

COMMUNITY INTERN REFLECTION: AN INTEGRATIVE SEMINAR**FE-4222**

2.0 credits

Starr King School for the Ministry – Graduate Theological Union

FALL 2018

This course is a peer group seminar for interns doing fieldwork in community field sites. 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 spiritual reflection. The course includes a required live web-based video seminar every other week as well as frequent online discussion postings that orient the seminar sessions. This online course is synchronous on Zoom and counts as low residency; students must have consistent internet access to relevant technology. Evaluation is based on participation, depth of engagement with peers and resources, as well as written self-evaluations. Required for MDiv/ MASC students enrolled in credit for community internship during the same semester. Fulfills thresholds based on personal learning goals.

Prerequisites: Simultaneous enrolment in community internship credits for the semester. Full and complete approval of the internship agreement by the Director of Contextual Education, site supervisor and faculty advisor. Student must submit description of approved internship and copy of agreement to FE-4222 instructor prior to first session.

Note: Because the number of students in this course fluctuates from semester to semester, the course requirements and activities, especially the reflection process, will be tailored accordingly.

Instructor: Megan Dowdell, mdowdell@sksm.edu

Office Hours: You may schedule a 15-minute appointment through Calendly to discuss course assignments by phone or Zoom.

E-mail Communication: Questions by e-mail are welcomed. E-mails sent after 6pm or on weekends 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 other Thursday, 4-5:30pm Pacific/7:00pm-8:30pm Eastern on Zoom. *Time of seminar may be adjusted to fit relevant internship schedules in the first week.*

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 religious/spiritual 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, spiritual 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

A Leadership Text (selected from a list or otherwise approved by instructor)

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

adrienne maree brown. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Shaping Worlds*. (AK Press, 2017) ISBN: 1849352607 \$10.87 on Amazon [PDF of first chapter will be sent out]

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., and Switzler, A. *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High, Second Edition*. (McGraw Hill, 2012). 978-007-177132-0 \$11.52 paperback [Kindle version also available]

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 spiritual 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. Sourcebook of Spiritual Touchstones

Early in the term, students collect the sources of wisdom, "touchstones" from their own religious/spiritual traditions, heritages, or communities (and/or sources of inspiration from their own community field site or supervisor. Moodle provides a Wiki function for sharing text, visual, audio and video materials. Students will create a space/time in their schedule over the first few weeks to reflect on their learning goals for their internship and assemble sources that ground, inspire, energize, soothe or connect. In our commitment to educate to counter oppressions, at least half of the sourcebook shall be sources from voices or individuals with historically marginalized identities. All sources will be fully cited and shared with permission, if otherwise unpublished. Text sources included in full should be brief; otherwise, students may include a link to the full-text if it is available elsewhere on the web. Source examples: a poem, a psalm, a verse of sacred text, a ritual blessing, an image, a hymn, an audio clip.

This sourcebook will become a shared resource for the group spiritual reflection process – its own sacred "text" of the course.

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. Students are encouraged to reach out the instructor or their faculty advisor for referrals.

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 spiritual 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 two (2) sessions, I suggest you withdraw from the course. Repeated lateness will negatively impact your evaluation in the course. Bring to Sessions: Assigned texts, reading notes, as well as any assignments.
2. **Technological Readiness**: Students are expected to review and adhere to the minimum technology requirements and best practices shared by the Dean's Office. Each student is responsible for the effectiveness and reliability of the internet connection, microphone, and headphones, as well as the space and privacy required to be fully present and respectful of peers and the instructor. Students are encouraged to use headphones to minimize background noise and feedback. Test, troubleshoot, and keep disruptions to a minimum.
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 spiritual reflection, intellectual depth, and vocational discernment in a dialogue among scholars and leaders. In service of this goal, students will be asked to contribute items to the Sourcebook of Spiritual Touchstones.

