- discover a deeper appreciation for the joys, hardships, disciplines, and power involved in writing,
- and discover their own strengths in and dreams for writing.

Teaching and Learning Methods

This course will heavily utilize class discussions and writing exercises. 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 your phones and hide them from view. Joyce Carol Oates: "The worst thing for writing is interruption."

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 writing exercises in and out of class in light of readings, class discussions, and interests. The emphasis for the notebook writings will be upon engagement with the assignments, not whether the writing is publishable. **The following reading is to be completed by January 6:**

Lamott, Anne, *Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.

Walker, Frank X. *Affrilachia*. Lexington, KY: Old Cove Press, 2000.

The following reading is to be completed by January 17:

Clark, Roy Peter. *Writing Tools: 50 Essential Strategies for Every Writer*. New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2008.

Zinsser, William. *Going on Faith: Writing as a Spiritual Quest*. New York: Marlowe & Company, 1999.

By January 31:

Complete 10 additional freewrites in your Notebooks (10 minutes each)

Students will choose one additional book from the list below, with a 5-page review, due with the final project and Notebook.

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.

Goldberg, Natalie. *True Secret of Writing: Connecting Life with Language*. Atria, 2013

Karr, Mary. *The Art of Memoir*. Harper Perennial, 2016.

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.

Alternative—another book about writing that you've been wanting to read.

Final Project and Book Review (50%) Students will submit a final writing 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 potentially presented in class).

January 31: all materials are due (Notebook, Book Review, Final Project).

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.

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. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

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

(Working) Calendar

November class: preparatory meeting to discuss assignments and expectations.

I (Monday a.m.) *Course introduction: In the Beginning...*

Freewriting, Character, and Setting
Writing and Sharing

II (Monday p.m.) *Attending like a writer*

Sense and Imagination
Plots and Scenes

Homework for Tuesday:

Freewrite (10 mins)

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 (if possible) something that represents it.

III (Tuesday a.m.) *Of Poems and Prayer*

Writing and Formation
Poems of God
Project Dreaming

IV (Tuesday p.m.) *Writing as a Means of Grace?*

Writing for Educational Situations and Ministry

Writing for Children
No More Clichés!

Homework for Wednesday:

Freewrite about your project (again)
Outline the project
Imagine and describe the opening scene/book cover

V (Wednesday a.m.) *Narrative/Creative Nonfiction*

Scenes and Information
Dialogue

VI (Wednesday p.m.) *Playing with Poetry*

Poetry as “No Big Deal”

Homework for Thursday:

Choose one: 1) If you’re willing to present your project Friday, work on your project. Or,
2) If you’re not ready or are undecided, freewrite about it until you know what you will
do for a project.

VII (Thursday a.m.) *Jedi Mind Tricks*

Rules to Play By
Book Reviews
Verb Power

VIII (Thursday p.m.) *Editing*

General Review
Letter to the Editor

Homework for Friday:

Freewrite (10 mins)
Work on your project (minimally provide an outline)
Bring any questions you have about remaining assignments

IX (Friday a.m.) *Writing aa Blessing*

Ideas and Presentations

X (Friday p.m.) *Publishing 101*

Ideas, Presentations, and Benedictions

Friday, Jan 31:

Turn in (the equivalent of) 10 pages of a final project.
Turn in 5-page Book Review of a book on writing (imagine the context).
Turn in Notebooks with Reading Log.

Sample Reading Log

Reading

Date Completed

(mark "late" if not in time for class)

Walker, *Affrilachia*

completed Jan. 3

Lamott, *Bird by Bird*

completed Jan. 5

Clark, *Writing Tool.*

completed Jan. 15

Zinsser, *Going on Faith*

completed Jan. 16

Book of choice to review: (e.g., Miller, *Fathering Words*)

completed Jan. 27