

**Community Intern Reflection Fall:
An Integrative Seminar
FE 4222- 01
2 units
Starr King School for the Ministry -
Graduate Theological Union
Rev. Dr. Gabriella Lettini
Fall 2010**

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Class Meeting Times: on alternating weeks

- At SKSM Monday, 1:00-2:30 pm, see calendar in the syllabus

- Online, on Moodle, by-weekly, see calendar online

Introduction

Field-based learning involves two equally important experiences: work in a community field site and work in a peer group seminar that structures theological/ethical reflection related to the events of the work site. The mere fact of working at an internship is not enough to create learning. It is only through the process of critical reflection on experience and theological reflection that field *work* becomes field *education*. This class is designed to broaden and to deepen your analytic perspective on your field site context and your role as a professional (a religious leader for social change) in it. In your internship you will be learning specific skills for community ministry. But more importantly, you will be learning how to think and learn in a praxis way, that is, allowing situations of practice to deepen and challenge your academic knowledge about theology/ethics/spirituality, and allowing your academic knowledge to deepen and challenge your ministerial practices.

OBJECTIVES:

The goals of the internship and theological reflections experiences are:

- to develop praxis learning skills that will serve a professional community ministry vocation;
- to develop specific skills necessary to the successful implementation of a specific ministry/leadership for social change;
- to integrate classroom-based learning with field-based learning;
- to make use of and to participate in a peer learning experience;

- to reflect about your professional boundaries in leadership and your code of ethics;
- to explore how your spirituality, theology and ethics are enriched and challenged by the concrete experiences in your internships;
- to explore how ongoing "ECO work" can strengthen your leadership;
- to establish a practice of self-care that will make community ministry sustainable.

In order to understand the process of field-based learning for professional ministry, you may find it helpful to read the following books as background: Regina Coll, *Supervision of Ministry Students* (The Liturgical Press, 1992), and William T. Pyle and Mary Alice Seals, eds. *Experiencing Ministry Supervision* (Broadman & Holman, 1995). You may discuss them in your work with your supervisor (these texts are not required for class).

Field Sites

Before starting your internship in the internship of your choice you should have met with your supervisor to discuss and sign your learning agreement. **Should any problems or concerns occur in the field site it is essential that you inform the Director of Public Ministry immediately.** In most cases she can assist you in working through the issue to a satisfactory conclusion.

Supervision:

In your field experience you can expect supportive interaction with a person or panel of people who are seasoned practitioners in different forms of leadership for social change. Since supervision is teaching, these persons will have an interest both in getting a particular job done and in nurturing your spiritual and professional growth through reflection on these experiences so as to identify their meanings and significance for your formation.

You can expect that a supervisor will:

- provide one hour of focused supervisory time each week;
- help you to clarify your learning goals for the experience;
- be a source of entree and legitimation in the site;
- function as an evaluator of your contribution, offering both positive affirmation and constructive critique of your effectiveness and appropriateness in the context.

Your supervisors, along with the Director of Public Ministry and your seminar colleagues, are all partners with you in this educational process. It is to your advantage to make the most of your time in supervision. It is **highly recommended** that you read the chapters on theological supervision in both the Coll and the Pyle/Seals books to understand more about the process.

Seminar Class

In addition to work at the field site and with the supervisor, this seminar provides structured theological reflection on the events of the field site, on your spiritual/theological journey in relation to your internship, and on the development of identity as a religious leader for social change. There are two goals of the educational experience of this seminar:

- Spiritual Identity Formation for Religious Leadership for Social Change and Its Pragmatic Tasks
- Cognitive Formation for the Integration of Ministry Identity and Tasks with Other Disciplines of the Theological Curriculum: interdisciplinary study and "permeable wall"

In the seminar you will have an experience of collaborative learning with your peers. The learning of the seminar lies precisely in the participation of all group members in bringing to the group key experiences from the field site to be examined further, and group analysis and theological reflection on the issues present in the event.

ECO Commitment: this seminar is committed to the educational and spiritual mission of SKSM, educating to Counter Oppressions and Build Just and Sustainable Communities. We will explore how these issues are embodied in your ministry and how you are struggling and growing in your ECO work through the internship and the class.

TOPICS:

We will concentrate on the following topics:

YOUR VISION FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

THE PROCESS OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON EXPERIENCE

SOCIAL ANALYSIS OF FIELD SITE CONTEXT/S

THEOLOGIES/PHILOSOPHIES OF MINISTRY

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

SPIRITUAL GROUNDING AND SELF CARE

It is important to know that the work of the seminar is not merely supplementary to one's work in a field setting. Rather, the topics of the seminar are intended to become an integral part of the field experience. Vocational clarity, theological reflection and social analysis skills, and a clear understanding of your theology/philosophy of ministry are

essential tools of ministerial competence.

