

PT110: WISDOM FORMATION IN A (POST-)MODERN WORLD

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Thursdays 1 – 3:50 p.m.

Fall 2008-2009

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines Christian and Jewish lived traditions for commonalities that draw people together in religious practice *and* differences that forge an intimate, wisdom way of living in compassionate faith companionship. In contrast to “interfaith dialogue,” the postmodern approach is grounded in Mother Teresa's adage--to make a Christian a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Jew a better Jew, and a Buddhist a better Buddhist--and therefore originates only in rooted faith identities, willingly shared practices, and compassionately deep listening with and for "the other."

II. TEXTBOOKS:

REQUIRED READING:

- U.S. Religious Landscape Survey 2008, *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*
<http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>
- Almond, Gabriel A., R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan. *Strong Religion: the Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World (the Fundamentalism Project)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003. ISBN-10: 0226014983; ISBN-13: 978-0226014982
- Bigelow, Bill and Bob Peterson. *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World*. Rethinking Schools Ltd., 2002. ISBN-10: 0942961285; ISBN-13: 978-0942961287
- Bourgeault, Cynthia. *The Wisdom Way of Knowing: Reclaiming an Ancient Tradition to Awaken the Heart*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc./Jossey-Bass, 2003. ISBN 0-7879-6896-X
- Manjoo, Farhad. *True Enough: Learning to Live in a Post-Fact Society*. Hoboken: Wiley&Sons, 2008. ISBN 978-0-470-05010-1.
- Polak, Paul. *Out of Poverty: What Works When Traditional Approaches Fail*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008. ISBN-10: 1576754499; ISBN-13: 978-1576754498
- Tucker, Mary Evelyn and John A. Grim, eds. *Worldviews and Ecology: Religion, Philosophy, and the Environment*. Ecology and Justice series. Orbis, 1994. ISBN-10: 0883449676 ISBN-13: 978-0883449677

Articles (on reserve at UTS library)

- McKenna, Andrew J. “Postmodernism: It’s Future Perfect” *Postmodernism and Continental Philosophy*. eds. Hugh J. Silverman and Donn Welton. *Selected Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* series. Albany: State University of New York, 1988. ISBN 0-88706-522-8
- Olthuis, James H. “Introduction: Love/Knowledge – Sojourning with Others, Meeting with Differences” and “Crossing the Threshold: Sojourning Together in the Wild Spaces of

- Love,” in *Knowing Other-wise: Philosophy at the Threshold of Spirituality*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1997. ISBN 0-8232-1780-9; ISBN 0-8232-1781-7.
- Silverman, Hugh J., “Introduction,” *Postmodernism and Continental Philosophy*. eds. Hugh J. Silverman and Donn Welton. *Selected Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* series. Albany: State University of New York, 1988. ISBN 0-88706-522-8
- Vanhoozer, Kevin J. “Theology and the Condition of Postmodernity: a Report on Knowledge (of God),” in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-521-79062-X; ISBN 0-521-79395-5

RECOMMENDED READING:

- Bemporad, Jack, ed. *The Inner Journey: Views from the Jewish Tradition*. PARABOLA Anthology Series. Sandpoint, ID: Morning Light Press, 2007. ISBN 10: 1-59675-015-4; ISBN-13:978-1-59675-015-9
- Bos, A. David. *Bound Together: a Theology for Ecumenical Community Ministry*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005. ISBN-10: 0829816283; ISBN-13: 978-0829816280
- Kisly, Lorraine, ed. *The Inner Journey: Views from the Christian Tradition*. PARABOLA Anthology Series. Sandpoint, ID: Morning Light Press, 2006. ISBN 10: 1-59675-008-1; ISBN 13: 978-1-59675-008-1
- Sternberg, Robert J., ed. *Wisdom: Its Nature, Origins, and Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990 (reprinted 1992, 1993, 1995). ISBN 0-521-36718-2

III. RATIONALE:

Faith formation for religious leaders in today’s increasingly fragmented and fearful environments requires deeper roots in established traditions yet complemented by fearless openness to other faith traditions and their religious practice in the public marketplace. This course brings fledgling religious leaders across faith traditions into shared practice and conversation with one another to

- develop greater self-understanding and spiritual maturity toward traditionally-rooted conviction open to compassionate, sacred encounter within intimate difference,
- foster understanding that God’s redemptive activity is both personally and socially transformational, and
- cultivate the skills and perspectives required for religious leadership in today’s local and global contexts of shared mission

IV. SPECIFIC COMPETENCIES:

1. Develop and further strengthen a globally-nuanced view of faith communities in local contexts.
2. Deepen participation in faith-practice groups – support, advocacy, challenge – in order to develop familiarity with other religious communities’ practices with simultaneous fidelity to one’s faith tradition.
3. Compare and contrast theological presuppositions between faith traditions toward an open-ended and listening engagement with ‘the other.’

