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IS 502 Vocation of Ministry

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VOCArION OF MINISTRY [3 HOURS]
3 credits
IS502

Dates: Fall 2008
Enrollment Capacity: 22
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course seeks to ask and address the question, "How is our vocation as those called to Christian ministry discerned, shaped, and sustained?" The purpose of this course is to explore from a Wesleyan perspective the biblical and theological foundations of Christian personhood and vocation by examining the nexus between call to ministry and formation of persons in ministry.

Welcome to Vocation of Ministry! I am delighted to be your instructor and learning guide for this course. You may already have a strong sense of who you are in Christ and the implications of his call upon your life. If so, this course should help you to strengthen and to further clarify the nature and implications of that call. On the other hand, you may yet feel tentative about a "call" and vocation. Be of good cheer. We're embarking on an exploratory journey that should lead you toward making some vocational commitments. Together we will grow in Christ and embody his claims upon our lives. I'm here to support you on the journey and to hold you accountable along the way.

First things first: “The development of this extended learning syllabus is intended for distribution to members of the course and others by my permission. It is not intended for general distribution on the Internet. Permission to copy, in whole or in part, must be requested from the professor (R. Dale Hale).” Thanks for honoring these instructions.

And then some preliminaries: Teaching and learning online is a growing experience for us all. Periodically we will need to extend grace to one another as we communicate and work together in this medium. For example, are the instructions clear? Are the assignments and discussions working? Are you having problems? Please let me know. What I might consider “crystal clear” might seem as “clear as mud” to you.

Also let me and your course mates know if you find that you are going to be “off line” for a time. That will save us from wondering where you are.

It has also been my experience that life throws curve balls into our well-constructed plans. If you find yourself falling behind because life has overwhelmed you, please contact me by phone or e-mail as soon as you can so we can discuss your situation and problem solve together. Too often students ignore the support and help that a professor can offer at the front end of a crisis.
EXL SUPPORT CONTACT INFORMATION

For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact Information Commons: Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu Phone: (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program, contact Dale Hale: ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu Phone: (859) 858-2393

ACCESSING INFORMATION COMMONS MATERIALS

1. General Questions:
   a. The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.php

2. Materials Requests:
   a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/
   b. ExL Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary’s Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.
   c. ExL students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50 mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:
   a. ExL students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:
   a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/ and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0’s to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

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**REQUIRED READING/RESOURCES**

You should call the Asbury Seminary Bookstore, managed by Cokesbury, to order your text books. They will be sent to you by mail.

**Required Textbooks**


**Web-based Documents**

- Women and Wesley’s Time
- Facione, Peter A. “Critical Thinking: What It Is and Why It Counts.”
- Scriven, Michael & Paul, Richard, Defining Critical Thinking.
- Session activities from the on-line small group guide located at www.nopartiality.net
- Peggy McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”

Some other reading may pop-up within a week’s assignment.
Other Required Materials

- Course Media (1 DVD distributed by Information Technology Department via snail-mail; streamed video)
- DiSC & Spiritual Gifts (distributed during the first month of class via website)

Recommended Textbooks


COURSE OBJECTIVES

Having successfully completed this course, you should:

1. Understand the nature of Christian vocation (including God's call of all Christian disciples to ministry in church and world) from a Wesleyan perspective;
2. Grasp the relationship between critical reasoning and spirituality and understand their importance for theological reflection on the vocation and practice of ministry;
3. Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and gender issues with regard to their importance for the vocation of ministry;
4. Understand the importance of moral formation and integrity for Christian ministry, with a clear understanding of boundary issues related to ethical conduct;
5. Demonstrate commitment to "the way" of the Christian disciple through immersion in the means of grace;
6. Articulate a coherent narrative of one's own call into God's ministry; and
7. Project a curricular plan consistent with vocational discernment.

