Aim of the Course

Assuming some experience in youth and family ministries (though not required), this course attempts to share with students the spirit, theories, and practice of youth and family ministry in a way that applies to all Christian ministries. It attempts to give students basic proficiency in systems thinking, an ecological understanding of families and youth, churches and communities resulting in a more relevant and holistic ministries.

Goals of the Course

1. Students should catch from the professor, classmates, readings, and from the life of Jesus, the passion and sensitivity necessary in ministering to youth and families. Outcomes of passion and sensitivity will be measured from class discussions, student presentations, and their writing.

2. Students should understand and integrate into their thinking and practice of ministry, theories of the youth and family ecology, systems thinking, family process, individual healing and growth, and programs for youth and family. Outcomes of theoretical understanding will be measured by short quizzes, student papers and their presentations.

3. Along with their exegesis of Scripture and of themselves, seminarians and Christian leaders need to exegete the culture. It is expected that students of this course have some familiarity with the various aspects of our culture and subcultures as well as the different generations making up our society. This capacity will be measured by class discussions and specific writings.

4. This course is designed to increase the leadership capacity of students beginning with their recognition of their own leadership style. Their ability to relate individually, to speak before large groups and facilitate small groups will be measured by their oral presentations and their participation in, and periodic facilitation of, small groups.
Course Texts


Roberta M. Gilbert (2004/2013) *The Eight Concepts of Bowen Theory: A New Way of Thinking About The Individual and The Group*, Leading Systems Press, 127pp. ISBN-13: 978-0977345510. This little book will surprise you. It is enlightening enough for professional therapists and readable for the lay leader. It traces dysfunction to the family and social systems beyond, while helping pastors, parents and leaders self-differentiate themselves and understand theory in a way that will affect practice. By its end, you will agree with the author, we should and can make changes where we see dysfunction or injustice.


Further Texts

(You may write critical reviews of any of the following for extra credit.)


Dean Borgman (2003) *Hear My Story: Understanding the Cries of Troubled Youth*, 418pp. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4568-4. This book has been used as a text for years by Gordon-Conwell’s MACO program. Its emphasis is on listening to stories, seeing stories in the context of dysfunctional systems, and putting it all in theological context. It is also recommended here as an encouragement of compassion. Note the last two chapters on the important matters of personal healing and corporate reconciliation.

Mark Cannister (2013) *Teenagers Matter: Making Student Ministry a Priority in the Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: BakerAcademic, 254pp. ISBN 978-0-8010-4852-4. A seasoned, solid practitioner, and an involved and respected professor of youth ministries at Gordon College and leader of the professional society, Association of Youth Ministries Educators, has given us this thoughtful text on church, youth and family ministries. Note particularly Ch. 6, “Parents Matter.” If not able to read through this current text, take a careful look at topics such as “Culture,” “Parents,” “Church”—as found in its Index.


James Garbarino (2nd ed. 1992) *Children and Families in the Social Environment*, AldineTransaction, 400pp. ISBN: 978-0202360799. ($36) This lays the social science, ecological and systemic basis of this class. From a respected expert on urban youth comes this substantial text incorporating established family ecological principles. You will find here an excellent introduction to Bronfenbrenner’s ecological description of macro-, esso- and meso-, and micro-systems themselves, and systems thinking. Though somewhat dated, its material is still very relevant. You won’t be able to finish all of it this semester, but it should be a valuable resource for your future ministry.


Topics to be Covered

1. Introduction to Compassionate and Holistic Youth Ministry: Science & Theology
2. Cultural & Social Context: Ecological Systems and Systems Thinking
3. Micro- and Macro-systems, Media, the Digital Age and a Consumptive Society
5. Leadership of Compassionate and Holistic Ministries
6. Using Search Institute’s Forty Assets for Holistic Ministry
7. Communicating the Gospel: one-on-one, small groups and large-group speaking
8. Recruiting and Training Volunteer Leaders
9. Supervising Leaders and Managing Programs
10. Facing and Negotiating Conflict: Reconciliation
11. Evaluation and Termination

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Personal Journaling. You will write two 2-page subjective, emotional and spiritual responses, comments, mostly tracking your personal growth through this course. The first will describe your initial reactions to the course, its readings, your classmates along with you expectations and possible apprehensions.

   Due 16 September

   The second will be your Final Journal, describing what you have learned of your own family of origin, your own personal growth through the class, and your evaluation of the class for you and your future ministry— to be turned in at the final class.

