

Vancouver School of Theology
ED5/700:
Catechesis and Community in Post-Christendom Canada
Thursdays, 9 am to Noon

Christians are made, not born.

- Tertullian

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Course Description:

This course is designed for students approaching a teaching ministry in pastoral and public contexts. We will attend to faith formation in a secular age, acknowledging and exploring the diverse and innovative ways in which Christian identity is established and formed through different iterations of Christian witnessing communities.

Purpose:

Catechesis is the process of transmitting the Gospel in a variety of intercultural contexts, as the Christian community has received it, understands it, celebrates it, lives it and communicates it in many ways. Catechesis, within the Christian community, educates and equips people for missionary discipleship and evangelistic witness by building up the Body of Christ in the world. As Dallas Willard once said, "Discipleship is for the world; the church is for discipleship." Catechesis, translated from the Greek "to echo the teaching," is an interactive process in which the Word of God speaks to and through the proclaimer, the one receiving the message, and the Holy Spirit. Catechesis is a life-long process of initial call and conversion, formation, and on-going conversion. Through Word, worship, service and community, Catechesis seeks to lead all God's people missionally to an ever-deepening relationship with God the Father revealed in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Catechesis takes many forms and includes the initiation of adults, youth and children as well as the intentional and systematic effort to enable all to grow in faith and discipleship through sanctification. This course will explore models of catechesis and community in post-Christendom Canada for leaders exercising a teaching ministry.

Competency Objectives:

1. Students will *analyze and identify* issues of educational ministry in the church and society today, while *developing reflective skills* to integrate theology and learning theory for a teaching ministry.
2. Students will *form attitudes, habits and character* needed for mature teaching ministry with all ages, through *practicing skills* for teaching ministry and group facilitation for use in future faith communities.
3. Students will *describe* their own educational vision and philosophy for future educational ministry while *demonstrating* conscientiousness and willingness to take personal responsibility for learning, honesty and personal integrity in leadership.

Assigned Texts:

- Byassee, Jason and Ross A. Lockhart. *Better Than Brunch: Missional Churches in Cascadia*. Eugene: Cascade, 2020.
- Dawn, Maggi. *The Accidental Pilgrim: Modern Journeys on Ancient Pathways*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011.
- Duckworth, Jessica. *Wide Welcome: How the Unsettling Presence of Newcomers can Save the Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013.
- Lockhart, Ross A. *Beyond Snakes and Shamrocks: St. Patrick's Missional Lessons for Today*. Eugene: Cascade, 2018.
- Smith, Gordon T. *Wisdom from Babylon: Leadership for the Church in a Secular Age*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2020.
- Sparks, Paul, Tim Soerens and Dwight Friesen. *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2014.

Texts are NOT on order at the UBC Bookstore. Instead, students should order the required reading online as ebooks or hardcopy using sites at your local bookstore, the Regent College bookstore or an online provider.

Format:

This class meets weekly for three hours throughout the term. The primary format will be lecture and discussion based on the reading of the assigned texts.

Course Schedule:

I. Models of Catechism

September 16: *Big Shoes to Fill* - The Teaching Elder
Baby Steps – Catechesis for Children

Please read and come ready to discuss:

<https://www.christiancourier.ca/growing-faith/>

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/faith-matters/why-should-kids-my-church-care-about-pursuing-god>

September 23: *Steppin' Out* – Catechesis for Teenagers

Please read and come ready to discuss Kenda Dean's article here:

<https://blog.oup.com/2010/09/teen-christian-faith/>

As well as:

<http://www.christiancourier.ca/columns-op-ed/entry/kids-these-days>

and Andy Root:

<https://faithandleadership.com/andrew-root-take-it-bonhoeffer-there-no-christian-youth>

(What are some particular challenges facing catechesis and teenagers today in the church? What role, if any, do you think so called 'para-church' (Youth for Christ/Young Life, etc.) has to play in catechesis and teens? Who are the best role models of faith for teenagers today?)

September 30: *First Steps* – Initial Catechesis for Adults

Please read and come ready to discuss Duckworth's *Wide Welcome*

(What new insights emerged for you on the theme of catechesis as a result of reading this book? What was the author's main thesis? What would change in your experience of local church if you took the author's argument seriously?)

October 7: *Further Steps* – Continuing Catechesis for Adults

Please read and come ready to discuss Smith's *Wisdom from Babylon*.

(What did this book help clarify for you when it comes to faith formation in a secular age? What is one critique of this book? How might something from this book concretely shape your practice of Christian education with adults?)

October 14: *Virtual Steps* – Online Catechesis for Adults

Please read

<https://www.christiancourier.ca/business-as-usual/>

as well as a chapter on ecclesiology from *Faithful Innovation* and a chapter from *Following* provided by Professor Lockhart on Canvas

(What are the opportunities that you see in the growth of online church? What are some possible challenges in this form of ecclesiology? What is different about catechesis in this experience of Christian community?)

October 21: *Faithful Footsteps* – Pilgrimage as a way of Catechesis for Adults

Please Read *The Accidental Pilgrim* and come ready to discuss.

(Were the author's initial concerns regarding pilgrimage something you share – why or why not? What are the strengths and weakness of the metaphor of pilgrimage for our earthly life? If you were to lead a pilgrimage tour in the future what key insight from this book would shape your leadership?)

