

## Christian Education with Children

Louisville Seminary: CE 304 (3 hours)  
Spring Semester, 2008, Tues/Thurs 4:30-6:00  
Instructor: J. Bradley Wigger, Ph.D.

*This online syllabus should be used to gain a better understanding of the content and focus of a course. The syllabus given out in the class may differ from this online version and its content supersedes that of the online syllabus.*

### 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 the church's educational ministry.

### Primary Resources

- Armstrong, Thomas Armstrong. *Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom*. Alexandria, Virginia: ASCD, 2000.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Creative Word: Cannon as a Model for Biblical Education*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982.
- Cohen, David. *How the Child's Mind Develops*. Hove and New York: Routledge, 2002.
- 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*. Boston: Beacon, 1992.
- MacLachlan, Patricia. *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. New York: HarperTrophy, 1985.
- Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*. New York: Avon, 1977.
- Wigger, J. Bradley. *The Power of God at Home: Nurturing Our Children in Love & Grace*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

### Other Resources:

- Ruby Bridges* (VHS). Walt Disney Home Video, 1998.
- Listening to Children: A Moral Journey with Robert Coles* (VHS). PBS Home Video, 1995.
- 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.
- Edelman, Marian Wright. *Faith, Families & Congregations Conference Plenary Address* (VHS/audiocassette). Louisville: Center for Congregations and Family Ministries, November 14, 1997.
- Paterson, Katherine. *Growing Up as a Spiritual Journey I and II* (VHS/audiocassette).

Louisville: Center for Congregations and Family Ministries, November 12-13, 1999.  
Moss, Otis III. *That Was Then, This Is Now* (DVD). Washington: Children's Defense Fund, July 20, 2005.

### **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)

[www.flooritime.org](http://www.flooritime.org) (The Floortime Foundation, resource for autism and related issues)

[http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple\\_intelligences.htm](http://www.thomasarmstrong.com/multiple_intelligences.htm) (Armstrong on MI)

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

### **Requirements**

This seminar focuses heavily upon class discussions of readings, reflective exercises, students= writing, and some audio-visual materials. Accordingly, class participation and preparation are crucial. Guidance for weekly assignments and the final project will be given in class. Additional assignments not listed in the syllabus may be required but will be given class time and will count towards the class participation grade.

### **Grading**

Weekly assignments/class participation 50%

Final project 50%

#### *Weekly Assignments*

Every week, students are to turn in written reflections upon the reading. Except for the second one (*Bridge to Terabithia*, 3 pp.) these are to be 1 page (approx. 300 words, hard copy) answering questions or completing tasks provided by the teacher. These assignments should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the reading and express thoughtful reflection upon the reading and the question. They should be well written. Graduate level grammar, spelling, and composition are expected, including proper citation of quoted materials. Please use inclusive language in writing and in speaking. Late papers will be accepted only if excused before their due dates. Even if they are excused, 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 led by students (5 minutes maximum). Each student will lead at least once. Students are to design the time in such a way that it would be appropriate and meaningful for one or more of the following:

Children

Households with children

Parents

A children's Sunday school class

An intergenerational event

You may use resource materials, or design your own. Keep it simple. Write out your plan (cite resources, if any). Send your plan to the professor who will post it on the blackboard site.

Reading reflections 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 will result in a lowering of the course grade at the professor's discretion. Six or more absences may result in a failing grade in the course.

### *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 either

- 1) an **interview** with a child and parent(s), or in some cases
- 2) a **teaching** session with children (normally in a congregation)

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.

The research and time commitment involved are to be roughly equivalent to the work for a 15 to 20 page term paper. Students will turn a brief progress report on March 18<sup>th</sup> and April 15<sup>th</sup> to encourage starting early. Do not conduct the interview or teaching session before Research and Study Week. The project is due May 14<sup>th</sup>.

### *Master of Theology/Doctor of Ministry Students*

For those taking this course for Th.M. or D.Min. level credit, required is an additional 500 pages of reading, or an additional 300 pages plus an additional project to be negotiated with the instructor. This project could be extra writing each week, a classroom presentation, or an additional dimension to the final project. The instructor will have some suggestions for extra reading. A plan is to be submitted by March 4<sup>th</sup>.

### *Email*

All students are responsible for email communications regarding the course.

### *Plagiarism and Documentation Policy*

From the Dean's Office: According to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, plagiarism is defined as using another person's ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source (Gibaldi, MLA Handbook, Fourth ed., p. 26). Students in this course are required to abide by the Seminary's academic honesty policy and are directed to observe the guidelines cited in the above-mentioned MLA Handbook which include matters of proper documentation and citation, use of work from a previous course, and collaborative work (pp. 26-29). ... "where citations are required, they shall follow the form of the latest edition of **Turabian/Chicago Manual of Style**, except in Pastoral Care and Counseling courses, for which students may use APA form."

**Calendar** (subject to minor changes)

Written assignments are due each Tuesday.

2/7

**Course introduction**

Assignments and expectations

Final project

2/12-14

**Listening to Children**

*Ruby Bridges* viewing

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

Stories and children

The doctor

Read Coles, Intro. and ch. 5

1 page

devotion sign up

2/19-21

**Childhood as Pilgrimage**

*Bridge* discussion

read

Insights from children=s literature

Growing up and the challenges of existence

Read Paterson (all), turn in 3 pp. write up  
and identify 5-10 discussion points as you

Hereafter, 1 page for each week's reading

2/26-28

**The Spiritual Life of Children**

Psychological and philosophical insights

Attending to children well

Representations

Coles, chs. 6-9

3/4-6

**Educational Ministry**

*The Creative Word*

Canonical dynamics

Law, Prophets, and Wisdom

AThe course to be run@

Brueggemann, chs. 1-4  
progress report

3/11-13

**Cognition**

Theories of cognitive development

Exceptions and challenges

Do children think like we think they think?

Cohen, selections

3/18

**Cognition continued**

Cohen, selections

Talking to children  
Learning from *Mister Rogers*

3/20, 25-27      **Maunday Thursday and Research and Study**

4/1-3

**Multiple Intelligences**

Armstrong, all

Challenges to intelligence theories  
Multiple intelligences  
Children who don't fit the schemes

4/8-10

**Formative Power of Home**

Wigger, Intro, chs. 1, 4-6

The power of "knowing"  
Education as spiritual formation  
Faith, vision, and meaning

4/15-17

**Advocating for Children**

Edelman, all

Sin's twistings  
*Children's Sabbath*  
Justice, righteousness, redemption  
What do children need to thrive?

4/22-24

**Braiding**

Wigger, 7-9

Congregations, classrooms, and homes  
The joy of practice  
Educational rhythms.

4/29-5/1

**Seeing Face to Face**

Coles, ch. 3  
MacLachlan, all

*Sarah, Plain and Tall* discussion  
A Face@ in psychology, philosophy, theology  
Relational existence

5/6-8

**Wrap-up**

Wednesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>

Final projects due