

**The Art and Practice of Teaching**  
**CE 315-3 Spring 2008**  
**Instructors, David C. Hester, J. Bradley Wigger**  
**Tuesday, Thursday 11-12:30**

*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.*

**Description**

In this course, students will examine the practice of teaching and, in particular, teaching for faith and the life of faith. The Church understands that there are “ordinary means of grace” given to the Body of Christ as “practices of faith” and the means of growing in the life of faith. Teaching is one such practice by which Scripture may be studied and learned, the traditions of the church examined and put into practice in contemporary life, and children and adults equipped to participate in baptism, the Lord’s Supper, worship, and life together in the community of faith. The class will explore the practice and art of teaching through historical review, contemporary contextual analysis, and examination of learning and teaching theory and practice.

Ultimately, the class will work toward practical wisdom that will enable students to discern gifts of teaching in themselves and others, to identify excellence in the art of teaching, and to suggest ways by which a community can encourage its members in their practice of teaching toward ever greater excellence and value for the church’s life together and God’s mission to the world.

**Prerequisite:**

There are no prerequisites and the course fulfills the Christian education requirement for the M.Div. If you choose a teaching project for your final project, you will need an appropriate ministry setting (e.g., field education position; a family; a church study group; study group on campus; or an appropriate clinical setting as so deemed by MFT faculty and advisors).

**Objectives:** At the end of the course, students:

1. will have an understanding of the concept of “the practice of teaching,” particularly within the community of faith;
2. will be able to identify key dimensions of growing in the practice of teaching in the community of faith;
3. will have considered their own gifts and abilities in relationship to identified “measures of excellence” related to teaching and learning;
4. will have considered the role, its power and authority, of a teacher, particularly in the context of Christian faith and life in the community of faith
5. will have experienced the art and practice of teaching both as teacher and learner
6. Will have considered and created a plan for teaching others the art and practice of teaching for the community of faith’s ministry.

## **Course Work**

Very specific guidance will be given in class for the following work.

### **Weekly Readings and Participation.**

To encourage careful reading and reflection, as well as high quality, respectful seminar discussion, for each reading there will be short (1-2 page only) writing assignments accompanying the reading (such as answering a question based on the reading, designing discussion questions, or other reflective exercises). These will be collected each week and will be returned at the end of the semester.

Writing and class discussions of the reading should demonstrate understanding of the reading and express thoughtful reflection upon the material involved. All written assignments should be of a high quality: graduate level grammar, spelling, and composition are expected, including proper citation of quoted materials. Please use inclusive language in writing and in speaking.

The reading reflections will be combined with overall class engagement. Attendance and active participation are assumed. Unexcused absences and other manners of nonparticipation will result in a lowering of the course grade at the professors' discretion. Six or more absences may result in a failing grade in the course.

### **Means of Evaluation:**

Weekly Reading and Participation: 1/3

Teaching: 1/3

Final Project 1/3

### **Teaching**

With the help of further guidance from the professors, students will teach in class at least twice and as part of teaching teams. (The size of the teams depends upon the class size.) Group preparation materials and lesson plans will be turned in at the time of teaching. Reflection papers (roughly 2 pages) from each member of the teaching team evaluating the teaching/learning experience are due at the next class session. Because thoughtful preparation and honest self-evaluation are essential dimensions of the practice of teaching these will be considered part of the "teaching" grade.

### **Final Project**

Students will design their own final projects, with various options. The projects must be of obvious relevance to teaching and the church's educational ministry. The work involved should be roughly the equivalent of the time and energy involved in a 20-page research paper, but practice-oriented projects are highly valued as well. The time could be spent teaching, writing, interviewing, organizing, or providing resources for your project. (Typically a 20-page paper is calculated at approximately 20 to 30 hours of work. Some possibilities are:

*Writing a curriculum for a Christian educational setting*

(e.g. 6-week adult Bible study; new member preparation; parent-child classes for communion; anti-racism and society; church officer training; teacher education)

*Writing a research paper on a relevant subject*

(e.g. multiple intelligences, history of curriculum materials, critical pedagogy, Parker Palmer's educational methods)

*Conducting qualitative research*

(e.g. interviewing Sunday school teachers, parents, or children; interviewing seminarians about attitudes toward Christian education, etc.)

