

COMMUNITY INTERN REFLECTION: AN INTEGRATIVE SEMINAR

FE-4222

2.0 credits

Starr King School for the Ministry – Graduate Theological Union

FALL 2017

(draft Syllabus)

This course assists the intern doing fieldwork in a community field site through a peer group seminar. It offers theo-ethical reflection, linking the experience in the internship to the student's broad educational and vocational goals (praxis). The class is designed for students to assess their personal progress, gather support from peers and the instructor, integrate their internship experience into their degree program, and deepen theo-ethical practices to sustain religious leadership in community ministry. Students gather multi-religious sources of wisdom, which serve as touchstones for group theological reflection. Each week features a process of theological reflection bringing intern experiences to a collective dialogue that engages these sources and yields new "truths" to introduce into personal spiritual practices. The course includes a required weekly live web-based video seminar and frequent online discussion postings; readings and discussion are in service of the professional experience in the internship as well as creating lasting tools and knowledge for a career in community ministry. This is a Hybrid, low-residence course.

Instructor: Megan Dowdell, mdowdell@sksm.edu

Skype: MDowdellSKSM

Office Hours: You may request a 15-minute appointment by phone or by e-mail to discuss course assignments.

E-mail Communication: Questions by e-mail are welcomed. E-mails sent after 6pm or on *Tuesdays and Wednesdays* may not receive an immediate response. The instructor does not accept text messages from students. Subject lines of e-mail messages should clearly indicate whether you have a question or request for appointment. Please do not hesitate to contact fellow students for assistance as well.

Course Website: moodle.gtu.edu

Meets every Thursdays, September 15 and the December 8 from 4:00pm-5:30pm

Pacific/7:00pm-8:30pm Eastern on Adobe Connect.

I. Student Learning Outcomes

At the close of the course and successful completion of all course requirements, students will be able to:

- Articulate a vision of religious leadership and ministerial vocation;
- Cultivate peer support for life-long sustainable religious leadership;
- Reflect on their religious leadership and site experiences in prayer/meditation and dialogue;
- Apply methods of theological reflection to real-life congregational, community, and global issues related to social change;

- Appreciate ethical commitments for religious professionals and community change agents;
- Integrate the site experience as well as bodies of knowledge into their vocational development and professional-spiritual identities.

II. Sources for Learning

We enter religious leadership for social change through diverse doorways, representing a variety of prophetic, counter-oppressive bodies of knowledge and academic disciplines. The required books will be supplemented with electronic readings to focus each unit and include diverse voices.

a. Work in the Field:

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.

b. Required Books:

Required for ALL:

Intrator, S.M. and M. Scribner, Eds. *Leading from Within: Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Lead*. (Jossey-Bass, 2007). ISBN-10: 0787988693

O'Connell Killen, P. and J. de Beer. *The Art of Theological Reflection*. (Crossroad, 1994) ISBN 9780824514013 \$17.95

Additional recommended texts from previous seminars (not required):

Van Dernoot Lipsky, L. *Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others* (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009) ISBN 157675944X \$19.95

Dudley, C. *Community Ministry: New Challenges, Proven Steps to Faith-Based Initiatives*. (The Alban Institute, 2002) ISBN 1-56699-256-7 \$17.00

Organizing:

Bobo, K., J. Kendall and S. Max. *Organizing for Social Change: Midwest Academy Manual for Activists*. (Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press, 2011 3rd edition). ISBN 0-929765-41-9 \$ 23.95

Mann, E. *Playbook for Progressives: 16 Qualities of the Successful Organizer*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011) ISBN 978-0-8070-4735-4 \$15

Kretzmann, J. and J.L. McKnight. *Building Community from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. (Chicago: ACTA Publications, 1993)

UU Theology of Ministry:

Gilbert, R.S. *The Prophetic Imperative* (Boston: Skinner House Book, 2000).

ISBN 1-55896-411-8 \$18.00

Vocation:

Daloz, L., et al. *Common Fire: 20th Anniversary Edition* (Beacon, 1996) 978-08070 2005-0 \$20

Farnham, S., et al. *Listening Hearts* (Morehouse Publishing, 1991) 978-0-8192-2444-6 \$18

c. Additional Required Resources:

The instructor will supplement the required course books by assigning required articles, and other electronic media relevant to each unit of the course. Students are expected to independently research topics relevant to their own site and field work, as well as the directions in which their theological reflection and vocational discernment takes them, using the GTU electronic and print holdings and subscriptions as well as popular U.S. and global media available on the Internet. Students should come to the reflection seminar with a working knowledge of the GTU's resources.

