

Communicating the Gospel to Youth



Instructor:

Andrew Zirschky

andrew@cymt.org

609-454-0052 cell

Course Description

Throughout Christian history various approaches have been used to share or pass along the faith to young people. In this course we will explore seven contemporary approaches for communicating the Gospel to adolescents and assess them both theologically and in light of our sociocultural situation. Students will test these approaches by crafting and teaching lesson plans that draw from each of them. In the process students will move toward formulating a personal philosophy of youth ministry to guide the formation and education of youth. Students will come away from this course with a deeper understanding of approaches to faith formation, and with a more intentional and developed skill-set for engaging in the work of passing on (communicating) the Gospel to young people.

Course Objectives (In this course, students will. . .)

COGNITIVE OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate their present but implicit theories of education and formation.
- Examine a diversity of models for engaging in the communication of the Gospel.
- Articulate a personal philosophy of youth ministry.
- Develop understanding of the nature of the Gospel and the Christian *kerygma*.
- Engage in theological reflection as to the aims and purposes of youth ministry.

PRACTICE OBJECTIVES

- Employ a variety of approaches in the Christian formation of youth.
- Enhance their ability to teach and equip volunteer youth leaders.
- Develop skills as a teacher and Christian educator of young people.
- Gain experience in teaching in a youth ministry classroom environment.
- Work individually and in small groups to test various approaches to communication of the Gospel.

SPIRITUAL & AFFECTIVE OBJECTIVES

- Contribute to a learning community in which creativity, risk, and rigor are encouraged.
- Participate in practices aimed at opening us to God and to one another.
- Open themselves to transformation through their own teaching.

Texts

Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education, Donald Miller and Jack Seymour

Basics of Christian Education, Karen Tye

Teaching That Makes a Difference, Dan Lambert

The Godbearing Life, Kenda Dean and Ron Foster

Story, Signs and Sacred Rhythms, Chris Folmsbee

Growing Souls, Mark Yaconelli

Ministry of Nurture, Duffy Robbins

Speaking to Teenagers, Doug Fields and Duffy Robbins

Teaching as a Sacramental Act, Mary Elizabeth Moore (excerpts)

Awakening Youth Discipleship, David White (excerpts)

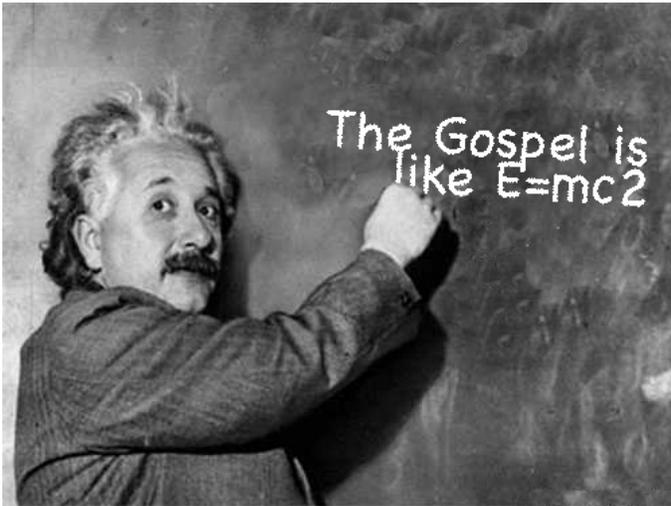
Models of Teaching, Bruce Joyce, et al.

August 2 – 6: Retreat #1 @ Memphis Theological Seminary

- History and theology of communicating the Gospel
- Finding purpose in Christian education
- Mapping approaches to youth ministry
- Locating yourself and your congregation: Implicit philosophies of ministry

UNIT 1:

An Instructional Approach to Communicating the Gospel to Youth



[Educational Building Block: CONTENT]

Scriptural basis for this approach:

Matthew 28: 19-20 - Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Reading to be completed prior to August 10 discussion group (YM):

- Mapping the Approach: Chapter 2 in Miller/Seymour, "Religious Instruction."
- Educational Building Block: Chapter 4 in Tye, "Content: What do we need to Know?"
- Example of the Approach: Dan Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 1-36, and 96-118.