MATRIX OF A VOCATION OF MINISTRY

The Matrix of Vocation of Ministry gives you a visual representation of where we are heading in this course [not drawn to scale ?]. Ultimately we are studying how a vocation of ministry contributes to a life characterized by holiness, a concept that is central to a Wesleyan understanding of the spiritual life. Each module will build upon the previous one, and all modules will ultimately relate to leading a life characterized by holiness. In Module One we explore the relationship among values, calling, and mission. In Module Two we add an investigation into virtues, character, and morals. In Module Three we add an examination of vision, commitment, and ministry. The material in each module delves into various facets of the matrix. Your written assignments require you to weave your current understanding of your own call to a vocation of ministry with all material [text, web, media, etc.] as they relate to the matrix.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This e-course is structured around required readings, video and audio presentations, team forum discussions, spiritual formation groups, personal engagement with "works of piety" and "works of mercy" that are central to Wesleyan thought and practice, and written assignments. Our work week runs from Monday morning (8:00am) to Saturday evening (11:59pm) ET. You should complete any postings by midnight on Saturday.

What follows are the requirements for this course and their relative weight toward your final grade.

1. Forums (20%)

   1.1 Forums (I must warn you, I will be experimenting with this part of the class. But, don't worry, this is a place where grace abounds, especially where it comes to my attempts to add flavor and options to this course. Just hang in there. Humor me. We'll all learn this together.)
   1.1.1 I will assign you to a team for discussion.
   1.1.2 Each week (normally) your team will collaborate to complete an assignment that relates to the goals for each module.
   1.1.3 Postings will normally range between 50 and 150 words.
   1.1.4 Forum discussions calls for good "e-manners." Remember that your team members do not benefit from hearing your tone of voice or seeing your body language, SO BE CAREFUL HOW YOU PUT THINGS IN WRITING!!!!! You may be perceived as shouting, when you only meant to add an emphasis.
   1.1.5 I will monitor interaction and discussion of the assignments and grade your individual contribution to the overall discussion content as well as your contribution to facilitating the group discussion process.
   1.1.6 At the conclusion of each week, the next week and its instructions will be revealed. Previous week blocks will appear in order below the current week. All previous discussions may be continued but will lose priority the further away from the current week’s discussion. In other words, current discussions will receive top priority followed by the previous weeks. Feel free to continue the discussions, just don’t forget to get involved in the current discussion.

   1.1.6 This area also relates to Course Objective 2: Grasp the relationship between critical reasoning and spirituality and understand their importance for theological reflection on the vocation and practice of ministry. You will demonstrate your gradual mastery of this goal over the course of the semester as you participate in the on-line discussions.

Sample Grading Rubric for Forum Discussions

a. Did you give a succinct, understandable statement that reflected how you understood the text content as it relates to the discussion question?
b. Did you reflect critically on the interface between course content and personal experience?
c. Did you post your own answers/responses in a timely way, so as to promote conversation among the members of your team?
d. How effective were you in generating ideas/proposals for group interaction?
e. How effective were you in your engagement with the ideas/proposals generated by others on your Team?
f. Did you respond to your Teammates as per the instructions for the exercise?
g. Did you attend to issues of form and style appropriate to formal writing?

The actual grading, goes something like this.
* If you fail to post in a discussion forum: -1 point.
* If you post but not the number of posts or substantive posts requested: +1 (for posting), -1 (for not fulfilling assignment).
* If you post the minimum: +1
* If you post and become engaged in the discussion with more than the required posts and add to the discussion: +2

Part 1: Module 1 In-Process Outline 15%

You will prepare the “in-process” personal outline that integrates and cross-references the first four weeks of the matrix on the course content about values, calling, mission, and holiness from the readings, lectures, class discussions, and assignments.

