Principles and Practices of Catechesis Syllabus PT701

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I. Course Themes.

This course provides an introduction to the theological and pedagogical principles undergirding the ministry of catechesis by providing a blend of both theoretical and practical skills for cradle to grave discipleship. Coursework will expose the student to a wide variety of readings in the Christian tradition as well as an examination of current and past examples of praxis as we examine a number of different models of catechetical formation.

This course will consist of various formats: discussions, workshops, lectures, informal fieldwork, demonstrations, and presentations. We will enjoy hearing from some master catechists and practitioners about how they approach the art of catechesis. The express goal of this course is to inform the doctrinal and spiritual formation of the participants such that they will be able to engage in effective catechetical ministry. Regardless of whether we are intentional about it or not, everything we do forms us. That formation can be positive, but it can also deform. Catechesis is far more than learning doctrine as a part of confirmation. We engage in catechesis in our homes (oikonomia) and with our lives (poiema). “For we are his workmanship,* created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10 ASV).

We will explore five themes: the who, what, why, where, and how of Christian formation with the express purpose of coming to a fuller understanding of living a Christian life, grounded in the Gospel and the historic teaching and practices of the church. We will examine the nature of catechesis from a broad range of perspectives: biblical, theological, historical, developmental and educational. We will explore these five themes by reflecting on historical and theological texts as well as contemporary and practical works that embody the following five forms of catechetical praxis: koinonia (the curriculum of community), leiturgia (the curriculum of prayer and worship), didache (the curriculum of teaching), kerygma (the curriculum of proclamation), and diakonia (the curriculum of service). We will use sections of To Be a Christian and look at pedagogical practices that one might choose to employ in terms of integrating orthodoxy, orthokardia, and orthopraxy (head, heart, and hands).

[* translated as poiema—literally we are His poem]

II. Required Texts [NB: this list has been revised from what was previously posted online]
The costs listed for the texts are for paperback versions. You may find that Kindle or certain audio forms, and/or used versions are significantly cheaper. Feel free to use whatever print/audio format suits you best.

- Didache [http://legacyicons.com/content/didache.pdf] (free)


• *To Be a Christian, the Anglican Catechism,* 2019.


Additional articles, podcasts, videos, and other multi-media sources will be utilized in class and made available to students via Google classroom or placed on reserve in the library. These will include but are not limited to Fr. Lee Nelson’s “Lost Tools of Catechesis” and a series of catechesis related posts via the facebook page for Anglican Compass; excerpts from Estep, White, and Estep, *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church*, excerpts from Godly Play, (https://s3.amazonaws.com/missio-emq/EMQ_Volume_54_Issue_1.pdf; a few podcast episodes from Always Forward; and excerpts from Sophia Cavaletti.

The following texts are required for STM and DMin students only. This is a change from the short syllabus posted online in our intensives registration section.


Not required, but cheerfully recommended:


historian and spiritual formation professor. The book was already timely, pre-pandemic. Now, more than ever we need to understand how to bear the light of Christ in a winsome and robust way. While he is not an Anglican, his Presbyterian point of view and his thoroughness as a scholar are quite helpful.

Taylor, David. *Glimpses of the New Creation: Worship and the Formative Power of the Arts.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019. ISBN 978-0-8028-7609-6 ($18.29). We tend to think of catechesis as being limited to orthodoxy and information. But the formative and pedagogical impact of the arts can be one of the best ways for us to learn about and impart the faith.

III. Course Expectations and Policies

Attendance and engaged participation are expected of all students. Now that we’re doing this class “remotely” it means that attendance is really about “attending” (as in paying attention to things that get posted in google classroom as well as doing your best to “show up” when we meet synchronously). It’s my intention to record our sessions so that folks can go back at the leisure to review and reflect on the content. Paying attention and attending are particularly important given that this course is being offered as a one-week intensive. It is expected that our collaborative efforts will take place in an environment in which you will be invited to share openly with your peers from your own experience and your own developing theoretical perspectives. Insofar as possible, we will try to have our class discussions and small groups serve in much the same way that discipleship and formation groups function in a ministry context. On the one hand, much of spiritual formation is something that is indeed solitary work, but it is work that can not be done alone. Our formation does not happen in isolation—nor should our learning.

All assignments are to be submitted in a timely manner. Because this is an intensive course and not one spread over an entire semester, any time after our week together up until the final due date, you may submit your work to Google Classroom. The only assignment to do prior to our time together is to read your textbooks.