d. Compendium of Theological Wisdom

Beginning in the second week of the seminar, students are expected to obtain brief theological sources of inspiration or wisdom from their own traditions and/or the traditions represented in their community field site (e.g., a Unitarian Universalist student working in a Sikh organization may want to obtain theological sources from their UU heritages as well as Sikh texts suggested by their site supervisors or otherwise, accessible to them). These sources should be in English (or all attempts should be made to provide appropriate translation) and very brief (no longer than a page in length, preferably much shorter). They will serve as essential tools within the seminar. Examples: a poem, a psalm, a verse of sacred text, a ritual blessing, an image, a hymn, an audio clip.

e. Embodied Knowledge

The last (or in some ways, the first!) source of learning: the personal, lifelong experience of having/being a body in relationship to others both in the site placement and in the rest of daily life. Embodied experience is a form of expertise in itself and ought not to be discounted. As students are confronted with multiple forms of knowledge and a variety of views on important issues related to their professions and community work, personal histories (our own and through narratives and literature) can offer pause and help one to think critically in dialogue with scholarly, professional, and sacred sources. Students are expected to approach texts and resources with the goals of interpretation, reflection, and response, while engaging embodied experience as a valuable component of learning in the field setting. *However*, personal sharing (anecdote, story, and raw opinion) is no substitute for serious study, reflection, and engagement. Everyone will be reminded, gently and often, to *bring it back to the text and/or the field experience*.

Note: Experiences in community work live in personal, family, and collective histories as well as religious communities and traditions. Processes of grief, healing, and recovery are not linear and can provoke a wide range of responses (or non-responses) and needs. This course values honesty, compassion, and peer support, *but* it does not gather for a therapeutic purpose. All students, regardless of personal history, are encouraged to seek out external sources of care, comfort, and restoration simultaneous to their field experience and this seminar, according to their personal needs.

III. Course Expectations

Students are required to work the number of hours per week at the site as is described in the Learning Service Agreement. They should have one hour of supervision weekly. The course is designed as an interdisciplinary seminar and laboratory for theological reflection.

1. **Seminar Attendance:** Each student is expected to come to each course meeting on time and ready to begin at the assigned time. If you are sick or have to miss class, please send the instructor an e-mail prior to the session. If you miss a session, it is your responsibility to review what has been missed and stay up-to-date. If you miss more than three (3) sessions, I suggest you withdraw from the course. Repeated lateness will negatively impact your evaluation in the course. Each student is responsible for the effectiveness and reliability of the internet connection and technology tools that they use to access Skype in a non-disruptive way. Test, troubleshoot, and keep disruptions to the session to a minimum. Bring to Sessions: Your laptop or tablet, assigned texts, as well as any assignments and reading notes.
2. **Technological Readiness:** Students are expected to review and adhere to the minimum technology requirements and best practices developed and shared by Faryn Borella, Assistant to the Dean of Faculty and Internal Communications Coordinator.
3. **Reading, Sourcing, and Note-taking:** Each student is expected to read all required reading in full, and come to the sessions prepared to discuss the assigned texts that are indicated in each session of the course schedule or by the instructor. Good notes will help you reflect, evaluate, and apply what you have read and discussed.

This course will engage these issues with the goal of theological reflection, intellectual depth, and vocational discernment in a dialogue among scholars and leaders. In service of this goal, students will be asked to contribute sources to a multi-religious compendium of theological wisdom posted on Moodle; students are encouraged to bring works. The compendium becomes the central sacred “text” of the course, providing multi-religious wisdom for the group theological reflection process during seminar. At the mid-semester, students will be invited once again to add to the compendium. See III.(d) for more description of the compendium.

4. **Participation:** Student involvement and leadership in course discussions (both live and online) are essential to the success of the seminar. The theological reflection process begins

on Moodle and continues in the live session. It relies on the attendance and engagement of all students. Plan to reflect and speak thoughtfully. We will also discuss course readings week to week.

5. **Written Assignments:** Each student is required to complete all assignments prior to the assigned deadline and according to the guidelines provided. Unless otherwise stated, all written assignments must be in 12-point font, double-spaced, include 1” margins, and adhere to assigned page limits. Grammar, spelling, clarity, and organization are important to the quality of your writing.
- Theological Reflections (approx. 3 per student)
 - Mid-Semester Self-Evaluation
 - Additional Moodle postings as required
 - Final Self-Evaluation

6. **Theological Reflection Process:**

Class sessions will follow Killen and De Beer’s method (Ch 3 and Ch 4) in order to relate wisdom with the experience in service of identifying new truths for religious leadership. Prior to most of the seminar sessions (see Moodle schedule), beginning Week 3, one student will identify a single memorable experience from the week prior in their internship site. Other students will read and one will offer a preliminary response to the reflection writer’s experience. In addition to developing/reviewing the Compendium of Theological Wisdom and reading assigned sections, the Moodle postings will prepare the group to begin a theological reflection process, based on resources in Killen and De Beer.

