



Grace Communion Seminary

CM506 Trinitarian Youth Ministry (Intensive)

Short Syllabus

Instructor: Greg Williams, DMin.

Note: The best way to contact the course instructor is via the GCS online system: log into the course, and in the right-hand column go to the block labeled “message my professor.”

GCS Mission Statement

“Equipping the Saints for Pastoral Ministry.” We are committed to equip the saints for pastoral ministry through quality graduate-level distance education programs in biblical, theological, ministerial and pastoral studies informed by Incarnational Trinitarian faith.

In order to do well in this course, students are expected to put in at least 13 hours each week.

Course Description: Trinitarian Youth Ministry

This course examines the relationship of theology and youth ministry practice as it has developed in North America. The course explores the centrality of Jesus in all ministry in the relationship that Jesus already has with young people. That relationship is explored in its post-Christian, post-modern cultural context, with an emphasis on the importance of mentoring as a relational/incarnational tool in youth ministry.

Required Textbooks

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York: Touchstone, 1959.
ISBN: 978-0-648-81500-8 (sells for about \$10).

Root, Andrew. *Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007. ISBN: 978-0-8308-3488-4 (sells for about \$13).

Torrance, Thomas F. *The Mediation of Christ*. Helmers & Howard, 1992. ISBN 0-939443050-3 (sells for about \$14).

Whitfield, Charles. *Boundaries and Relationships: Knowing, Protecting and Enjoying the Self*. Deerfield Beach: Health Communications, 1993, ISBN 1-55874-259-X (sells for about \$8).

Optional Textbook

Barth, Karl. *The Call to Discipleship*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press Facets edition, 2003. ISBN 978-0800636326 (sells for about \$10).

Student Learning Outcomes (see appendix for further details)

1. Students will identify and describe an approach to youth ministry that is expressive of a theology of ministry that is Trinitarian, Christ-centered and incarnational. This outcome will be demonstrated through contributions to online discussions and the short reflection paper.
2. Students will describe the history of youth ministry in North America and the trending of North American culture toward post-Christendom and post-modernity. This outcome will be demonstrated through contributions to the online discussions and in the final paper.
3. Students will describe how these historical/cultural forces impact the contemporary practice of youth ministry. This outcome will be demonstrated through contributions to the online discussions.
4. Students will compare a *Trinitarian, incarnational* approach to youth ministry to other approaches. This outcome will be demonstrated through contributions to online discussions, including reporting on a visit to an existing youth ministry program in the student's community.

5. Students will design a youth ministry program that is faithful to a Trinitarian, incarnational theology in their particular ministry setting. This outcome will be demonstrated in the final paper, which sets forth the student's assessment of current youth ministry programming and their proposal for the redesign of that programming.

Course Objectives

This course seeks to address the application of Trinitarian (Christ-centered, incarnational) theology to the practice of Christian ministry to, with and through teens (youth). Rather than ministry that seeks merely to *influence* teens toward certain goals, with this approach youth ministers participate in sustained, meaningful ways in what the incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended Jesus Christ is actually doing through his ongoing relationship, in the Spirit, with young people and their ministers. The course is designed to benefit youth ministers, pastors, parents, grandparents and guardians—all who wish to participate in Jesus' ministry to and through young people, with the primary focus being on congregationally based ministries that seek to disciple older children and teens.

The course begins with an overview of the relationship between the *theology* and *practice* of youth ministry, and a review of the historic development of youth ministry within North America. The course then continues by exploring the centrality of Jesus in all ministry—and how youth ministry may be viewed as our active sharing in the relationship that Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, already has with young people. Next, the course explores that relationship in an increasingly post-Christian, post-modern cultural context.

The course also explores the importance of *mentoring* as a relational-incarnational tool in service of a Trinitarian-incarnational approach to youth ministry. Online class discussions will examine the practical application of these concepts within the context of contemporary, “real world” youth ministry.

The course includes a variety of readings (in textbooks and journal articles), and places significant emphasis on students' responses to those readings as they interact in the classroom with the instructor and their peers.

Course Requirements

Trinitarian Youth Ministry is organized in accordance with the chapter topics in the primary textbook, “Revisiting Relational Youth Ministry” (one topic for each lecture). This textbook is augmented with readings from “The Cost of Discipleship,” “Boundaries and Relationships,” “The Mediation of Christ,” online articles and accompanying lectures (the original written lectures were produced by Ted Johnston and Greg Williams both of whom serve as church administrators in Grace Communion International). To these readings are added a variety of projects, three written papers, the viewing of videos and contributions to classroom discussions. These class assignments are summarized in the chart below and then described in detail in the text that follows.

Course Assignments Details

Class one: Theology forms ministry

Assigned reading:

- Root: preface and introduction (pp. 9-23)
- Bonhoeffer: introduction and costly grace (pp. 35-56)
- Article: Post-Relational Youth Ministry—(download on GCS website)
- Lecture: *Theology Forms Ministry*

Class two: History of youth ministry in North America

Assigned reading:

- Root: chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 25-61)
- Bonhoeffer: the call to discipleship (pp. 57-78)
- Torrance: chapter 1 (pp. 1-23)
- Lecture: *The Historical Ascent of Relational Youth ministry*

Class three: Our relational motivations

Assigned reading:

- Root: chapter 3 and introduction to part two (pp. 62-84)
- Bonhoeffer: single-minded obedience (pp. 79-85)
- Torrance: chapter 2 (pp.24-46)

- Lecture: *Incarnational Ministry vs. Personal Influence Strategy*

Class four: Who is Jesus Christ?

