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IS 502 Christian Formation: Vocation of Ministry

R. Jeffrey Hiatt

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Recommended Citation
Course: IS502 X3 (SP 2009)
Title: Christian Formation: Vocation of Ministry
Hours: 3.00
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Prerequisites: None
Department: Integrative Studies
Faculty: Dr. Jeff Hiatt

Email: jeff.hiatt@asburyseminary.edu
Office: SH
SPO: 898

Meetings:
During 02/09/2009 to 05/22/2009 Online via ExL.

Maximum Registration: 22

Catalog 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.

Objectives:

Welcome!
I am delighted to be your instructor and learning guide in this course. You may already have a strong sense of who you are in Christ and the implications of God’s call upon your life. If so, this course should help you to strengthen and clarify the nature and implications of that call. On the other hand, you may feel tentative about a “call” and “vocation in ministry.” 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.

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 colleagues know if you are going to be “off line” for a time so that we will not wonder where you are. If you find yourself falling behind because of life complications, please contact me as soon as you can so we can discuss your situation and problem solve together. Too often students ignore the help that a professor can offer at the front of a crisis. Serving Him Together, Jeff Hiatt

Course Description
This course asks and addresses 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.

Course Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, you should:
1. Understand the nature of Christian vocation from a Wesleyan perspective, reflecting God's call of all Christian disciples for ministry in/through the church and in/to the world;
2. Grasp the relationship between spiritual growth and theological reflection in the 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 a life of personal and social holiness through immersion in the means of grace and development of a “Rule of Life;”
6. Be able to articulate a coherent narrative of one's own call into God's ministry as well as one's God-given gifts and graces for ministry;
7. Project a personal vision for ministry and a curricular plan consistent with one's vocational discernment and vision for ministry (including one's Rule of Life).

Required Reading/Resources

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

- Scriven, Michael & Paul, Richard, Defining Critical Thinking. Located at http://www.criticalthinking.org/aboutCT/definingCT.cfm
- Session activities from the on-line small group guide located at www nopartiality.net
  See the site below for an interpretive view of Wesley's views http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/covenant/means.htm
- Women and Wesley’s Time http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/wesleywomen.stm

Other Required Materials

DISC & Spiritual Gifts (distributed during the first month of class via website). You will receive an e-mail link and instructions from the ExL office after the “drop-add” date.

Recommended Readings


Integrated Life of a Vocation of Ministry

We are studying how a vocation of ministry contributes to a life characterized by holy love, a concept that is central to a Wesleyan understanding of the spiritual life. Each module builds upon the previous module, and investigates four themes—three supporting elements, and the inclusive element of a life characterized by holy love.

In Module One we explore the relationship among values, calling, and mission.
In Module Two we reflect on virtues, character, and morals.
In Module Three we examine vision, commitment, and ministry.

The material in each module delves into various facets of these interrelated areas. Your written assignments direct 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 each other.

Course Outline and Learning Goals

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)

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

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 holy love.

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 for a vocation of ministry.

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 theological perspective in thought, word, practice, and written assignments. Our work week runs from Monday morning (8:00am) to Saturday evening (11:55pm) ET. Complete your topic postings no later than Wednesday and your colleague responses by Saturday; however, the sooner you post the better it is for interaction. I will respond to the major issues raised in your discussions as is pertinent and needed and will post my final comments for that week toward the conclusion of the discussion.

In submitted assignments, use one-inch margins, a 12-point clear font like Arial, TNR, double-space lines, and indent paragraphs. Document your sources within the body of the paper, for example (Lewis 45) and give your Works Cited information at the end of your paper. Papers must conform to MLA or APA form and style according to Slade or Turabian [available in the ATS bookstore and in the library].

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 (usually 1 week).

All written work is due by 11:55pm (ET) on the due date. 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, family crisis, or a natural disaster that disrupts power.