Weeks 1 to 3

Students read Killen and De Beer, review course requirements, and develop the Compendium of Theological Wisdom, as they begin their internship experiences.

Weeks 3-13

By Monday at 6pm (Pacific) of each week, a **student reflection writer** identifies an experience in their internship for further reflection in the group. It should be as concrete and specific as possible. Review Killen and De Beer for ideas on how to select an experience. Then, the reflection writer will summarize the experience in a chronological manner in a journal entry-style Moodle posting by 6pm (Pacific) on the Monday prior to the live session. It should be posted in the appropriate discussion forum labeled for each week.

By Wednesday at 6pm (Pacific) of each week, a **student respondent** will read the student reflection and post an initial response to the reflection writer. This posting should summarize the leader’s initial interpretation of the reflected experience (e.g., “This is what I think you said...”) and is not *evaluative* (not a critique, assessment, feedback, or set of suggestions). It should begin to offer insights into what Killen and De Beer call the “heart of the matter.” Respect, sensitivity, and courage are integral to this process.

Other students will read both the experience and the response, taking down their own personal notes.

All students should review the compendium of theological wisdom with the reflection experience in mind before class.

During the class session, the instructor will facilitate a group theological reflection session, offering the reflection writer an opportunity to re-introduce the experience and respond briefly to the leader’s reply. After identifying the “heart of the matter” as a group, the session will turn to the compendium and the *Leading from Within* text in order to correlate theological wisdom with the experience, in service of identifying new truths for religious leadership. The full process is outlined on Moodle and modeled in week two.

IV. Weekly Timeline of Reflection Process

Role	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday...
All	Read postings by the previous week’s discussion leader and reflection writer.	Read experience. Review compendium.		Read initial response from discussion leader. Participate in live reflection process.
Reflection Writer	Post about a single experience by 6pm.	Review compendium.		Participate in reflection process.
Respondent		Read experience.	Post initial response to reflection writer by 6pm. Then, review compendium.	Participate in reflection process.

VI. Evaluations

Students are evaluated holistically *on their performance in the integrative seminar only*. Evaluation of the community fieldwork experience is conducted elsewhere. Some clarification on the emphasis of each of the above expectations may be helpful. Below is a way to consider how each student will be evaluated:

Course Component	%
Attendance	25
Participation	35
Moodle Postings	25
Self-Evaluations	15
Total	100

Rubric for Classroom Discussion

<u>Criteria</u>		<u>Exemplary</u>	<u>Effective</u>	<u>Minimal</u>	<u>Unsatisfactory</u>
Level of Engagement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Contributes to class activities by offering quality ideas and asking appropriate questions on a regular basis <input type="checkbox"/> Actively engages others in class discussions by inviting their comments <input type="checkbox"/> Constructively challenges the accuracy and relevance of statements made <input type="checkbox"/> Effectively identifies and summarizes main points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Contributes to class activities by offering ideas and asking questions on a regular basis <input type="checkbox"/> Often engages others in class discussions by inviting their comments <input type="checkbox"/> Challenges the accuracy and relevance of statements made <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies and summarizes main points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally contributes to class activities by offering ideas and asking questions <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes engages others in class discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes has an understanding of main points <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies and summarizes some of the main points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fails to contribute to class activities <input type="checkbox"/> Fails to invite comment/opinions from other students <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates little understanding of main points <input type="checkbox"/> Does not identify or summarize main points
Preparedness		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Always prepared for class with assignments and required materials <input type="checkbox"/> Accurately expresses foundational knowledge pertaining to issues raised during the discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Usually prepared with assignments and required materials <input type="checkbox"/> Expresses basic foundational knowledge pertaining to class discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Seldom prepared with assignments and required materials <input type="checkbox"/> Expresses limited foundational knowledge pertaining to class discussions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently unprepared for class <input type="checkbox"/> Expresses no relevant foundational knowledge
Attitude		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consistently positive, cooperative attitude during class <input type="checkbox"/> Always supportive of other students' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Usually positive and cooperative with classroom projects and discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Often supportive of other students' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Seldom actively participates in classroom projects and discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes supportive of other students' ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely if ever participates in classroom projects and discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Occasional disruptive behavior