

INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH MINISTRY (CE 33-612)

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TENTATIVE!!!

Course Description

What do we really know about the life and culture of today's youth? Who or what serves as contemporary socializing agents competing for the cultural identity of youth? What role is, can or will the church play in ministering to the spiritual yearnings of today's "millennial" generation? What role is, can or will youth play in transforming the church for the future? The aim of this course will be to broaden our understanding of Christian education and its role in engaging in spiritual development and faith formation with youth. The course will explore the human development and culture of today's youth, the context necessary for spiritual development to take place, and various pedagogical models that can be used to guide youth from adolescence to young adulthood.

Class Goals: *(This class addresses the following goals determined by the CE faculty)*

Knowing: To know practices and disciplines of Christian education and formation and to understand how these are affected by differing cultural contexts. (This also includes knowing major approaches to faithful teaching and learning.)

Doing: To examine, assess, and lead a variety of approaches to teaching and learning appropriate to a particular faith community. This goal includes experience or practice in the following:

- To be able to read, evaluate and engage the culture of a congregation and its community with particular sensitivity to culture, race, class and gender.
- To teach Christian practices and faith in intentional ways to address the developmental and faith issues of people in congregations.
- To coordinate and lead a congregation in its educational ministry.

Being: To be a theological educator who seeks to liberate and empower persons to be co-creators of the reign of God in our multi-cultural and multi-faith environment. This goal includes the following:

- To be a reflective teacher and leader who can empower others in the congregation to be reflective and open to transformation.
- To be a Christian disciple who continues to engage in the practices that develops and deepens faith.
- To understand oneself as a critical and open participant in an ongoing theological tradition.

Course Texts

Corbman, Marjorie **A Tiny Step Away from Deepest Faith: A Teenager's Search for Meaning**, Paraclete Press, 2005; ISBN: 155725429-X; \$14.99

Dean, Kenda **Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Church**, Oxford University Press, 2010; ISBN-10: 0195314840; \$24.95

Dean, Kenda Creasy (editor), **OMG: A Youth Ministry Handbook**, Abingdon Press, 2010; ISBN-10: 1426700083; \$26.00

Lightfoot, Cynthia **The Culture of Adolescent Risk-Taking**, The Guilford Press, 1997; ISBN-10: 1572302321; \$30.00

Walsh, David **Why Do They Act That Way? - Revised and Updated: A Survival Guide to the Adolescent Brain for You and Your Teen**, Atria Books; Reissue edition (June 3, 2014); ISBN-10: 1476755574; \$12.97

White, David F. **Dreamcare: A Theology of Youth, Spirit, and Vocation**, Cascade Books (April 23, 2013); ISBN-10: 1620323982; \$15.00

Course Organization and Schedule

September 4th: Introductions; Review of Syllabus; Understanding today's youth; Defining Culture and the Millennial Generation

Readings: "A Tiny Step Away" (Please read before class)

September 11th - 18th: The Human Development of Youth: The Brain/Body Connection

Readings: "Why Do They Act That Way"

September 25th: The Human Development of Youth: The Psychological Connection

Readings: "Culture of Adolescent Risk-Taking"

October 2nd - 9th: The Spiritual Development of Youth: Yearning for Meaning

Readings: "Almost Christian"

October 16th - 23rd: Spiritual Yearnings: Intimacy and Healing

October 30th: Spiritual Yearnings: Identity and Purpose

Readings: "Dreamcare"

November 6th: Spiritual Yearnings: Mentoring and Nurture

November 13th: Spiritual Yearnings: Courage

November 20th: THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 27th - December 4th: Vision for Youth Ministry

Course Requirements

1) Regular attendance and on time, completion of reading assignments, completion of all papers, and informed participation in class discussions. The seminary expects that students will attend all classes. Each faculty member weighs class attendance and participation differently in determining a grade, depending on the particular needs and structures of the course. How attendance and participation is weighed will be specified in the syllabus for each course. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions should not expect to pass the class.

2) Immersion into Youth Culture: Spend 30 minutes per week watching, listening and/or reading what youth watch, listen to or read. Intentionally engage: What do you hear? What do you see? What did you learn? Be prepared to provide a 5 minute report at each class session. Write 2 critical reflection papers (3-5 pages, double spaced) placing in dialogue one of your Immersion Experiences and what we've read and discussed in class. (Due October 2nd and November 13th)

4) Conduct an interview with a youth, preferably one from your local congregation. Explore the following questions:

- a) What is it like to being a youth in today's society? What do you have to deal with on a day-to-day basis? What's exciting about being a youth? What bothers you about being a youth? What do you hope for?
- b) What has it been like growing up in your church?
- c) How well do you think your church understands what it's like being a youth today?
- d) Who is God to you? How well do you think God understands what it's like being a youth today?
- e) How has God and your church helped you deal with life?
- f) What do you wish your church would do differently for you and other youth in your church?

In a 5-7 page paper, reflect upon and critique the perspectives shared in the interview. What spiritual yearnings do you discern if any in your interview? Be in dialogue with the readings and class discussions. (Due October 23rd)

Final Project

A Vision for Youth Ministry (Due December 11th)

In a **10 page double spaced page paper**, reflect on the current model of youth ministry taking place in your local congregation. Drawing from your assignments, readings, class discussions and personal reflection, offer your theological and educational vision for providing youth "faith passage," and a model for implementation in your local church. Your vision and model should be offered in such a way that demonstrates you have engaged in dialogue with the authors we have read as well as class discussions.

Grades

It is assumed that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a "B" grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members identify the strengths and problems in their written work. The syllabus has provided detailed information on each assignment to limit the amount of "guess work" by students about what needs to be included and addressed in the assignment.

A "B" means that the basic elements of the assignment are in place.

A "B+" means that the assignment is also well crafted.

An "A-" means that the assignment is well crafted and probes the issues with considerable insight.

An "A" means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student's knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject.

A "B-" means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus. It tends to explore issues superficially.

A "C+" means that the assignment lacks clarity and focus, tends to be superficial, and lacks personal insight into the issues being discussed.

A "C" means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and class discussions to engaging them with the issues being discussed.

A "C-" means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.

A "D" is a grade of grace.

An "F" indicates that the assignment has not been fulfilled at all points.

Written evaluation/feedback will be given on all written assignments. In addition, class attendance and participation will be noted. All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Once all work is done, it will be weighed approximately as follows:

20%	<i>Class attendance and participation</i>
25%	<i>Youth Immersion</i>
25%	<i>Interview</i>
30%	<i>Final Project</i>