Plagiarism: The word plagiarism comes from the Latin word *plagiarius*, meaning kidnapper. The act of stealing someone else’s work and attempting to pass it off as your own is a moral shortcoming and antithetical to spiritual formation and our call to holiness. Any student who plagiarizes will automatically receive a failing grade on the assignment. Depending on the severity of the offense, the student may also be at risk of failing the course. For a full explanation of Trinity’s plagiarism guidelines please see pages 95-96 of our Academic Catalog. Our intellectual and spiritual formation take place in a community. While you are strongly encouraged to work together and collaborate on your projects, please strive to hold one another accountable to the highest academic and ethical standards. The most critical issue in exhibiting integrity in academic assignments is student compliance with accepted practices of notation of resources and references used to develop their paper or project. Choose excellence.

Incompletes: Incompletes are typically only granted when extenuating circumstances justify an extension. An incomplete can only be granted by formally petitioning the Academic Dean and
Registrar. This is in accordance with Trinity’s policy, which can be found on pages 36-37 of the Academic Catalog.

ATS: In accordance with ATS (the Association of Theological Schools) requirements, several samples of student work may be randomly selected and used as a class artifact. In accordance with Educational Rights and Privacy Act students’ names will be removed from any work used for this purpose. The artifact contributes to the on-going assessment of our courses and degree programs here at Trinity School for Ministry. FERPA (the Family, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99)

IV. Course Objectives

• students will be able to understand the connection between biblical theology and catechesis and formation
• students will be able to articulate the fundamental significance and purposes of Christian formation and catechesis
• students will know how different metaphors, assumptions, and theological emphases affect claims and strategies of Christian formation and catechesis
• students will learn to discern various cultural and educational models, paradigms, and assumptions that affect and influence spiritual formation
• students will gain an understanding of human psychological, moral, and social developmental learning theory/learning process
• Students will have a basic familiarity with the history of Christian religious education, spiritual formation, discipleship and the range of approaches that have been utilized in the life of the church
• Students will become comfortably familiar with the Anglican catechism, To Be a Christian as well as learn about other catechisms that are available.
• Students will have an increased appreciation for the role of imagination and wonder as a part of lifelong formation

• MAR students will be able to articulate an Anglican understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology. In addition, MAR students will be able to effectively communicate the Christian faith.

• MDiv students will be able to articulate an Anglican understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology. MDiv students will also be prepared to effectively lead in a variety of Christian communities.

• STM students will be able to articulate an Anglican understanding of biblical, historical, systematic, and pastoral theology. Furthermore, STM students will demonstrate the ability to carry out research from original sources.
• DMin students will recognize and identify the biblical theology evident in the course work. As a result of this course, DMin students will demonstrate the ability to reflect biblically and theologically about the identified problem.

V. Assigned Readings

It is expected that you will consistently come to class having done the readings and that you will be fully prepared to discuss them. Most class sessions will include an opportunity to discuss the readings, either in your small groups or with the entire class. And, because we may be doing this class “together but remotely” it’s important for you to do your best to have done the readings as well as to watch whatever social media links/lectures that will be posted in our google classroom site.

Assigned Readings—for your readings, I strongly encourage you to keep a reader response log. This log is for you—so use whatever style of logging, blogging, note-taking, etc. that works best for you. While somewhat akin to Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance—you’re basically keeping a journal of things that are helpful to you, that will assist you in “road maintenance” (whether you’re on a bicycle, in a jeep, an ATV, or on foot for your metaphorical journey). Your log is for you—it’s not the same as doing a book review. Instead, you are culling through the readings building up a toolbox of information and insights from scholars and practitioners on what pedagogical practices are most helpful for a master catechist. Need some inspiration? What one or two ideas/themes from the reading stand out to you? What spoke to you the most/least? Why? Engage these issues with your own ministry context. How might you use this idea/them in your ministry? How might you do it differently? You might be the sort of person who writes in the margins of your books, uses post-its, tabs and highlighter to mark key passages. This is an acceptable form of “logging” your reading for all of your textbooks with the exception of Parrett and Kang. Parrett and Kang end each chapter with a set of questions which are both insightful and thought-provoking. It’s in your best interest to not only read and reflect on the questions—but also to write out your answers. Write them out in a manner that is most helpful to you. After you have read the book in its entirety, pick a chapter that you particularly liked or that is most relevant to your interests or ministry setting. Submit your responses to the questions for that chapter using our Google Classroom platform by .