The central theme of the outline is Spiritual Autobiography: My Call to Ministry. In your outline you should clearly demonstrate that you have read and interacted with the assigned readings. With reference to pertinent course material, point to the development your values and your call to Christian ministry in light of God’s mission to the world are reflected in the course materials. As illustrations, select highlights from your life that reveal God’s hand leading you to this point in your journey. Include a section on what you learned from the results of your DISC instrument, your sense of your spiritual gifts, talents and work experience that will help, or hinder, your future ministry and how you see your seminary education as a means for preparing you for the work of “equipping the saints” for ministry. This outline should include an answer to the questions: how can growth in personal and social holiness help me fulfill my calling?

Part 2: Cross-Cultural Worship Experience 5%

Course Objective 3: Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and gender issues with regard to their importance for the vocation of ministry.

During the semester you will engage in learning activities that relate to our course goals. You are expected to attend one worship service in a congregation that is culturally or ethnically different from your own. If you are a pastor, start now to make preparations to be relieved of duty for one Sunday or Wednesday in order to fulfill this assignment. If you are living internationally so that you already experience cross-cultural worship on a regular basis, please contact me so that I can adjust the requirement accordingly. If you currently worship in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial setting, please contact me that I can adjust the requirement accordingly. Included as part 2 for your module one paper (described earlier).
Go to the following web site.  
http://www.nopartiality.net/sess_8.htm. Follow the instructions for the field trip and think through writing assignment #1. You may want to print it and take it with you to the worship service. The questions in the writing assignment will help you engage in critical thinking in this different worship setting. Include your church visit in outline form as part 2 of with your module one paper. Due Monday, October 3, 2008 by 12:00 midnight [ET]

2 part single sentence outline (NO NARRATIVE - that will come later) Check out example located in Course Information Center.

Part 1: Module 2 In-Process Outline 15%

You will prepare the “in-process” personal outline that integrates and cross-references the first seven weeks of the course content from the readings, lectures, class discussions and assignments for Modules 1 and 2. The central theme of this outline is: Integrity in Ministry. Prepare this outline with the four points of the matrix on virtues, character, morals and holiness. Include an answer to the question: How can a life of personal and social holiness help develop a life of integrity? Review the writing instructions for Module 1. Include new material from the first four points of the matrix in Module 1 (material not found in your first outline) on values, calling, mission, and holiness. See the matrix design for cross-referencing this paper from the major topics of the matrix of the first module.

Part 2: Commitment to Social Justice 5%

Course Objective 1: Understand the nature of Christian vocation (including God's call of all Christian disciples to ministry in church and world) from a Wesleyan perspective, and Course Objective 3: Demonstrate sensitivity to cultural, ethnic, and gender issues with regard to their importance for the vocation of ministry

A commitment to social justice is one of the emphases of the Wesleyan tradition. You are expected to invest a minimum of 4 hours of service in your community. You may work in a mercy ministry that your church sponsors, or you may choose to volunteer to help in some other community service organization. For example, your group can serve dinner at a Ronald McDonald House in your area, work for a soup kitchen, help out at the Salvation Army, work on a Habitat for Humanity home, give respite to a full-time caregiver, provide housekeeping or lawn care for a homebound person, etc. Please clear your project with me in advance. Part two of your outline will reflect this experience. The purpose of writing this in outline form is to help you remember this experience when it comes time to writing your third paper. In this outline, please describe your service involvement and recalling one event that sticks out to you.

Submit this full report on Monday, November 10, 2008, 12 midnight [ET].

3 part paper that now incorporates narrative, fleshing out previous outline and the following pieces.

Part 1: Module 3 In-Process Paper 25%
For Module 3, you will write an 8 to 10 page personal integrative paper that cross-references all class material to date in Modules 1, 2, and 3. The purpose of this assignment is to help you create an integrated understanding of ministry. The central theme of this paper should be: My Commitments to a Vision for Ministry and a Rule of Life. Write about the present state of your vision for your future in ministry. Include your views about working in a multi-cultural world with persons from different races, socio-economic status and gender different from your own. Describe the kind of personal, family, and institutional commitments you are willing to make to fulfill your calling to ministry. You will be evaluated upon the written demonstration of your ability to reflect on the assigned texts, class lectures, discussions, and class assignments. In your paper use the outlines from the previous modules to help direct you for this paper. However, do not just list words from the various units of study. Review the writing instructions in Module 1 and the grading rubric guidelines before writing your paper. The completion of this document should help you choose Seminary courses that will best prepare you for fulfilling your vision for ministry. It will also provide material for responding to written and personal interview questions regarding your call, motivation, and preparation for ministry.