1. Forums (20%)

Each week you will be required to contribute to the class forum. The forum discussion will be based on the class readings and questions for the week, similar to an in-class discussion. Post a response to the current topic or question being considered and to two other student postings. Postings will normally range between 50 and 150 substantive words. Responses to others postings that only indicate disagreement or affirmation are insufficient. A “substantive” response contributes to the conversation by thoughtful reflection
and sharing. I will monitor interaction and discussion, respond to, and grade your individual contribution to the overall content as well as your facilitation of the group discussion process.

(Note: Forum discussions call 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.) If you are expressing something with an emotional flare, then use an emoticon and/or put your feeling into writing. (It may seem strange, but it will reduce misunderstanding and increase clear communication.

At the conclusion of each week, the instructions for the next week will be posted. Previous week blocks will appear in order above the current week. All previous discussions may be continued, but will be a lesser priority than the current week’s discussion. Feel free to continue the previous discussions, but give priority to the current week’s discussion.

This area also relates to Course Objective 2: Grop the relationship between critical reasoning and spirituality to 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 and assignments.

Sample Evaluation 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 academic writing?
h. Did you speak the truth in love?

2. Spiritual Formation Group (10%) 

Report Due: Saturday, May 9, 2009, 11:55pm [ET]

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

Because a commitment to social holiness (spiritual formation as holy love) is a central emphasis of the Wesleyan tradition, and an important part of this course, you will participate weekly in a 3-4-person group (assigned in class) that provides opportunity for sharing and prayer. Begin this commitment by the second week of class. Ruth Barton’s book Sacred Rhythms will be the assigned study literature for your interaction. The suggestions that she provides in Appendix A and B (pp. 169-185) furnish the guidelines for your group reflections. This means that you need to post weekly to each other to discuss that material. Plan to lead the discussion (post first) with your group for every third chapter in the book. Every group discussion should seek to apply holiness of heart and life (personally and socially), both as a gift from God, and as a personal responsibility to the discussion material. Group members are expected to contribute biblical references, resources from reading and personal experiences that are directly related to the topic of discussion for that day. A 1-2 page summary report of your experience is due on Saturday, May 9, 2009, by 11:55pm (ET). Include how many sessions you missed, if any. IMPORATNT: if you do not post for three weeks’ group discussions (for whatever reasons!), you will not receive credit for this component of the course.

Goals for the spiritual formation group:

Engage with “means of grace” in order to cultivate attentiveness to God’s presence in 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: When you are the designated facilitator, this is not a “me teach you” format, but a “let’s learn together as members of God’s family” approach.

3. Cross-Cultural Experience -OR- Cross-Cultural Conversations (10%) 

Report Due: Saturday, March 14, 2009, 11:55 ET

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

A. Cross-Cultural Worship Experience

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 away 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. Include a one-page summary report of your church visit with your module one paper.

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 a 1 – 2 page summary report of your church visit with your module one paper. Due Saturday, March 14, 2009 by 11:55pm [ET]

-OR-
B. Cross-Cultural Conversations

By the conclusion of Module 1, you will conduct two conversations (45 minutes long per conversation) with one individual who is culturally and/or ethnically different than you. In the first conversation find out where this person was raised. Ask how their family functioned and the role of Christianity in their lives. In the second conversation, talk about each other’s call to ministry and how each evolved. Share who and what God used in your lives to get you to Asbury. Attach a 1 – 2 page summary report of your two conversations to your module one paper. Due Saturday, March 14.

4. 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. 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, work with a group to 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. Write a one-page description of your service involvement describing 1 or 2 things about the experience that stand out for you and your personal reaction to the experience overall. Submit this report concurrent with your Module 2, In-Process Paper by Saturday, April 18, 2009, 11:55pm ET.

5. "In-Process" Papers (55%)

Module 1 Paper 15% Saturday, March 14, 2009, 11:55pm ET
Module 2 Paper 15% Saturday, April 18, 2009, 11:55pm ET
Module 3 Papers 25% Wednesday, May 20, 2009, 11:55pm ET

Course Objective 6: Be able to articulate a coherent narrative of one’s own call into God’s ministry. Other objectives also relate to these papers.