*Designing or carrying out a teaching project intentionally using multiple intelligences*

(perhaps artwork, music, dance, videos, can be used in conjunction with words in a project. E.g. teaching children to drum or dance for worship; working with a sewing circle to design stoles or paraments; creating an educational video with a youth group)

*Teaching and reflecting upon Sunday school class sessions*

(e.g. design the session, audio- videotape the experience; provide written reflection and evaluation, much as we will do in the course teaching sessions, but this time done alone)

Students must get approval for their projects and a plan will be submitted by **March 11**, including time and writing estimates for work involved. A progress report is due **April 10**.

*For students taking the course for D.Min. or ThM credit, an additional 10-page research paper will be required on a subject related to the course and chosen in consultation with the instructor.*

### **From the Dean's Office:**

#### *Plagiarism and Documentation Policy*

“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.”

### **Bibliography (Reading will be selected from the following):**

#### **Primary**

hooks, bell. *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. New York: Routledge, 1994. **Or, if you have already read it,**

hooks, bell. *Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Little, Sara. *To Set One's Heart: Belief and Teaching in the Church*. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983.

Palmer, Parker. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Wimberly, Ann. *Soul Stories: African-American Christian Education*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Wink, Walter. *Transforming Bible Study: A Leader's Guide*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1980.

### ***Secondary***

Dykstra, Craig. *Growing in the Life of Christian Faith*. Louisville: Geneva Press, 1999.

Farley, Edward. *The Fragility of Knowledge*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988.

Eisner, Elliot. (Ed.) *Learning and Teaching the Ways of Knowing*. National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: 1985.

Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, 1994.

Freire, Paulo. *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1998.

Harris, Maria. *Teaching and Religious Imagination*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Harris, Maria. *Women and Teaching: themes for a spirituality of pedagogy*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *The Insecurity of Freedom: Essays on Human Existence*. New York: Schocken, 1966.

Hodgson, Peter. *God's Wisdom: Toward a Theology of Education*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1999.

Joyce, Bruce, and Weil, Marsha. *Models of Teaching*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1995.

Moran, Gabriel. *Showing How: The Act of Teaching*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 1997.

Melchert, Charles. *Wise Teaching: Biblical Wisdom and Educational Ministry*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1998.

Wink, Joan. *Critical Pedagogy: Notes from the Real World*. White Plains, NY: Longman Press, 1997.

## Calendar

February 7

### ***Introduction***

Course expectations and syllabus  
Thinking about your groups

February 12-14

### ***Teaching as Vocation***

*Small Wonders* (View Tuesday)  
Exploring the heart of teaching  
Teaching and identity  
Education and faith

Read Palmer, Intro, chs. 1-3  
one page assignment (due Thursday)  
Establish groups

February 19-21

### ***Teaching in the Church***

Being intentional through methods and plans  
Beyond techniques and classrooms  
Creating educational space through lesson plans

Read Little, all  
assignment (due Tuesday)

February 26

### ***Teaching Session--Group 1***

Method: a particular approach from Little  
Content: a theological idea/doctrine

February 28

### ***Teaching Session--Group 2***

Method: a particular approach from Little  
Content: a justice issue

March 4-6

### **\*Critical Pedagogies**

Read hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, Intro, chs.1-3, 11-12, 14  
If you've read TT, then *Teaching Community*, chs. 1-5, 9, 11  
assignment (Thursday)

Tuesday: attend Anna Carter Florence lecture in Chapel

*In light of lectures and hooks, how can preaching and teaching work together for the sake of freedom?*

March 11-13

### ***Transforming Bible Study***

Discussion of book and method

Read Wink, all  
project proposal  
assignment

March 18

### ***Soul Stories***

Discussion of book and method

Read Wimberly: carefully read pp. 13-48,  
get a feel for/review remainder  
assignment

March 20, 25, 27 No classes

April 1

**Teaching Session—Group 3**

Method: Wink

Content: Bible parable or narrative

Read Palmer, chs. 4-6  
assignment

April 3

**Teaching Session--Group 4**

Method: Wink

Content: Bible parable or narrative

April 8

**Teaching Session—Group 5**

Method: Wimberly

Content: Bible

progress report

April 10

**Teaching Session--Group 6**

Method Wimberly

Content: Bible

**Teaching Sessions Round 2: Method and Content open—group chooses**

April 15, Group 1

April 17, Group 2

April 22, Group 3

April 24, Group 4

April 29, Group 5

May 1, Group 6

May 6-8

**Reflections and Wrap-up**

*What have we learned about the art and practice of teaching in the community of faith?*

**May 14**

**Final Projects due**