Reading to be completed prior to August 17 discussion group (CH):

- Example of the Approach: Dan Lambert, *Teaching That Makes a Difference*, 37-95 & 119 -217.
- [Recommended Reading]: Models of Teaching, Part III, *The Information-Processing Family*.

Teaching Team assignment for this unit:

Lesson Plan #1: INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH: Craft a Bible study lesson plan, the purpose of which is to offer instruction on religious belief (truth) in some way. It should incorporate multiple instructional methods (see Lambert) and should be suitable for use in a class of 10 to 20 youth. **Due at retreat, September 16.**

UNIT 2:

A Community of Faith Approach to Communicating the Gospel to Youth



[Educational Building Block: CONTEXT]

Scriptural Basis for this Approach: 1 Corinthians 12:26-28
- Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Reading to be completed prior to August 24 discussion group (YM):

- Mapping the Approach: Chapter 3 in Miller/ Seymour, "The Faith Community..."
- Educational Building Block: Chapter 3 in Tye, "Context: Where do we educate?"
- Example of the Approach: Dean, *Godbearing Life*, preface, introd., chapter 1 & chapter 10.

Reading to be completed prior to August 31 discussion group (CH):

- Example of the Approach: Kenda Dean, *Godbearing Life*: chapters 2-9; chapters 11-13.
- [Recommended Reading]: Models of Teaching, Part II, Social Family of Models

Teaching Team assignment for this unit:

Lesson Plan #2: COMMUNITY OF FAITH APPROACH: Craft an experiential lesson plan that communicates the Gospel in, through, and in tandem with the life and practices of the community. Draw principles and ideas for such a plan from the assigned reading. The context of your educational plan might be centered around a baptism, Eucharist service, retreat, or variety of other options. **Due at retreat, September 16.**



UNIT 3:

An Interpretation Approach to Communicating the Gospel to Youth



Scriptural Basis for this Approach:

Philippians 3:4-7: If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. ⁷But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Reading to be completed prior to September 7 discussion group (YM):

- Mapping the Approach: Chapter 6 in Seymour/Miller, "Faith Seeking Understanding."
- Example of the Approach: Folmsbee, *Story, Signs, and Sacred Rhythms*, intro. & chapters 3- 6.

SEPTEMBER 14 — 16 RETREAT : (3) teams teach lesson plans using the following approaches: instructional, community of faith, and interpretation.

Reading to be completed prior to September 21 discussion group (CH):

- Example of the Approach: Folmsbee, *Story, Signs, and Sacred Rhythms*, chapters 1-2 & 7-9.
- Zirschky, "Baking with Augustine: Ancient Help for Making the Most of Youth Ministry Resources," *The Journal of Student Ministries*, Vol 4, No 1, 2009, pp. 12-15.

Teaching Team assignment for this unit:

Lesson Plan #3: INTERPRETATION APPROACH:

(Option 1): Create a discussion-based lesson plan that brings a common experience of youth into dialogue with a story from Scripture and which seeks to help students develop their lives and self-understanding in accordance with the Christian story. Incorporate Bloom's six levels into your discussion questions (or use another discussion typology if you choose). Be sure in the discussion leader guide to provide 1-3 possible responses in parenthesis after each question. Focus your discussion on the more complex forms of questioning. **Due September 16.**

(Option 2) Do the same as above, but use creative artistic expression and exploration in place of much of the discussion-based learning. **Due September 16.**

(Option 3) Alternatively, write an experiential lesson plan which utilizes a brief simulation game or other experiential activity that connects with the Christian story. The simulation will likely take up the entire time; be sure to include debriefing time in your plan that will allow students to connect their lives with that which they experienced in simulation. **Due September 16.**

UNIT 4:

A Development Approach to Communicating the Gospel to Youth

[Educational Building Block: LEARNER]

Scriptural Basis for this Approach: Ephesians 4:14-15: Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Reading to be completed prior to September 28 discussion group (YM):

- Mapping the Approach: Chapter 4, Seymour/Miller
- Educational Building Block: Tye, Chapter 5, "Whom do we educate?"
- Example of the Approach: Robbins, *Ministry of Nurture*, forward, preface., ch. 1-5 and 9-11

Reading to be completed prior to October 5 discussion group (CH):

- Example of the Approach: Robbins, *Ministry of Nurture*, chapters 6-8 and 12-16
- *[Recommended Reading]:* Models of Teaching, Personal Family of Models, Part IV