I want to reiterate that while it is strongly recommended that you complete all reading prior to the start of our January Intensive, given the many ways in which this pandemic has impacted each of us, I’m now looking at the readings as something you can and should “marinate” in (read, mark, and inwardly digest). Perhaps you might consider undertaking these readings as an Advent discipline rather than as an academic task that you must attend to. (Trying softer rather than harder may open up some new ways of learning and receiving information that can be transformational when approached with an open heart and mind.

Kindly note that STM and DMin students have additional required reading. James K. A. Smith’s entire trilogy: Desiring the Kingdom, Imagining the Kingdom, and Awaiting the King are fascinating and substantial works for theological, cultural, and catechetical reflection. For those interested in Smith’s exploration of cultural liturgies, his shorter book, You Are What You Love, gives a very readable, précis summary that you may find helpful for framing the heart of
catechesis and the significance of cultural liturgies. Similarly, his book on the philosophical writings of Charles Taylor, How (Not) to be Secular is also quite good.

Lastly, during the actual course, I will post a number of additional readings, or social media sources—again, not as a requirement, but as resources for you. Do not try to read or listen to everything during our 5 days together. Rather, I intend these as enrichment for your information and edification. I will not test you on any of the readings, nor will there be any pop quizzes. Given the breadth and depth of the subject of catechesis and best pedagogical practices, my hope is simply to provide you with as wide a selection of material as possible so that you can sample and then specialize given your particular area(s) of interest or ministry.

VI. Assignments

NB: The final due date for assignments:
   - Masters - 2/8/21
   - STM - 3/8/21
   - DMIN - 4/5/21

SHEMA: Write a commentary, produce a PowerPoint, or video or podcast (or you pick the medium that you want!) on the Shema.

Carefully examine and reflect on the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:1-9) and write a minimum of two pages (not to exceed 5 pages total), providing commentary on this passage regarding its meaning and significance for today’s families. This can be done with 1 other classmate. You can compose this in a variety of ways. Perhaps you are already in a ministry setting and need to put together a parent seminar or newsletter/pamphlet. Or, perhaps you hope to plant a church. What do you want your launch team to understand/envision when it comes to the catechetical role families can/might/should play? Your paper can take the form of a PPT presentation so long as the accompanying text is sufficient in quantity and quality. When you submit this to Google Classroom, please add a personal/private note to me indicating whether or not you are willing to have the assignment shared “publicly” (as in with your classmates).

“We Need to Talk” (These 3 sets of interviews will serve as your final exam)

Templates for the kinds of questions you might wish to ask will be provided during our week together. This is not an assignment that you should try to knock off prior to the start of class! Rather, it is intended to help you shape and define your understanding of yourself as a catechist and ways in which you can further equip yourself in being able to work as effectively as possible within your particular ministry context.

Interviews of Ministry leaders

Interview a preschool and/or children’s ministry leader and a youth or family ministry leader. Interview an assistant or associate rector or lead catechist. Your interview should focus on the opportunities and challenges faced in ministry. While you will be given a template for your
interviews, feel free to tailor the questions to your context. The interviews are to be submitted as a verbatim along with a summary of the interview, synthesizing information you have gleaned in light of your readings and course lectures. Lastly, write a page or so regarding your reflections on your interview experience in light of what you have learned from Dean & Foster, Murphy, and Parrett & Kang. NB: If you are a DMin or STM level student, interweave the additional readings you were responsible for with all 3 of your interview reflections.

Interviews of Adolescents

Interview 3 teens (anyone in the age group from 13-25. You read that correctly. Psychologists have now broadened the definition to range from as young as 9 to as old as 26 years of age. Instead of a verbatim, summarize some of the particulars that stood out to you from your conversation with each individual. Have they been confirmed? Why? Why not? How are they (if at all) involved in ministry in their congregation? What spiritual practices/disciplines do they engage in? Do they have a mentor or someone they particularly look up to? Who are their heroes/spiritual giants? Again, a template will be provided, but use this opportunity to engage in a conversation that makes it clear you are seeking their help and input. There will be either a lecture or a handout having to do with Thomas Bergler’s book, *The Juvenilization of America’s Christianity*. Write a paragraph or two (or three!) regarding your reflections on your interview experience in light of Bergler’s premise.