Over the course of the semester you will prepare three "in-process" papers that integrate course content, your understanding of your vocation of ministry, and assessment surveys where appropriate. Upload the papers to the appropriately marked location within our online classroom. (You will see this when the time is needed.) These 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.

Module 1 “In-Process” Paper Spiritual Autobiography: My Call to Ministry (15%)

Due: Saturday March 14, 2009, 11:55pm ET

Write a 4-5 page reflection paper that integrates and cross-references the first four weeks of the course content about values, calling, mission, and holy love from the readings, lectures, class discussions, and assignments. [Please note: your Spiritual Autobiography will go into your ATS Portfolio.]

With reference to pertinent course material, discuss the development of your values and your call to Christian ministry in light of God’s mission to the world. Select highlights from your life that reveal God’s hand leading you to this point in your journey. Discuss what you learned from the results of your DISC instrument, your sense of your spiritual gifts, talents and work experience that may 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 paper should include an answer to the two-part question: How can growth in (1) personal and (2) social holiness help me fulfill my calling?

Remember to include your response paper for attending a culturally different worship service or conversation along with your Module 1 paper. Please send this as a second document rather than embedding it in your Module 1 paper.

Module 2 In-Process Paper: Integrity in Ministry (15%)

Due: Saturday, April 18, 2009, 11:55pm ET

For the Module 2, In-Process Paper please write a personal 5-6 page integrative paper on 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 paper is: Integrity in Ministry. Write from the four points on virtues, character, morals and holy love. Include an answer to the question: How can a life of personal and social holiness help develop a life of integrity? Include new material from the first four points in Module 1 (material not found in your first paper) on values, calling, mission, and holy love. (Review the writing instructions for Module 1.) Remember to also send [as a separate document] your social justice project report.

Module 3 In-Process Paper: Vision for Ministry (15%) & Rule of Life (10%)

Due: Wednesday, May 20, 2009, 11:55pm ET

For Module 3, write a 6-8 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 races, socio-economic statuses, 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. Pull out of your integrated Vision for Ministry paper, to submit as a separate document, your Rule of Life. Specific instructions for developing a Rule of Life are available in the Course Center.

You will be evaluated upon the written demonstration of your ability to reflect on and integrate the assigned texts, class lectures, discussions, and class assignments in practical ministry. In your paper, avoid repeating things you wrote for Modules 1 and 2. Review the writing instructions in Module 1 and the grading rubric guidelines before writing your paper. The completion of this document will allow you to meet a graduation requirement of constructing a “Rule of Life” paper, and should help you select Seminary courses that will best prepare you for fulfilling your vision for ministry. (It will also provide material for those responding to written and personal interview questions regarding your call, motivation, and preparation for professional ministry.)

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 a nuanced position between categories, as applicable.

**Point Grading Scale**

- A = 100-95
- B+ = 90-87
- B = 83-80
- C = 76-70
- F = 59-0
- A- = 94-91
- B = 86-84
- C+ = 79-77
- D = 69-60

Grading Process
When you submit your in-process papers, I will write my comments on a separate post than on your paper, highlighting proper content and technical issues. The Asbury Seminary faculty adopted the following standards for 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, Papers, and Attendance

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 discussion center and your team folder 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. You are considered “absent” from class, if you do not post “substantively” for that week.

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 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.

ExL Support Contact Information
For technical support, library research support, library loans, and ExL media contact Information Commons:

- **mailto:Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu**
- **Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu**
- **Phone:** (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

For general questions and administrative assistance regarding the ExL program, contact Dr. Dale Hale:

- **mailto:ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu**
- **ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu**
- **Phone:** (859) 858-2393

Accessing Information Commons Materials
1. General Questions:
   - 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](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:
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:
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).

5. Online Communication Guidelines
The collaborative classroom is built upon the Moodle platform that Asbury Seminary uses for its course management system (CMS). An “ISS02” 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.

Copyright Policies
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(o)Designates optional reading