Teaching Team assignment for this unit:

Lesson Plan #4: DEVELOPMENT APPROACH: Write a lesson plan based on a case study which challenges teenagers' moral reasoning in some way and which leads them to engage with theological and scriptural reflection in responding to the case. This can be based upon a real situation, if possible, but names and locations should be changed. The leader's guide should give ample help to leaders for guiding the discussion into theological and scriptural reflection. **Due November 4.**



UNIT 5:

A Liberation Approach to Communicating the Gospel to Youth



[Educational Building Block: METHOD]

Scriptural Basis for this Approach:

Romans 12:2: Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.



Reading to be completed prior to October 12 discussion group (YM):

- Mapping the Approach: Reading Seymour/Miller, Chapter 5, "Liberation..."
- Educational Building Block: Tye, Chapter 6, "How do we educate?" [Method]
- Example of the Approach: Moore, *Teaching as a Sacramental Act*, pgs. 9-13; 22-38; 187-215 (e-reserve copies will be provided).

Reading to be completed prior to October 19 discussion group (CH):

- Example of the Approach: David White, "Pedagogy for the Unimpressed" in *Awakening Youth Discipleship*, pgs. 21-37 (e-reserve copies will be provided).
- DO PERSONAL READING & PREPARATION FOR EXPERTISE PRESENTATION

Teaching Team assignment for this unit:

Lesson Plan #5: LIBERATION APPROACH: Craft a learning experience that engages youth in critical reflection and dialogue, examination of their presuppositions, and which leads them toward action that relieves oppression. Draw ideas from the reading. As with all the lesson plans, you may wish to think beyond the confines of the classroom. **Due November 4.**

UNIT 6:
A Contemplative Approach to Communicating the Gospel to Youth
[Educational Building Block: EVALUATION]



Scriptural Basis for this Approach:

Colossians 4:2 - Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Reading to be completed prior to October 26 discussion group (YM):

- Example of the Approach: Mark Yaconelli, *Growing Souls*, (excerpt on e-reserve).
- Educational Building Block: Tye, chapter 7, "Evaluation..."

Teaching Team assignment for this unit:

Lesson Plan #6: CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACH: Craft a lesson plan that uses patterns of listening, prayer, lectio, or other contemplative practices as discussed in *Growing Souls*. This plan should utilize indirect communication in some way and should include opportunities to encounter God through prayer, mystery, and/or worship. **Due November 4.**

UNIT 7:

A Proclamation Approach to Communicating the Gospel to Youth

Scriptural Basis for this Approach:



Romans 10:14 – And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

Reading to be completed prior to November 2 (no discussion group):

- Example of the Approach: Doug Fields and Duffy Robbins, *Speaking to Teenagers*, pgs. 10-105
- DO PERSONAL READING & PREPARATION FOR EXPERTISE PRESENTATION

NOVEMBER 4 - 6 RETREAT : (3) teams teach lesson plans using the following approaches: development, liberation, contemplative



ASSIGNMENTS & GRADES

Contract Grading: We will be using a contract grading system this semester. At the first retreat you will sign a contract to do the work and receive one of the following grades. All assignments will be graded with a plus (+) for satisfactory, or a minus (-) for needs improvement. Assignments graded with a minus will not count toward fulfillment of the contract until they have been revised and marked as satisfactory by the professor.

Satisfactory completion of the following will earn a grade of C+:

(Failure to earn satisfactory marks on these assignments will result in a failing grade):

- 1) **Prepare (6) lesson plans with a teaching team:** Teaching teams will work together over the course of the semester and will submit a 45-minute lesson plan based on the teaching method under discussion for each two week block of the semester (for a total of 6 lesson plans during the semester). The written lesson plans should follow a fairly standard format (see "How to Write a Lesson Plan" handout) and include enough supplementary material — or directions on how to obtain supplementary material — so that someone unfamiliar with our class could teach the lesson. There will be three teams of five people each, and two teams of four people each. *[Suggestion #1: Your teaching team might consider having each person act as lead author on one lesson with two or three additional people actively involved in creation of that lesson plan. The rest of the team could be involved in feedback/revision that week. You MUST involve each member of the team on the creation of each lesson plan. Suggestion #2: Your work on each lesson plan should be carefully spread across two or three weeks or more! Don't save this for a last minute endeavor. Everyone will receive the group grade of a plus or a minus. Lesson plans graded minus will be returned for revision.]*