   Due 2 December

2. Reading.

   Nouwen: to be read throughout the semester—used for Devotionals. A one-page review of your experience reading this book

   Due 2 December

   Report to the Nation: Brief Quiz 17 September

   Roberta M. Gilbert: Brief Quiz on book 30 September

   Borgman: Brief Quiz on Preface and Part 2, Chs. 6-8 7 October
   Brief Quiz on Part 1, Chs. 1-5 21 October
   Quiz on Part 3, Chs. 10-14 & Ch. 9 (Pt.2) 28 October
   Quiz on Pt. 4, Chs. 15-16 18 November

   [Short Critical Review of one other Book for extra credit 25 November]
3. Brief Analysis of a Family, Church or Christian Organization.

Using the principles and criteria presented in class and in your readings (especially Bowen’s Theory and Search Institute’s Forty Assets) you are to describe/critically analyze a family or a church or Christian organization or your choice. You may use diagrams, very brief history, current observations and interviews in noting the healthy functioning or relative dysfunction or your subject.

Turn in initial plan of your Project: 21 October
Give an Oral Presentation of Project: 4, 18, and 25 November
Final Paper/Project (6-9 pp.) due last class 2 December

Grading

The following should be considered in conjunction with grading percentages already listed above (Outcomes). This is not a perfect mathematical system and obviously involves an element of subjective judgment from the professor. But in general:

Class promptness/attendance and contributions will count for 10% of grade
Personal Journals 25% of grade
Quizzes and Nouwen Review 30% of grade.
Final Project 35% of grade

Further Bibliography
Family Systems
Developing Leadership Skills
Youth and Family Ministries

Jack O. and Judith K. Balswick (3rd ed. 2007) The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home, BakerAcademic, 398pp. This married couple, professors of sociology and psychology have produced a classic on marriage and family. It draws on social science research and insights as well as biblical and theological principles on marriage and the family. Covers marital and parenting issues, sexuality and gender roles, communication issues and social dynamics of family life, relationship of the Christian family to modern culture.
John Bradshaw (1988, revised ed. 1996) *Bradshaw On: The Family, a New Way of Creating Self-Esteem*, Deerfield Beach, FL: Health Communications, Inc. 303pp. This best seller, augmented by TV specials, speeches and workshops, has helped millions seeking self-help and recovery. Striking insights and help on individual and familial dysfunction and return to relational and emotional health are offered the reader. You can bypass specific disagreements with his rather dogmatic paradigm and its omissions of any vertical, transcendent reference and let the book what it purposes to accomplish—restore health and self-esteem to those who have been “shamed down.”

ISBN-13 978-0671724009. A tried and true method to make you a better and more confident communicator and speaker.

Dale Carnegie, *How to Develop Self-Confidence & Influence People by Public Speaking*, 1956, 244pp. ISBN: 0-671-74607-3. Please don’t scoff or sneer; this is a tried and true method for developing poise and self-confidence before an audience, making yourself clear and persuasive.


Brian Haynes (2009) *Shift: What it takes to finally reach families today*, Loveland, CO: Group, 139pp. If you are looking for an actual, biblical plan for family ministry, here it is. It works off 7 milestones in the life of a child/youth. It is a workable strategic plan that might be modified in urban and various ethnic contexts.


Michael J. Karcher and Michael J. Nakkula, eds. *Play, Talk, Learn: Promising Practices in Youth Mentoring (New Directions for Youth Development: Theory, Practice, Research) Summer, 2010: 157pp. Discussions often turn to the importance of mentoring, but few can point to resources regarding research, theory and practice.

Jawanza Kunjufu (2004) *Solutions for Black America*, Chicago: African American Images, 208pp. This book is not just for African-Americans; all of us can profit greatly from reading his strong Christian, Afrocentric perspective. He deals with the system of racism but also the family, economic, social and church systems as well. It is a provocative book that ought to be discussed.
Mark Matlock (2010) *Real World Parents: Christian Parenting for Families Living in the Real World*, Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 143pp. Here is an easy reading emphasis on countering the world’s story with God’s story from the home. It may be a bit simplistic, but there are sound, practical suggestions here.

Mark Matlock (2012) *Raising Wise Children: Handing Down the Story of Wisdom*, Zondervan/Youth Specialties, 147pp. Here is a simple and readable biblical and practical exposition on wisdom and passing it on to our children.


Nathan Turner, *Leading Small Groups: Basic Skills for Church and Community Organizations*, 1996, 121pp. ISBN: 0-8170-1210-9. This book is designed to help you become a more effective leader of all kinds of groups. Read this alone, better with another person, or best discuss in a small group, and you will become a better group facilitator.