Interviews with Children

Interview 3 children, one from each of the following age grouping: 4-6 years, 7-9 years, and 10-12 years. The focus of the interview is to ask them about their perceptions of God. Hand in a verbatim (transcript) or your interview, including any artwork. At the close of your verbatim, write a page or so regarding your reflections on your interview experience in light of what you have learned from Cavaletti, Estep, Parrett & Kang.

Pedagogy in Practice

MDiv and MAR: Pick one of the following options from what is most relevant to your ministry context. STM and DMin must do two of the following options. NB: I am open to proposals for applied/practical alternatives if you have something specific you wish to do in your particular ministry context.

Option A: Integrative Essay
A five-page integrative essay that reflects upon the readings and conversations from our class-time together. Organize your essay around the following questions: What is your understanding of the nature and purpose of religious education? What is the theology that undergirds your position? What are some of its educational, ministerial, and pastoral consequences?

Option B: Pedagogical Creed
Write a synthesis paper where you design and explain your own pedagogical creed. The focus of your paper should reflect your area of ministry. You might want to use this as an opportunity to set forth a vision and mission statement for your congregation’s formational ministry. Many
churches operate out of good intentions and assumptions, but not necessarily out of an intentional cradle to grave catechetical model. This assignment gives you agency to get the ball rolling. Dream big!

Option C: Term Paper
Produce a term paper (roughly 8 to 10 pages) on a topic that is relevant to your particular vocational calling and/or DMin project. This paper must have a minimum of 5 different sources (in addition to the required readings for the class) and should have an annotated bibliography. The bibliography annotations are to help you be able to give “elevator speeches” (or the 2-minute pep talk on Zoom) for why the source you have used in your research was helpful in shaping your thoughts.

Option D: Teaching Plan
Create a 10-12 page teaching plan in an area of religious education or ministry. Thoroughly map out the course/topic you plan to teach.

Option E: Methods Bank
Develop a methods Bank. Select one age group: children: (12-24 months; 2-4 yrs; 5-7 yrs; 8-10 yrs; or 11-12); middle school, high school, college, young adult, adult, seniors/elderly. Develop a bank of 10 to 15 ministry methods appropriate for that age group. In a sentence or two describe the method and how it can be used in ministry. This is a helpful assignment for being able to articulate to your vestry or leadership team the reason(s) for employing a variety of methodologies and approaches to formation and rather than the default – “But, we’ve always done it this way.”

Option F: Catechesis Assessment
Conduct a ministry assessment. Visit a church. This church should not be where you work, lead or participate in regular worship or are doing a field placement. In fact, it would be best if you pick a setting of ministry outside your norm. Stretch yourself! More than one visit might be beneficial. Provide a description of the setting. What educational theories and transactions did you observe taking place? Your assessment task is to describe, interpret, evaluate! Look for explicit, implicit, and null curricula. How does this particular local church ministry adhere to best practices as reviewed in course materials and discussions? In addition to observing the ministry, make every effort to speak with a leader in the church about the ministry and the principles behind it. In response to your visit, write a 5-8 page paper describing what you learned. Describe the model(s) and methods used for teaching, learning, and worship. What place do children have in the faith community? What place to youth and young adults have in the community? How are relationships built between children, youth, peers, and other generations? Insightfulness of assessment and observation in light of your readings and course content will be

Don’t hesitate to reach out if you have questions or concerns! We’re all in this together and I will do my best to make this class worth your time and effort. Speaking of effort, the following is the criteria for evaluation in this course.
**Course Evaluation**
MAR and MDIV latest possible due date: Feb. 8, 2021; STM latest possible due date: Mar. 8, 2021; DMin latest possible due date April 5, 2021.

Class Participation (10%)

Shema Commentary (20%)

We Need to Talk (these interviews and your 60% accompanying reflections on the readings will serve as your final examination. Each set (leaders, children, and adolescent) is worth 15% --for a combined 45% of your course evaluation.

Pedagogy in Practice (25%)

This is graduate school. I don’t “give” you a grade! You give it to yourself based on the way in which you choose to approach your work. For persons pursuing the catechesis certificate, this is a Pass/Fail course. Huzzah! That takes the pressure off immediately.

Grading at Trinity is based on the following scale:

A 90-100%  B 80-89%

C 70-79%  Failure (less than 70%)