- a. **Lesson Plan #1: INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH:** Craft a Bible study lesson plan, the purpose of which is to offer instruction on religious belief (truth) in some way. It should incorporate multiple instructional methods (see Lambert) and should be suitable for use in a class of 10 to 20 youth. **Due September 16.**
- b. **Lesson Plan #2: COMMUNITY OF FAITH APPROACH:** Craft a plan for an educational experience that communicates the Gospel in, through, and in tandem with the life and practices of the community. Draw principles and ideas for such a plan from the assigned reading. The context of your educational plan might be centered around a baptism, Eucharist service, retreat, or variety of other options. **Due September 16.**
- c. **Lesson Plan #3: INTERPRETATION APPROACH:.(Option 1):** Create a discussion-based lesson plan that brings a common experience of youth into dialogue with a story from Scripture and which seeks to help students develop their lives and self-understanding in accordance with the Christian story. Incorporate Bloom's six levels into your discussion questions (or use another discussion typology if you choose). Be sure in the discussion leader guide to provide 1-3 possible responses in parenthesis after each question. Focus your discussion on the more complex forms of questioning; **(Option 2)** Do the same as above, but use creative artistic expression and exploration in place of much of the discussion-based learning; **(Option 3)** Alternatively, write an experiential lesson plan which utilizes a brief simulation game that connects with the Christian story. The simulation will likely take up the entire time; be sure to include debriefing time in your plan that will allow students to connect their lives with that which they experienced in simulation. **Due September 16**
- d. **Lesson Plan #4: DEVELOPMENT APPROACH:** Write a lesson plan based on a case study which challenges teenagers' moral reasoning in some way and which leads them to engage with theological and scriptural reflection in responding to the case. This can be based upon a real situation, if possible, but names and locations should be changed. The leader's guide should give ample help to leaders for guiding the discussion into theological and scriptural reflection. **Due November 4.**
- e. **Lesson Plan #5: LIBERATION APPROACH:** Craft a learning experience that engages youth in critical reflection and dialogue, examination of their presuppositions, and which leads them toward action that relieves oppression. Draw ideas from the reading. As with all the lesson plans, you may wish to think beyond the confines of the classroom. **Due November 4.**
- f. **Lesson Plan #6: CONTEMPLATIVE APPROACH:** Craft a lesson plan that uses patterns of listening, prayer, lectio, or other contemplative practices as discussed in Growing Souls. This plan should utilize indirect communication in some way and should include opportunities to encounter God through prayer, mystery, and/or worship. **Due November 4.**

2) **Teach (1) lesson with your teaching team:** Each teaching team will have the opportunity to teach one of the above lesson plans at either the second or third retreat. The teaching of the lesson plan is not graded, but will be debriefed in class. Parts of the lesson may be conducted twice in order to learn certain teaching skills. Immediately following the teaching/learning experience, each member of the class will complete a teaching/learning experience evaluation form. (Members of the teaching team will complete a self-evaluation.) There will then be 30 minutes of discussion and debriefing about the lesson. *[Please note: If you need technical equipment, it is your responsibility to make sure technology is working effectively and setup prior to your presentation.]*

a. Teaching on September 16, Instruction: _____

- b. Teaching on September 17 (1st hour), Faith Community: _____
 - c. Teaching on September 17 (2nd hour), Interpretation: _____
 - d. Teaching on November 4, Spiritual Development: _____
 - e. Teaching on November 5, Liberation: _____
 - f. Teach on November 6, Contemplative: _____
- 3) **Pass all (9) reading quizzes:** A short reading quiz will be given at various small group discussion meetings and each retreat to keep you accountable and on track with the reading. A passing score will be considered 4 of 6 questions correct or better. A failing grade on a reading quiz can only be corrected by writing a one-page, single-spaced summary of the "example of the approach" book assigned for that week.
- 4) **Articulate a philosophy of youth ministry:** Your final project will be to craft a personal philosophy of youth ministry that answers the following (and other) questions: PURPOSE: What do you understand as the purpose of youth ministry? CONTENT: What should be taught and communicated? LEARNER: What is the role of youth in their own formation? TEACHER: What is the role of adult leaders in the formation and education of youth? HOLY SPIRIT: How do you understand God to be at work in the communication of the Gospel to youth? CONTEXT: What is the context in which education/formation should happen? METHOD: How do you plan to go about educating and forming youth? EVALUATION: How will you evaluate ministry to youth? A detailed instruction sheet for crafting this youth ministry philosophy will be provided by October 15. **Final project due November 19 @ 10pm.**