QUESTIONS WE WILL EXPLORE:

What does it mean to become competent as a community minister of a religious leader for social change?

In order to be an effective minister, in the broadest definition of ministry, the question of identity is central. Why am I doing this work? What convictions are given expression through this work? Who am I as a religious leader? How can I serve the "sacred" and the human community with the gifts that I have been given? We will answer these types of questions through our interactive reflection on our field site experiences, our faith, our intellectual learning, and our communities.

An essential aspect of effectiveness in religious leadership for social change is the ability to reflect upon one's experiences from an intentionally theological/spiritual perspective. How does the practical decision that I am making make theological/spiritual/ethical sense? How does my seminary education relate to my field experience? How does my experience in my field site challenge, affirm and form my theological voice? Learning the process of theological reflection will help us answer these questions.

Along with a clear sense of vocational identity and theological reflection skills, effective religious leaders must also have a clear sense of the identity of the community in which they minister. In order to know community ministers must listen carefully to the dynamic interaction between community, social structures, culture and faith. In short, an effective religious leader must understand the social analysis of the site context.

Another important factor for effective ministry from a religious perspective is a clear understanding of your theology of "ministry" (UU or from other traditions). An awareness of your spiritual and theological foundations allows your ministerial action to connect to your religious beliefs coherently. The process of theological reflection on experience will help you to make these important connections. It is essential to ministerial integrity that what we say we stand for and our actions are consistent and credible. If your site grounds itself in another kind of tradition, either religious or secular, it is important as well that you understand its religious or philosophical foundations.

Thus, this seminar focuses on the development of a clear awareness of vocational call, the development of theological reflection skills, the development of an understanding of the social analysis of the field site, and knowledge of the key elements of your theology of ministry. These topics will be discerned through online discussion, readings, writings and the interaction of the experiences of the field site. It seeks to assist students in answering the following questions:

- Who am I in ministry/religious leadership for social change? What is my vocational identity?
- What is theological reflection and how is it important for ministry?
- Who are the people who make up this site? What are their concerns? Who am I in

- relation to the people of this site?
- What is the theology or philosophy of ministry that comes from this site and is appropriate to this site?
 - In dialogue with your religious tradition, your ministerial experience, and your field site supervisor, what is your understanding and articulation of your theology of ministry?
 - What is professional conduct in religious ministry for social change? What guidelines and values help you address ethical issues in your internship?
 - What are the boundaries of your role? In what ways does your personal life intersect with your professional life? How do you appropriately get your needs met? What are the appropriate boundaries for relationships with co-workers, parishioners, employees, or clients?
 - What are some ethical principles appropriate and necessary for your different kinds of religious ministries?

READINGS:

REQUIRED:

Theological Reflection

O'Connell Killen, Patricia and J. de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. (Crossroad, 1994) ISBN 0-8245-1401-7

Social Analysis

Dudley, Carl. *Community Ministry: New Challenges, Proven Steps to Faith-Based Initiatives*. (The Alban Institute, 2002) ISBN 1-56699-256-7

Suggested:

UU Theology of Ministry

Richard S. Gilbert, *The Prophetic Imperative* (Boston: Skinner House Book, 2000). ISBN 1-55896-411-8

Additional Suggested Readings

Vocation

Myers, William H. *God's Yes Was Louder Than My No* (Eerdmans, 1994)

Daloz, Laurent, et al. *Common Fire* (Beacon, 1996)

Farnham, Suzanne, et al. *Listening Hearts* (Morehouse Publishing, 1991)

Theological Reflection

Whitehead, James and Evelyn. *Method in Ministry, revised edition* (Sheed and Ward, 1995)

- Additional readings will be assigned in relation to specific issues encountered by the students.

Course Requirements:

A. From the Internship Site

- 1) Numbers of hours work per week at the site as in Learning Agreement
- 2) One hour of theological supervision *weekly*
- 3) Supervisor's end of semester written evaluation - Due: December 13
- 4) Student's end of semester evaluation - DUE: December 13

B. From the Seminar Class:

1) Participation to online discussions: This is a course in which knowledge is created collaboratively in the process of group interaction. Your active presence is essential to the learning that occurs. Therefore, both attendance and participation in class and online are part of the grade for this course.

To participate to the online portion of the class, please go on Moodle and register for Community Intern Reflection I. To insure confidentiality no outside guests will be allowed online. The password you need is Stella.

2) Careful reading of assigned texts.

3) A **written reflection of 5 pages** in which you articulate, as clearly as you are able, your **understanding of yourself as a religious leader for social change at this moment**. This paper should include your personal understanding of your vocational call, along with research from either an interview with a community ministry professional, on his/her sense of call, or one biography of a call/vocation experience. State the ways in which your interview and your biographical reading the other person's sense of call has influenced your understanding of your own call to community ministry and religious leadership. See the attached handout for a more thorough explanation of this assignment.

