X-516: Peer Learning in Ministry
Spring 2013
Suzanne Coyle, Ph.D.--Instructor
scoyle@cts.edu 931-2349
Thursdays, 4:30-5:40, Room 161

I. Course Objectives:
The purpose of this course is 1) to teach integrative modes of learning about ministry, vocation, pastoral identity, and communal practice and 2) to reinforce the values of collegiality and of peer learning for future work in ministry.

The focus of integrative study this semester will be the interconnectedness of God’s creation. Through readings and discussion we will examine racism/antiracism, including white power and privilege, poverty, classism, war, multiculturalism and “radical welcome.” We will examine these issues from historical, biblical, theological-ethical, and socio-political perspectives, considering the implications for congregational life. But the central objective[s are] to become an inclusive community and [to] learn how to create one.

II. Course Policies:
Regular attendance is expected, and you are reminded that CTS has a policy that stipulates missing more than 25% of class time will automatically result in a failing grade. While genuine emergencies and significant illnesses will be treated with compassion, you should make this class a priority throughout the semester. Please contact the instructor as soon as you know that you will be absent in order to make arrangements to make up the work that you miss. Excessive absences will result in a lower, or even failing, grade.

Plagiarism is a serious offense. You are expected to be familiar with and to abide by the seminary’s policy on plagiarism and cheating. If you have any questions about when and how to cite sources, please see the instructor. The front desk of CTS library and your student planner have helpful materials.

Free and open discussion is essential to the educational process. You are expected to treat one another in a respectful manner, especially when you disagree. You are also expected to maintain confidentiality with regard to in-class discussions. If you want to reflect with others who are not members of our class on issues that come up in class, please do so in a way that does not identify specific individuals.

III. Textbooks:
IV. Process
This class will be primarily a discussion, reflection, and processing experience. We will critically engage materials about how humans interact in and with God’s good creation as the skeleton on which to flesh out the body of a community. You will be expected to bring your reflections on your papers and on the readings as your primary contribution to the conversation. We will initially discuss peer learning as a process and collaborate with each other to determine how to make that happen in the class.

V. Grading
Although ungraded, the 1 page reflection papers are required. They will assist your class discussion. As such, they will count for 25% of the final grade (thus if you have them all as assigned, you earn 25% of an A grade).

Class discussion and participation will count for 50% of the final grade (balanced between being prepared [having read the material], being willing to be self-disclosing and open to new ideas, encouraging the conversation of your peers, and supporting a learning environment.

The class presentation on Session 9 will count for 25% of your final grade.

VI. Course Outline (with reading assignments):

Session 1 (Jan. 24)
1. Getting acquainted. Intro to peer learning and the interconnectedness of all creation. Discussion of ground rules for conversation and confidentiality (ROPES handout).

Session 2 (Jan. 31)
1. Small group discussion on white privilege. Where do you see it in our society, in our churches, and in the seminary? Clarify – can you identify any theological claims?
   a. Assignment for Session 2: Read Peggy McIntosh, “Invisible Knapsack” and “Martin Luther King, Jr., “Christmas Sermon on Peace.” (on reserve)

Session 3 (Feb 7)
1. Share what you wrote about Spellers claims. What would yours be? Any distinctions to note?
   a. Assignment for Session 3: Read Spellers, to page 60. Bring approximately one page summary of her theological claims (ungraded, but you must bring something).

Session 4 (Feb. 14)
1. Thinking about sin and evil. Share ideas from your papers. Group conversation about the church – does it seem a mix of goodness and evil? How so or how not? Consider white privilege in the mix.
   a. Assignment for Session 4: Read De LaTorre (DLT), p 3-21. Bring approx. 1 page of questions/ideas about goodness and evil. (ungraded, but you must bring something)
Session 5 (Feb. 21)
1. Group conversation linking ethical ideas and peer learning. What good are peers?
a. Assignment for Session 5: DLT, chapter 2 (22-56) and chapter 3 (57-69)

Reading Week (Feb. 26-March 1)

Session 6 (Mar. 7)
1. Discussion on interconnectedness of creation, global relations, and our congregations. Share information and thoughts from DLT. What about the hermeneutical circle? Before leaving, choose a partner for project: choose one area to present to rest of group in 3 weeks, from DLT (chapter 9, 11, 13 or 14)
a. Assignment for session 6: DLT, chapter 4 (73-83 [intro to global relations]). Bring approx. 1 page noting what new information or thoughts this chapter stimulated (ungraded, but you must bring something)

Session 7 (Mar. 14)
1. Group conversation on interrelatedness of racism, white privilege, poverty, war, and our congregations.
a. Where will you find challenge, support, and companionship in future ministry as you continue to wrestle with these ideas?
b. Assignment for session 7: DLT, chapter 5 (84-100 [poverty]) and 6 (101-121 [war])

Session 8 (Mar. 21)
1. Each pair teaches the others about their chapter. As a group, decide which unchosen chapter to read for next week.
a. Assignment for session 8: DLT, pages 143-147 and 203-206 (everyone read); And prepare (with your partner) to present chapter 7, 9, 11, 13 or 14 in DLT to the larger group.

Easter Recess (Mar. 25-29)

Session 9 (Apr. 4)
1. Share your thoughts about the different topics. Group discussion on implications these ideas have for your ministry. How will you continue to think about ethical ideas with peers? Can you recall a time the light of the Gospel was cast on a situation of racism, white privilege, poverty, war, or ecological abuse in your church? How might you facilitate such an event in the future?
a. Assignment for session 9: Read chapter chosen by class. Bring 1 page of ideas/questions about the topics you have been reading in DLT.

Session 10 (Apr. 11)
1. Each student: Describe your congregation/denomination. What do we need to know in order to better understand your religious organizational and spiritual life? Discuss and categorize 1here your congregation is on anti-racism in Spellers, p. 70.
a. Assignment for session 10: Read Spellers, part 2(63-94). Bring approx. 1 page noting whether and how your congregation has been inviting or
welcoming. Is such welcome a meaningful and realizable goal? How so or how not?

Session 11 (Apr. 18)
1. Group discussion of the new ideas and thoughts about liturgy and white privilege. Talk about the relationship of radical welcome and the interconnectedness of all creation.

Session 12 (Apr. 25)
1. In light of our leanings about the interconnectedness of all creation, how has your congregation positively and negatively affected others (intentionally or not). Conversation sharing ideas of putting radical welcome into practice.
   a. Assignment for session 12: Read Spellers, Part 3, pages 97-158. Bring approx. 1 page noting specific ways you could introduce Spellers’ ideas to your congregation.

Session 13 (May 2)
1. Discussion of future ministries. What concrete ideas have stirred in you? How can you keep connected to your peers for support? Closing worship.

Session 14 (May 9): Meeting at group’s discretion for video, meal, field trip, etc.