Part 2: Spiritual Formation Group (10%)

Course Objective 5: Demonstrate commitment to "the way" of the Christian disciple through immersion in the means of grace.

Because spiritual formation is an important part of this course, you will participate in a weekly small group that provides opportunity for fellowship, sharing, and prayer. You will begin this commitment by the second week of class. If you are not currently in a group, you may start one on your own. Your group should have at least two other persons in it and meet weekly for one hour each week. Ruth Haley Barton’s book Sacred Rhythms will provide the foundational content for weekly reading. The suggestions that she provides in Appendix A and B (pp. 169-185) furnishes guidelines for your group reflections.

Membership in your spiritual formation group:
• Should be at least 3 persons (including yourself). If your spouse is a part of your group then your minimum number of participants is 4 persons (including yourself). Your spouse in not required to be a member of your group.
• You are required to study Sacred Rhythms together. This means that you may need to negotiate with other small group members if you are participating in a small group that is using some other material.
• You may use an existing group of which you are a part for this component, but you must use the Sacred Rhythms text for the fall semester in your group.
• You do not have to be the group’s weekly leader. Your group is welcomed to work out leadership responsibilities as is fitting for your group.

Goals for the spiritual formation group:
• Engage with “means of grace” in order to cultivate attentiveness to God’s presence our lives.
• Provide an opportunity for mutual accountability. Participants designate their own goals and all share the journey of growth in grace.
• Focus on prayer – corporate and personal.
• Mutual sharing. While you may be the designated facilitator, this is not a “me teach you” format but a “let’s learn together as members of God’s family.”

Inclusion in the final paper: The spiritual formation group summary should be included as a part of your discussion of part 1. In other words, even though it is explained here as a separate part, you should include it in the main piece of this paper. Explain how the experience worked for you. Answer this question: Will this be a part of your ministry as a "means of grace" to help you cultivate God’s presence in your life?

Part 3: As a separate document, you will also include your Rule of Life. Specific instructions for developing a Rule of Life will be available a few weeks before the due date.

General Instructions
In this class your papers are personal reflections about all course material covered (that is, they are not just journaling or stream of consciousness writing). You must demonstrate your degree of engagement with the reading, lectures, and discussion material in your paper. Write your paper in the first person without an attempt to preach to others.

Your paper should use one-inch margins and a 12-point font like Times New Roman, double-spaced. Document your sources within the body of the paper, for example (Lewis, 45) and give your bibliographic information at the end of your paper.

4.1 Papers must conform to MLA or APA form and style according to Slade [available in the ATS bookstore and in the library].
4.2 I will grade all submitted work and will seek to return your papers to you in a timely fashion as defined by the faculty policy (1 week).
4.3 All written work is due by 12:00 Midnight (ET) on the due date.
4.4 If you need to negotiate an alternate due date with me, please discuss this with me BEFORE the assignment is due. Do not request an extension because you have too much academic work in other classes or you are entering a busy church season. PLAN ahead. Typical reasons for extensions include unexpected illness, injury, unexpected family crisis, hurricanes that disrupt power.

GRADING POLICY
Asbury Seminary defines grades using the following criteria (catalog, p. 24):
A= Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives
B= Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
C= Acceptable work: essential achievement of course objectives
D= Marginal work: minimal or inadequate achievement of course objectives
F= Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

A plus (+) or minus (−) indicates positions between categories (for example, B+ = very good; C− = slightly below acceptable, etc.).
Grading Process
When you submit your in-process papers I will use the “Insert Comment” function from Word as my way to “write” my comments on your paper. The Asbury Seminary faculty have adopted the following standards for faculty grading of papers:

- Timely feedback: For assessment of student work during the course of the academic term, the expectation of “timely” feedback is met when students have their work marked, graded, and returned within one week of its submission. Moreover, when assignment “B” builds on assignment “A,” assignment “A” should be returned before assignment “B” falls due. Longer assignments are often due at the end of the term, and are not subject to this definition.

