



Grace Communion Seminary

CM506 Trinitarian Youth Ministry

Short Syllabus

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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.

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, postmodern 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 0939443050-3 (sells for about \$14).

Whitfield, Charles. *Boundaries and Relationships: Knowing, Protecting and Enjoying the Self*. Deerfield Beach: Health Communications, 1993, ISBN 155874-259-X (sells for about \$8).

Student Learning Outcomes

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 postmodernity. 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 provide an analysis of the existing youth ministry and youth programs in their setting (this would include youth configurations related to family, church or neighborhood). What are the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats? This outcome will be demonstrated through class discussion and a short reflection paper.
5. Students will design a youth ministry program that is faithful to a Trinitarian, incarnational theology in their 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 written lectures were produced by professors who have also served 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 Summary

Lecture Number	Topic for the Lecture	Discussion Questions
1 May 11 -17	Theology forms ministry	Reading: lecture, books and articles Project: view two online videos
2 May 18 - 24	The history of youth ministry in North America	Reading: lecture, books and articles Project: Analysis paper of local youth ministry meeting (due May 31)
3 May 25-31	Our relational motivations	Reading: lecture, books and articles
4 June 1 -7	Who is Christ?	Reading: lecture and books
5 June 8-14	Where is Christ? (survey of personal boundaries + a 2-page reflection paper)	Reading: lecture and books Project: begin work on reaction paper (due no later than Sunday, June 21)
6 June 15-21	What Then Shall We Do?	Define the concept of “place-sharing.” Reading: lecture, books and articles Project: continue work on reaction paper
7 June 22 - 28	Place-Sharing	Reading: lecture and books Project: view the movie “Good Will Hunting,” write a reaction paper (due no later than June 28)
June 29 – July 5	No Assignments Due	
8 July 6 - 12	Relational Transformation	Reading: lecture, books and articles Project: continue work on reaction paper
9 July 13 -19	Place-sharing in community	Reading: lecture and books Project: view assigned videos
10 July 20 - 26	Local application (course summary)	Reading: lecture, books and articles Project: begin work on final report?
July 27 – Aug. 9	Final Project	Note: your final report is due no later than Sunday, August 9, 2020

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)
- View two GCI “You’re Included” interviews:
- Lecture: *Theology Forms Ministry*

one: 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)
- Article: *Trends in American Child Rearing Practices*
- Analysis paper of Existing Youth Ministry (minimum of 1,000 word 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font, double spaced). Describe your local setting for youth-related ministry. This could be in your home, local church, or neighborhood. What are the strengths, challenges, opportunities and potential threats of the fabric of the youth connections in your world. This paper is due no later than Sunday, May 31.

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)
- Article (chart): *Stages of Development in Youths*
- 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 1,000 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 Sunday June 21.** 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)
- Article: *Perichoretic Parenting*
- 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*
- Assignment: View the movie *Good Will Hunting*. Write a reaction paper (minimum of 1,000 words 12-point Times New Roman or Arial font, double spaced), summarizing and analyzing how place-sharing happens in the various, complicated relationships of the movie (focusing primarily on the interplay of Will and his counselor). **The reaction paper is due no later than Sunday June 28.** Note that this paper will be graded for content, style, grammar and spelling.

Class eight: Relational transformation

Assigned ding:

- Root: chapter 8 (pp. 166-196)
- Bonhoeffer: the work and suffering of the messengers (pp. 206-217)
- Article: *Evangelizing Postmodern Youths*
- Lecture: *Postmodern, Post-Christian Culture*

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)
- Article: “Blending Builders, Boomers, Busters, and Bridgers”
- Lecture: *Putting It All Together*

Post-class assignments

Supplemental reading in preparation for final project:

- Article (chart): *Stages of Development in Youths*
<https://web.archive.org/web/20170114055423/http://www.son.wisc.edu/net/wistrec/net/developstagetext.html>

- Article: *Perichoretic Parenting*
<https://web.archive.org/save/https://www.fulcrumanglican.org.uk/articles/perichoretic-parenting/>
- Article: *Evangelizing Postmodern Youths*
<https://web.archive.org/web/20150908001755/https://www.gci.org/church/youth/postmodern>
- Article: *Blending Builders, Boomers, Busters, and Bridgers*
https://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/-/media/Enrichment/IssuePDFs/2002/EJ_2002_01_Winter.pdf#page=28
- Article: *The Bible For the Post Modern World*

Final Project:

- Begin work on your 15-page **final report**, which is **due no later than Thursday, August 9**. 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 <https://www.gcs.edu/mod/book/view.php?id=5016>. (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	
Youth ministry analysis of home setting and reflection paper		6	10
Classroom participation: commenting on assigned reading, discussion with other students and the course instructor			
	Number of pages	24	40
Reflection paper on Personal Boundaries	2	4	10
Reflection paper on <i>Good Will Hunting</i> movie review	2	6	10
Final research/project report	15	60	30
Total estimated hours		140	100