Assigned reading:

- Root: chapter 4 (pp. 85-103)
- Bonhoeffer: discipleship and the cross (pp. 86-93)
- Torrance: chapter 3 (pp. 47-72)
- Lecture: *The Mediation of Christ*

Class five: Where is Jesus Christ?

Assigned reading:

- Root: chapter 5 (pp. 104-123)
- Bonhoeffer: discipleship and the individual (pp. 94-101)
- Whitfield: chapter 2 (pp. 11-38)
- Lecture: *Relational Ministry as Participation in God's Presence*
- Complete the "Survey on Personal Boundaries" found in chapter 2 (pp. 11-14) of Whitfield's book. Read the full chapter and write a **reaction paper** (minimum of 500 words, 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font, double spaced), summarizing and analyzing what you have learned about yourself through taking the survey and reading chapter 2. Discuss which boundary areas in your life need the most personal attention/development. **The reaction paper is due no later than Friday Dec 29.** Note that this paper will be graded for content, style, grammar and spelling.

Class six: What then shall we do?

Assigned reading:

- Root: chapter 6 (pp. 124-141)
- Bonhoeffer: The disciple and unbelievers (pp. 182-188)
- Torrance: chapter 4 (pp. 73-98)
- Lecture: *Participating in Jesus' Ministry*

Class seven: Place-sharing

Assigned reading:

- Root: chapter 7 (pp. 142-165)

- Bonhoeffer: the great divide (pp. 189-195)
- Lecture: *The Complicated Person*

Class eight: Relational transformation

Assigned reading:

- Root: chapter 8 (pp. 166-196)
- Bonhoeffer: the work and suffering of the messengers (pp. 206-217)
- Lecture: *Postmodern, Post-Christian Culture*
- **Youth Group Visit:** write a **reaction paper** (minimum of 500 words, 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font, double spaced), summarizing and analyzing what you observed as in alignment with our course? What were the challenges of the group? How did this experience inform your goals for back home? **The reaction paper is due no later than Friday Dec 29.** Note that this paper will be graded for content, style, grammar and spelling.

Class nine: Place-sharing in community

Assigned reading:

- Root: chapter 9 (pp. 197-217)
- Bonhoeffer: the body of Christ & the visible community (236-271)
- Lecture: *Mentoring Youth*

Class ten: Local application

Assigned reading:

- Root: appendix (pp. 218-219)
- Bonhoeffer: the saints and the image of Christ (pp. 272-304)
- Lecture: *Putting It All Together*

Post-class assignments

Supplemental reading in preparation for final project:

- Article: *Reconsidering the Non-Negotiables*
http://www.generationsministries.org/uploads/2/5/2/7/25278738/reconsidering_the_non-negotiables.pdf
- Article (chart): *Stages of Development in Youths*
<http://www.son.wisc.edu/net/wistrec/net/developstagetext.html>
- Article: *Perichoretic Parenting*
<https://www.fulcrum-anglican.org.uk/articles/perichoretic-parenting/>
- Article: *Evangelizing Postmodern Youths*
<https://www.gci.org/church/youth/postmodern>
- Article: *Blending Builders, Boomers, Busters, and Bridgers*
http://rss.ag.org/articles/detail.cfm?RSS_RSSContentID=6017&RSS_OriginatingRSSFeedID=3202

Final Project:

- Begin work on your 15 page **final report**, which is due no later than Friday December 29. Note that this paper will be graded for content, style, grammar and spelling, and include the following four components.

1. Core concepts.

Summarize what you feel are the core concepts that you have learned in this class. Provide short quotes from assigned reading that highlight these concepts (be sure to follow the formats for quotes, including footnoting and a bibliography in the standard GCS report/paper requirements). You can mention here outside reading that meaningfully has informed your understanding of these concepts.

2. Personal observations.

In this section we want you to reflect on how your thinking has been impacted by what you have learned. Please give concrete examples, but you need not write in long detail.

3. Assessment of existing program.

In this section, you will assess what your congregation is now doing to minister to and with youth (older children and teens). What is working? What is not? What is consistent with the core concepts you have learned in this course? What is not? Why? As part of this assessment, survey a few student participants, asking them: • How has your life been impacted by being a part of the youth group this last year? • Describe your current relationship with Jesus. • What church programs or events have helped you most in developing your relationship with Jesus?

4. Strategic plan for new program.

In this section, I want you to provide a specific plan for developing your youth ministry in your congregation (if you work with more than one congregation, chose just one). Since various sizes and types of congregations are represented by the students in this class, there is no one-size-fits-all requirement here. For some of you this plan may be about launching a program that does not yet exist. For others it will be about radically altering an existing program, for still others it will be about “tweaking” an existing program that is already operating well. Be sure to include specifics here – names, goals, dates and budgets. Address staffing, including training staff. Get real and specific. What I want you to come up with is a concrete plan that you can then take to your leadership and begin to enlist them in refining (or completely overhauling) the plan as you progress forward. If your plan includes educating your congregation about some of these issues, say so and perhaps include a sermon or Bible Study outline that you would use.