4. **Participation**: Student involvement and leadership in course discussions (both live and online) are essential to the success of the seminar. The spiritual 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.
 - Spiritual Reflections (approx. 2 per student)
 - Responses to Spiritual Reflections (approx. 2 per student)
 - Mid-Semester Self-Evaluation
 - Additional Moodle postings as required
 - Final Self-Evaluation

6. **Spiritual Reflection Process**:

In order to cultivate peer support, reflect on religious leadership experiences, and integrate spiritual reflection and care for self into their vocational or religious leadership identity, students will participate in a spiritual reflection process. Each live seminar week, a reflection writer and a reflection respondent are assigned. The process begins online in the discussion forum and continues in the live seminar. *Some live seminars will focus on other topics related to professional identity and development, including questions or topics that arise from student inquiry or discussion.*

Written Verbatim of an Experience

(By Monday at 6pm Pacific of assigned week)

The reflection writer creates space/time in their schedule to identify memorable experiences from the previous two weeks. It should be as concrete and specific as possible (example: one conversation with a supervisor, one meeting of a committee, or one interaction at a fundraising event). Tell the story as close to verbatim as possible, noting dialogue. Make note of your feelings, mood, or sensations in parenthetical phrases, but try to avoid evaluative comments or critique. As you consider what to share, here are some reflection questions that might help:

- Is there an experience from the past week that I find myself thinking about or replaying in my head?
- Is there an event in the past week that brought up questions about religious leadership or social change?
- Is there a story that I am curious to explore with peers? To get feedback on?

For example, a student may have a thought-provoking meeting with their supervisor or a volunteer about the power dynamics in the organization. A student may want to share an experience that they note as an achievement or another that they wish to generate feedback about from peers. Briefly, the student jots down some notes right after the conversation. It would be good to write the verbatim draft as soon as possible following the experience. When it is time to write their reflection posting on Moodle, edit for clarity and answer the posted reflection questions to give the group a sense of focus and direction. By Monday at 6pm (Pacific) of the assigned week, the student reflection writer will post the experience reflection in the appropriate forum opened on Moodle.

Note: it is important to remember that this reflection will become a catalyst for spiritual reflection in the group session. Sharing a personal story with others takes a degree of courage and vulnerability; it does not come without risk of judgment or even perceived judgment. While the peer group has shared agreements, misinterpretation is possible. Students are encouraged to reflect and take appropriate risks or ask for what they need from peers in sharing a particular experience.

Student Respondent

(By end of Tuesday of the assigned week)

An assigned student respondent reads the student reflection and posts an initial response to the reflection writer. It may be helpful to read it a few times over. In the response, the student should ask any clarifying questions about the story told by the reflection writer. Then, they can consider responding to some of the following questions:

- What words or thoughts stick out to you?
- What do you most appreciate about what the reflection writer shared?
- What feelings or emotions did this experience bring up for you as you read?
- As a reader, what do you understand to be the core or the heart of the story?
- What does the story help you appreciate about the writer?

This posting is reflective rather than *evaluative* (as in “This is what I think...” or “if this were me, I would feel...”). It is not an opportunity to say things like “Maybe you could try doing _____ next time” or “I think you overreacted.”) **We can be spiritual witnesses to one another’s journey if we enter this process with respect, sensitivity and courage.**

All Others

(before the live seminar)

Each other student and the instructor will read both the experience and the response. Before the seminar, each student should also identify one or two touchstones from the Sourcebook that connect or resonate with the reflection and response. During the class session, the reflection process continues with the goal of shared insights, affirmation, intention or questions for reflection in the week to come. The session makes use of the student-generated Sourcebook and the *Leading from Within* text.

- What does this story help me understand about the writer?

- What does this story help me understand about myself?
- What does this story help me understand about vocation or religious leadership?

VI. Evaluations

Students are evaluated holistically *on their performance in the integrative seminar only*. They also have the opportunity to evaluate their own performance and engagement of the seminar and their internship at the mid-term and final weeks of the semester. 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	50
Moodle Postings	25
Sourcebook Contribution (full, partial, no credit)	10
Self-Evaluations	15
Total	100