VST READING WEEK – OCTOBER 28 – NO CLASS

October 28: *Final Footsteps?* - Catechesis for Sanctified Seniors

Reflection paper due

Please read and come ready to discuss: <https://www.anglican.ca/news/seniors-ministry-nourishes-spiritual-well-being-in-retirement-and-long-term-care/30023393/>

<https://www.christiancentury.org/article/features/what-does-christian-vocation-look-elderly>

And

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/richard-bodini-on-the-pandemic-and-senior-faith-formation>

(What questions do these articles raise about how you would relate to seniors in your Christian leadership and teaching ministry? What challenges you in being around older adults? What gifts can you see older adults bringing to the local church?)

II. Models of Community

November 4: *House Call* – Exploring House Church community, the role of family worship and practice of Christian faith

Please read Sparks *The New Parish* and come ready to discuss.

(What are the strengths and weaknesses of focusing so clearly on the local neighbourhood for mission? What challenged your current practice of faith in this book? How might this neighbourhood incarnational model of ministry work if you served a rural congregation?)

November 11th is a Provincial holiday – no class

November 18: *Life Together* - New Monasticism and lessons of discipleship through Intentional Christian Community

Please read Chapter 10 “Recovering Monasticism in a Secular Age” in Tim Dickau’s *Forming Christian Community in a Secular Age* (Copy provided on Canvas)

November 25: *Sanctified Start Ups* - Church Planting/Church Replanting

Please read and come ready to discuss Lockhart’s *Beyond Snakes and Shamrocks*.

(What excites you or terrifies you at the prospect of starting a new witnessing community? What are the essentials of faith needed to be communicated to those of no Christian background? What are the key lessons you take away from this book for your own ministry in the future?)

December 2: *This Old House* - Revitalizing Congregations

Please read and come ready to discuss Byassee and Lockhart’s *Better Than Brunch*

(Where did you discover revitalization in this book that gave you hope for the church? What would you need to change in order to live out your faith according to the vision for community in this book? What do you see as the greatest challenges to revitalizing congregations today?)

Assignments:

Please note:

Audit students will complete:

- All reading as assigned by instructor
- Class participation

No letter grades will be given for the completion of courses by audit.

Certificate students will complete:

- All reading as assigned by instructor
- Class participation and group work
- A 3-credit course requires 9-12 pages; therefore, Certificate students will complete the weekly spiritual practice and the mid-term personal reflection paper *but NOT* complete the Quick Ethnographic Visit assignment nor the final paper.

Written assignments should demonstrate the ability to thoughtfully engage the material and reading for the class while offering a personal reflection on the reading and material covered

Certificate courses will be evaluated on an Approved (APP) /Not Approved (NAPP) system. No letter grades will be given for the completion of certificate courses.

**Asynchronous Students* in Certificate and Basic degree programs will also be required to submit to Professor Lockhart a 500-word summary after watching the recording providing their top three insights from the class.

Basic Degree students will complete:

- All of the assignments below numbered 1 through 4.

Advanced Degree students will complete:

- All of the assignments below numbered 1 through 4, with #2 (mid-term) being 3,000 words and #4 (research paper) being 5,000 words.

1. Class Participation and Expectations

Consistent and timely attendance is required. This includes the completion of a reading summary based on questions from the instructor due at the beginning of each class by email to rlockhart@standrews.edu wherever noted in the syllabus. Reading summaries should be in 12-point font, doubled spaced with 1-inch margins and 250 to 500 words per assignment. If a student is unable to attend a class, the Professor is to be informed by email. Smart Phones can be disruptive to the learning experience of other students. Please set all phones to silent or turn

them off during class. Exceptions can always be made for medical or family issues that require being in constant contact. Surfing the internet is not permitted while class is in session unless it is part of a small group activity. Sending texts and emails will be limited to break time.

2. Reflection Paper

Students will submit a personal non-research reflection paper of 2,000 words in which they share what they understand catechesis to mean in the church and how they see themselves engaged in a future teaching ministry. Included in this paper should be:

- A personal philosophy of Christian education (epistemology of Gospel instruction) (2 pages suggested)
- How catechesis would be incorporated into the student's future ministry (2 pages suggested)
- An assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses that the student brings to the teaching ministry (2 pages suggested)
- A plan that the student might employ to continue to develop his or her skills in this area (1 page)
- The area in teaching that the student will most need to work on in the first five years of ministry (1 page)

DUE DATE: October 28th at the beginning of class.

3. In Class Presentation

Students will make a presentation in class, developing a Christian education lesson according to a schedule offered in the first class. Students will make a 20-minute presentation on a topic selected in consultation with the Instructor. Research, writing and presentation of the lesson will be assessed for creativity and ability to communicate the Christian faith for the specific age category identified in the assignment.

DUE DATE: According to the schedule developed in class.

4. Research Paper

Students will submit an academic research paper of 3,000 words (double spaced, 12-point font, word count does not include footnotes) based on a selection of case studies provided by Professor Lockhart. These scenarios will be provided in

class (after reading break) and the students will draw on learning from lectures, course readings and further research on the Christian Education scenario provided.

DUE DATE: December 16th

Deadlines:

Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus for each course. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

Selected Bibliography

- Bass, Dorothy & Craig Dykstra, ed. *For Life Abundant: Practical Theology, Theological Education, and Christian Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.
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- Cherry, Ellen. *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
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- Harak, G. Simon. *Virtuous Passions: The Formation of Christian Character*. Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001.
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- Melchert, Charles F. *Wise Teaching*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1998.
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- Tomberlin, Jim. *Better Together: Making Church Mergers Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012.
- Tye, Karen B. *Basics of Christian Education*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000.
- Wilson-Hartgrove, Jonathan. *New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today's Church*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2008.