Satisfactory completion of the above and the following will earn a grade of B+ :

- 1) **Teach (1) lesson plan to real, live youth.** Submit a 4-6 page paper which compares the strengths and weaknesses of your learning approach and techniques with the youth in your setting (you can tell them you're doing this for class – ask for their feedback!). Assess both successful moments and "crash and burn" moment in terms of what was going on developmentally, culturally, relationally, and theologically. You should cite sources appropriately (i.e., show that you can make substantial connections between your real-life experience and what you have read, discussed and learned this semester). **Due by October 15.**

Satisfactory completion of the above and the following can earn a grade of A- :

Pick One:

- 1) **Teach a second lesson plan to real, live youth.** Submit a 4-6 page paper which compares the strengths and weaknesses of your learning approach and techniques with the youth in your setting (you can tell them you're doing this for class – ask for their feedback!). Assess both successful moments and "crash and burn" moment in terms of what was going on developmentally, culturally, relationally, and theologically. You should cite sources appropriately (i.e., show that you can make substantial connections between your real-life experience and what you have read, discussed and learned this semester). **Due by November 19.**

((OR))

- 2) Propose an alternative project to the professor that helps you satisfy one of your personal objectives for the course.

Satisfactory completion of the above and the following will earn a grade of A:

- 1. Individual Expertise Project, "Very Short Introduction": (Due by Nov. 3)** Become an expert (at least more than the rest of the class) in an area related to education, formation or communicating the Gospel to youth. Teach the rest of the class about your area of expertise. This project will involve:
- a. Creating a "Very Short Introduction" suitable for training volunteers or other youth workers on your subject. In addition to introducing your topic, your Very Short Introduction should include an annotated bibliography of web links, readings, and articles that would be helpful for digging further. This will be published online at YMToday.com (Length: 4 to 8 pages).
 - a. Teaching the rest of the class in 10 to 12 minutes in a creative way suitable for your topic and then distributing your Very Short Introduction to class members.
 - b. Your Very Short Introduction should (a) comb through the resources available and the tips and tricks that are out there; (b) give a simple system by which to proceed; (c) offer concise recommendations for continued reading; (d) offer some theological guidance for this practice using practical theological reflection. [For help with this read Kenda Dean's article, "The Tasks of Practical Theology," pgs. 223-228 in *Starting Right*.]
 - c. A few suggestions: Learn deeply about your topic so that you can sort through what's necessary and what's not for a Very Short Introduction. What is most essential in the essentials?
 - d. Feel free to propose your own topic of interest for your area of expertise. Here are a few possibilities:
 - i. Methods of Teaching: Which work in youth ministry? What do we need to know?
 - ii. Curriculum Development: How should we go about crafting a scope and sequence in a way that is theologically sound?
 - iii. Context Matters: Setting atmosphere, getting disciplinary control, and creating a learning environment in ways that are responsible to your theology.
 - iv. Preaching/Speaking to Youth and Young Adults
 - v. Teaching and training adult volunteers: How can we contribute to more than just skill development by volunteers? How can we nurture their own formation and education?
 - vi. Experiential Worship: How can we craft worship experiences that are experiential, formative and educational?
 - vii. Faith formation & the discipleship of adolescents
 - viii. Writing Bible Studies: Turning scriptural truth into a meaningful and faithful message for teens.
 - ix. Adapting Curriculum: Using multiple resources, how to do it with theological conviction
 - x. Learning styles & Multiple intelligences: How they matter in youth ministry
 - xi. Take any piece of the CYMT Practicum Pathway (currently under development) and become an expert in that area.

YOU MUST CHOOSE YOUR AREA OF EXPERTISE AND GAIN APPROVAL FROM THE PROFESSOR NO LATER THAN SEPTEMBER 16.