- Substantive feedback: For assessments of student work during the course of the academic term, the expectation of “substantive” feedback is met when students receive responses that alert them to what they have done well and how they might improve their performance in subsequent work.

Late Assignments and Papers
- Team assignments or discussion assignments. These assignments are time-sensitive and are not amendable to negotiating a different due date. You will receive no credit for a team/discussion assignment that is posted late.
- If you are not active for more than three weeks in the course you will not receive a passing grade. “Inactive” means that you have not posted at all or that you demonstrate minimal participation for more than three weeks.
- Due dates for In-Process papers may be adjusted provided you discuss this with me at least one week ahead of time. A paper or assignment that is late without prior permission from the instructor receives a grade but no written comments. If your paper is more than 1 week late, then your grade is lowered by 1/3 of a grade for each late week.

Incomplete Policy
A grade of “I” denotes course work that has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include failure to turn in course work or attending to church work or other employment. A request for an incomplete requires not only my approval, but also the approval of the Provost. See the Asbury Seminary Catalog for further clarification.

Other Grading Points of Note
In this class I use a variety of different notations. Some items are marked on a “credit-no credit” basis. Most team discussions are rated on a mark of 1-10. All in-process papers are graded on a range of 1-5. Each of these “ways” of marking is weighted differently. The formula for tallying your grade employs a method of standardizing these ways of marking. I will be happy to send the full formula to you should you be interested in it.
When all is said and done and all the grades are averaged together, here is the final scale of measurement:

- 100-96 = A
- 95-93 = A-
- 92-87 = B+
- 86-84 = B
- 83-81 = B-
- 80-77 = C+
- 76-74 = C
- 73-71 = C-
- 70-67 = D+
- 66-64 = D
- 63-61 = D-
- 60 and below = F

COURSE OUTLINE AND LEARNING GOALS

1. Module 1: Understanding the Nature of Christian Vocation from a Wesleyan Perspective

At the completion of module 1, you will be able to:
- Discuss core Christian values;
- Articulate your personal core values and how they influenced your call to ministry;
- Discuss how your values influenced your call to ministry and share how you responded to a perceived call of God;
- Relate your calling to your understanding of a personal mission in life and how this connects to the mission of God;
- Write a Spiritual Autobiography (= Module 1 paper)

2. Module 2: The Call to Integrity: Christian Virtues, Character, Morals, and a Life of Holiness

At the completion of this module, you will be able to:
- Discuss the relationship between virtue, ethics, and the fruit of the Spirit;
- Develop a list of personal Christian virtues for prayer and practice;
- Distinguish the difference between personality development and character transformation;
- Articulate the importance of moral behavior that leads to a life of integrity;
- Formulate a theological understanding of temptation;
- Be receptive to the gift of the Holy Spirit and develop a plan for the process of growth in a life of personal and social holiness.

3. Module 3: Commitment to God’s Vision for Ministry

At the completion of this module, you will be able to:
- Describe the relationship between the kind of person you want to be and the work you are being called to;
- Decide on the commitments you are making to the Lord, others, yourself, and institutions;
• Formulate a Rule of Life;
• Articulate an understanding of ministry from a theology of mission;
• Integrate all 10 points of the matrix for a vocation of ministry.

ONLINE COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

The collaborative classroom is built upon the Moodle platform that Asbury Seminary now uses for its course management system (CMS). An “IS502” link will show up in the “My Courses” block after you sign into Asbury’s Virtual Campus, located at:  http://virtual.asburyseminary.edu

Once inside the classroom you will be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course.