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IS 502 Christian Formation: Vocation of Ministry

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Course: IS502 X1 (SP 2009)
Title: Christian Formation: Vocation of Ministry
Hours: 3.00
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Prerequisites: None

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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 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. Blessings, Reg Johnson

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 (Reg Johnson). Thanks for honoring these instructions.

And now 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.

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.

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

This course is designed to show 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, e-team conferencing, 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 Tuesday Noon (ET) to Tuesday Noon (ET). You should complete any postings by midnight on Monday. On Tuesday mornings (God willing and the creek don't rise), I will post any final comments I may have.

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

1. E-Conferences (20%)

1.1 E-Conferences

1.1.1 I will assign you to an e-team for conferencing.
1.1.1 Each week (normally) your e-team will collaborate to complete an assignment that relates to the goals for each module.
1.1.2 Postings will normally range between 50 and 150 words.
1.1.3 E-conferencing 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
1.1.4 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.

1.1.5 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.

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?

1.2. Cross-Cultural Worship Experience (5%)
Report Due: Friday, March 13, 2009, Midnight ET

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. 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 one-page summary report of your church visit with your module one paper. Due Friday, March 13, 2009 by 12:00 midnight [ET]

2. Spiritual Formation Group (10%)
Report Due: Friday, May 15, 2009, Midnight

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 BartonÕs 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. One page summary report of your experience is due on Friday, May 15, 2009, by 12 midnight (ET).

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 groupÕs 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 Ômeans of graceÕ in order to cultivate attentiveness to GodÕs 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 Ôme teach youÕ format but a ÔletÕs learn together as members of GodÕs family.Õ
3. Commitment to Social Justice (5%)
Report Due: Friday, April 17, 2009, Midnight ET

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. You are to write a brief (one-page) description of your service involvement describing one thing about the experience that stands out for you and your personal reaction to the experience. Submit this report concurrent with your Module 2, In-Process Paper on Friday, April 17, 2009, 12 midnight ET.

4. "In-Process" Papers (60%)
Module 1 Paper 15% Friday, March 13, 2009, Midnight ET
Module 2 Paper 20% Friday, April 17, 2009, Midnight ET
Module 3 Paper 25% Friday, May 15, 2009, Midnight 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. These you will post at the "assignment" heading on the web page for the week the paper is due.

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 you 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 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.
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.

Module 1 Process Paper 15%
Due: Friday March 13, 2009, Midnight ET

You will prepare a 4-5 page Öin-processÖ personal, paper 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 paper is: Spiritual Autobiography: My Call to Ministry. In your paper you should clearly demonstrate that you have read and interacted with the assigned readings. With reference to pertinent course material, discuss the development your values and your call to Christian ministry in light of GodÔs mission to the world. Select highlights from your life that reveal GodÔs 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 will help, or hinder, your future ministry and how you see your seminary education as a means for preparing you for the work of Öequipping the saintsÖ for ministry. This paper should include an answer to the questions: how can growth in personal and social holiness help me fulfill my calling?

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

Module 2 Process Paper 20%
Due Friday, April 17, 2009, Midnight 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 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 paper) on values, calling, mission, and holiness. Refer to the course "matrix" explanation located earlier in this syllabus for the elements in the way the course is designed. This will be useful for cross-referencing your paper from the major topics of the matrix of the first module.

Remember to also attach [as a separate document] your social justice project report.

Module 3 In-Process Paper 25%
Due: Friday, May 15, 2009, Midnight ET

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. As a separate document, you will also include your Rule of Life. Specific instructions for developing a Rule of Life will be available in the Course Center.

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 avoid repeating things you wrote for Modules 1 and 2. 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.

5. 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


Helpful Web-based Documents.
(Links to many of the following sites will be included in your weekly course materials. As I discover other resources on the Web, they will pop-up within a weekÕs assignment.)
Women and WesleyÕs Time http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/wesley/wesleywomen.stm
I have also downloaded this as a pdf file in the Course Center.
Session activities from the on-line small group guide located at www.nopartiality.net
Peggy McIntosh, ÔWhite Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible KnapsackÕ found at http://www.cwru.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf

Other Required Materials
A Course DVD (probably labeled as "Disc 3") which you will received via snail mail, and which contains presentations that will be assigned for your viewing at various times during the semester
DiSC (distributed during the first month of class via website)
Spiritual Gifts Inventory found at http://buildingchurch.net/g2s.htm
Recommended Textbooks

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 School of Theology faculty has 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 ÔAÔ builds on assignment ÔA,Ô assignment ÔAÔ should be returned before assignment ÔBÔ 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
Forum assignments are time-sensitive and are not amendable to negotiating a different due date. You will receive no credit for a Forum assignment that is posted late. If you are not active for more than three weeks in your group Forum you will not receive a passing grade. OlnactiveÔ means that you have not posted at all or that you demonstrate minimal participation for more than three weeks.

Due dates for 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 you 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.

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 e-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 ÔwaysÔ of marking is weighted differently, as will be evident in the feedback you receive on your papers.

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 (COLLABORATIVE CLASSROOM) COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

The Collaborative Classroom is built upon Moodle platform that Asbury Seminary uses. within this folder you will be able to collaborate with participant-colleagues and me throughout the course. The following are functions with which you should familiarize yourself:

1. The Course Center will contain a copy of the syllabus as well as any other materials I may choose to post for the entire class to access.

2. The Discussion Center will be used for all public communications. Anytime you have a question or comment about the course, the schedule, the assignments, or anything else that may be of interest to other participants and me you should post it to the Discussion Center. You will also post all of your entire-class (versus team) discussion responses here. Normally these will be organized around threaded discussions. In a threaded discussion, your comment builds on the comments of those who preceded you. You might think of a threaded discussion as a file drawer in which all the comments are organized sequentially so that you can follow the flow of conversation. Each new question or posting begins a different threaded discussion.

3. Your work with your e-team will be done within the Team Folder. Any intra-team discussions will take place here, in contrast to the Discussion Center that is for the entire class.

4. The IS502X Office is for private correspondence between you and me. This will contain items that you do not want to appear publicly to all your classmates or items that you think may embarrass me if they were to appear publicly. It is also the place where you will send your assignments as attached files.

5. The Chat Center is intended primarily for real-time interaction among participants. You can get together with other members to study, ask questions, or to explore topics. None of the conversations carried on in this location are ever saved.

6. The Resource Center provides access to a number of specific tools available to all ExL and DMIN students. These include access to the B.L. Fisher Library, the services in Estes Chapel, ExL Updates, Guidelines for Success, Helpful Hints, Interesting Links, a PowerPoint Viewer, as well as a Real Audio player. I encourage you to explore these resources, and particularly to utilize the chapel access in order to connect with the seminary’s on-campus opportunities for spiritual growth.
ExL Support Contact Information

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

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

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.htm

2. Materials Requests:
a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here:
http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm

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/index.htm 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).

Copyright Policies

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