DUE: October 18

4) **Theological reflection journals: 2 entries, each approximately 3 pages**, that record a process of theological reflection on a specific issue/event encountered/occurred at the site.

Here are some suggestions for theological reflection processes:

- In *The Art of Theological Reflection*, the authors list nine processes for in-depth theological reflection (pages 87-109). Pick one process and work through it.

See handouts.

DUE: November 1st and November 22

5) A **5-6 page paper** articulating your understanding of religious leadership for social change in dialogue with your spiritual tradition/s and the ways in which it operates or does not operate in your site. In this paper you want to consider the ways in which your religious tradition/s understand religious leadership or social change and the ways in which that understanding is in dialogue with the community and values at your field site context.

DUE: December 13

Calendar of online posting:

You are free to post each week to simply "check-in" and share what is happening at your site and how it challenges your theological and ethical thinking. However, you are required to post and respond to each other every two weeks, according to the following calendar (that respects school breaks and holidays). Please, make sure you post and/or reply by Friday. I will send my responses by the following Tuesday at the latest. Please note that while I will ask you to discuss on specific topics on these dates by posting more specific questions to address the week before the deadline, you are always free to bring to our discussion important "emergency issues" arising from your site.

February calendar: (the calendar for the following months will be posted and distributed as we create the topic together)

- Sep. 13 Moodle: Introduction of our work and internship experiences
- Sep. 20 SKSM Community Ministries/Work, Spirituality and Social Change
- Sep. 27 Moodle Check in
- October 4 SKSM Seeing yourself as religious/spiritual leader for social change
- October 11 Moodle Check-in Reflection essay due
- October 18 SKSM The processes of theological reflection on experience
- October 25 Reading week - Moodle Check in OPTIONAL
- November 1st: Theological Reflection II - Theological Reflection I Due
- November 8: SKSM Social analysis of your site/s
- November 15 : Moodle Check in
- November 22: SKSM Questions of Professional Ethics and Sustainability - Theological Reflection II Due
- November 29: Moodle Check in
- December 6: SKSM Philosophies/Theologies of ministries and Spiritual Grounding
- December 13: Moodle Check-in- Closing Final papers due

Autobiography/Biography Assignment

On October 4 you are asked to discuss your own sense of "vocation" as a religious leader for social change, and then write a reflection paper due October 11. Prepare by interacting first with someone's call story or sense of vocation: either interviewing someone that inspires you or reading a biographical story. This assignment is a central component for writing your paper on your own vocational call. The person you chose will be, in a way, your companion for the semester as you reflect upon spiritual journey, call and vocation. This exercise is about articulating where you are now: wherever you are is fine.

Interviews:

Interview a person who understands his work to be a form of religious leadership for social change. We will discuss a set of questions as a group. After the interview, make some notes on what you found out, including the answers the person gave, and perhaps some questions or insights the interview raised for you. How did you identify with this person, and in what ways could you not identify? Did this interview affirm, change or challenge your previous understanding of religious leadership for social change?

Alternative:

Reading:

Pick a biography/autobiography to read in which the main character considers his spiritual journey and vocational call. The list below suggests some possibilities; you may have other suggestions, so feel free to read what interests you. In your reflection upon the story consider your revelations and frustrations with this story and this person. Reflect upon the meaning of vocation for this person as revealed in the biography/autobiography. What was the most vivid scene for you in this person's story? Why? What are his strengths? His limitations or weaknesses? How would you live your life differently or similarly? In what way is your understanding of who you are called to be and what you are called to do the same or different from your companion?

Aristede, Jean-Bertrand. *In the Parish of the Poor*.

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Boyd, Malcolm. *Gay Priest*.

Coles, Robert. *Dorothy Day: A Radical Devotion*.

Fox, George. *The Journal of George Fox*.

Gandhi, Mohandas K. *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*.

Gonzalez-Wippler, Migene. *The Santeria Experience*.

Heyward, Carter. *A Priest Forever: The Formation of a Woman and a Priest*.

Horton, Myles. *The Long Haul*.

Humez, Jean McMahon, ed. *Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress*.

Malcolm X. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.

Merton, Thomas. *The Seven Story Mountain*.

Norris, Kathleen. *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*.

Ochs, Vanessa. *Words on Fire: One Woman's Journey into the Sacred*.

Schneider, David. *Street Zen: The Life and Work of Issan Dorsey*.

Tiny a.k.a. Lisa Gray Garcia. *Criminal of Poverty: Growing Up Homeless in America*

Thurman, Howard. *With Head and Heart*.

.....or something of your choice, that you might already have read.