Here are the final report formatting requirements: The final report is to be no less than 15 pages long (in 12 point Times New Roman font, double spaced). In formatting the report, be sure to adhere to the requirements for papers/reports outlined in "How to Format a Paper for GCS Classes" at <http://www.gcs.edu/mod/resource/view.php?id=2009> (be sure you're signed onto the GCS site before clicking this link). Estimated hours to complete course assignments

Following is an estimate of the number of hours that students will need to spend to complete course assignments. Some students will complete the assignments in less time, and some will take more.

Assignment		Estimated hours for average student	Percentage of final grade
	Number of pages		
Root textbook	197	13.1	
Bonhoeffer textbook	155	10.3	
Whitfield textbook	25	1.3	
Torrance textbook	98	8.3	
Online articles/essays		7	
On-site youth ministry visit, assigned movie (evening sessions)		10	
Classroom participation: commenting on assigned reading, video viewing, field visits, and comments from other students and the course instructor (10 sections over 3.5 days)		24.5	50
	Number of pages		
Reflection paper on Personal Boundaries	2	3	10
Reflection paper on Youth Ministry site visit	2	3	10
Final research/project report	15	50	30
Total estimated hours		130.5	100

Grading Standards

Individual course assignments will be graded according to the grading standards noted in this section. The final grade for the course will be assessed on a 100-point scale with a grade letter assigned as follows:

- 95 - 100 % = A
- 90 - 94 % = A-
- 87 - 89 % = B+
- 84 - 86 % = B
- 80 - 83 % = B-
- 77 - 79 % = C+
- 74 - 76 % = C
- 70 - 73 % = C-
- 0 - 69 % = F

Grades will be assigned according to the following criteria:

- A to A- = Outstanding work: Above and beyond the requirements; outstanding effort and significant achievement are evident. Some measure of remarkable skill, creativity, or energy is also evident.
- B+ to B = Above average work: Fulfills all aspects of the assignment and goes a bit beyond minimum competence to demonstrate reflection, research, and integration of the texts that show extra effort, achievement or improvement.
- B- to C = Average work: Fulfills all aspects of the assignment with competence. Assignments are completed as assigned.
- C- = Below average work: Below average either because some aspect of the assignment has not been fulfilled or because the number of errors interferes with clear communication. A grade of C- may also indicate failure to follow directions, failure to follow specific recommendations, or failure to demonstrate effort and improvement.

- F = Work not acceptable: Not acceptable, either because the student did not complete the assignment as directed, or because the level of performance is below an acceptable level for graduate level work.

The final course grade will be given by combining the grades for individual assignments, weighted as follows:

- 50% of total grade: the grade given for *classroom contributions*. Those contributions will be graded based on the quality, thoroughness and consistency of contributions, which include:
 - summarization of key points gleaned from assigned reading (including lectures) and assigned projects (visits, video viewing, etc.)
 - interaction with what other participants (including students and instructor)
- 20% of total grade: the grade given to *the two reaction papers*
- 30% of total grade: the grade given to *the final report*

Library resources

In doing research and writing papers, you may find it helpful to use a few books. Some students will already have ready access to appropriate books; others will need to plan ahead, to obtain these books at a local seminary library, through interlibrary loan at a public library, or by mail from the GCS library. Often, quality resources are available on the internet. For guidance on that, see the document on our website, “Research Resources Available Off Campus.”¹ That’s on the “Student Handbook” section of our website. Also in that section is the GCS library catalog. For details on how our library works, see the *Student Handbook*, section V.H.

¹ Posted at <http://www.gcs.edu/mod/resource/view.php?id=1989>.

Course Policies

- **Penalty for late submissions**

Assignments are due no later than the date noted in the course requirements. Late submissions will be penalized 10 percent for each day they are late, so only in rare cases it will be worth your while to take an extra day to do a better job.

Assignments should be completed several days early, to allow for possible emergencies near the deadline. Most students are involved in pastoral work, and emergencies are common in this line of work, so you need to make allowance for the possibility. Not many emergencies last an entire week.

- **Penalty for plagiarism**

Representing the words, ideas, or work of someone else as if it were your own is considered plagiarism. It does not matter whether this is done intentionally or accidentally. In general, any quote of more than 5 words in a row should be put within quote marks, and the source noted. It is not enough to cite the source. Penalties for plagiarism are at the discretion of the instructor.

- **Nondiscrimination**

Grace Communion Seminary admits students of any race, sex, color, creed, age, or national origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, age, or national origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

- **Class confidentiality**

Materials posted in the class, including lectures and discussion forums, are for class use only. Grades are confidential; we do not report your grades to your employer or to anyone else outside of GCS administration. Students are to protect the confidentiality of all classroom materials and should not share any classroom materials without written permission of the person quoted and the instructor.