4. Identify potentially shared mission priorities between faith traditions and develop sensitive, inviting language in which to be faithful to localized pursuits.
5. Experiment with and deepen educational leadership skills – presentation, reflection

V. TEACHING STRATEGIES:

This course involves a rhythmic mixture of plenary lectures and facilitated small group discussions. Course readings structure additional contemporary contributions for critical analysis and exploration. Small groups will be used regularly in order to articulate new questions and challenge new communities of discourse on both lecture and course reading materials.

Specific Teaching/Learning, Student-Driven Practices

Spiritual Practice Descriptions/Reflections: A 1-2 page description (similar to the example passed out in class) of a spiritual practice in terms of its history (how did you begin or find out about this? From whom? What kind of relationship?), its actual practice (imagine teaching it to a junior high kid and then to an elderly adult), and its significance within your own awakening or compassionate awareness. The reflection will be a 1-2 page musings on a practice you learned the ‘first’ week, and engaged at least once in the week following.

Small group participation: Students will participate in small groups, in support of deepening spiritual practice and engagement of readings and discussion.

Educational Leadership: A final presentation, reflective of small group learning and the challenges of maintaining spiritual practice within contemporary ministry settings, will conclude the course. More detailed description will be given mid-semester, as the coursework forms the teaching/learning process.

Final Project/Paper: Each participant must conclude the course with a final project, illustrative of critical engagement with class readings and discussions, suited to context and choice.

VI. CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND READINGS:

September 11	<i>Endings and Beginnings – Wisdom Formation for Today’s Leaders</i> Introductions Ground Rules Spiritual Practice Groups amidst Traditions The World as We See It Have read: <i>US Religious Landscape Survey</i>
September 18	<i>Building Awareness and Introducing Practices</i> Bring to class: Spiritual Practice descriptions [Kula travelling...]
September 25	<i>Reflections on the New and the Old</i> Bring to class: Spiritual Practice reflections [Kula travelling...]

READING WEEK

October 9 ***Formation and the Challenges of Wisdom-Knowing***
Have read: Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Way of Knowing*
[Kula in NYC – Yom Kippur]

Becoming Wisdom-Bearers in (Post-)Modernity

October 16 ***Postmodernity in Theology, Philosophy, Culture, the Public***
Have read articles: Vanhoozer, Olthuis, Silverman

October 23 ***Living Factually Compassionate Wisdom in a Post-Fact Society***
Have read: Manjoo, *True Enough*

READING WEEK

November 6 ***Facing Fundamentalisms of all Kinds—Conservative, Liberal, etc.***
Have read: Almond, Appleby & Sivan, *Strong Religion*

November 13 ***Poverty***
Have read: Polak, *Out of Poverty*
[Kula travelling...]

November 20 ***Ecological Stewardship***
Have read: Tucker and Grim, *Worldviews and Ecology*

READING WEEK

December 4 ***Globalization***
Have read: Bigelow & Peterson. *Rethinking Globalization*

December 11 Presentations
[Kula travelling...]

December 18 Presentations and Conclusion

VII: SEMINARY STANDARDS

A. Inclusive language

- a. United Theological Seminary has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and is further explained in the Student Handbook. If you have specific questions, please see Dr. Hess.

B. Academic Integrity

- a. Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the Seminary community. A detailed policy regarding what constitutes a violation of academic integrity can be found in the Student Handbook.

C. Online Confidentiality

- a. One of the highlights of the online classroom is that students can draw from the experiences shared during class discussions and in written work. However, it is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing online conversations with those outside of the classroom.

VIII: USING ONLINE RESOURCES

You may access all online courses, along with help guides for online learning, at <http://virtualunited.utsweb.net>. Help guides are also available in the student computer lab and in the Student Handbook.

IX. METHOD OF DETERMINING FINAL GRADE:

A. COURSE EVALUATIONS:

1. Attendance, preparation, and participation in class (20%)
2. Spiritual Practice description and reflections (20%)
3. Educational leadership (20%)
4. Final project/paper (40%)

B. Method of Determining Grade:

The grade will be calculated in the following way:

1. Attendance, preparation, and participation in class (20%) – assessed by
 - a. demonstrated preparation
 - b. contribution to class discussions
 - c. signs of active listening
 - d. critical insight brought to subject and readings
2. Spiritual Practice description and reflections (20%)
 - a. clarity of prose and communication
 - b. articulation of practice within a religious tradition
 - c. openness and sensitivity to diverse interpretation(s)
3. Educational Leadership (20%) – assessed by demonstration of
 - a. Integration of spiritual practice and critical reflection on that practice
 - b. Collaborative abilities applied outward
 - c. Participation in group and shared accountability.
4. Final project/paper – (40%)
 - a. demonstration of critical reflection on the challenges and opportunities of wisdom formation for future religious leadership
 - b. ample reliance upon course readings and discussions engaged throughout the semester
 - c. potential implications of critical reflection for particular ministries