

Community Studies: Spring 2012

Faculty: Dr. Mike Hogue, Dr. Sharon Welch, Rev. Dr. Qiyamah Rahman

Focal Themes: Religion, Theology, Vocation

General Reminders (from the syllabus):

“Ministerial formation is an ongoing process throughout the professional life cycle. The healthy practice of ministry is based on deep and regular reflection on our experiences in ministry” [Unitarian Universalist Ministry Association CENTER News 2008-09.1].

“Service-learning supports the possibility that a person’s original intentions of generosity can be married to intellectually sharpened, academically probed skills and insights so that practice becomes praxis and sentiment can become strategy...we are more likely to act ourselves into new ways of thinking than think ourselves into new ways of acting” [Paul Fitzgerald, “Doing Theology in the City,” *Cross Currents* (Spring 2001), p.89].

The Community Studies course is *attuned* to the contextual nature of learning and ministry; *aligned* with the values of Unitarian Universalism and the mission of MLTS; *alert* to the strategic roles, tasks, and callings of liberal religious ministry; *aware* of the need for contemporary liberal religious ministers to partner with communities and resources outside of religious liberalism; and *attentive* to the complex cultural factors and dynamics that affect effective (mutually beneficial) community partnerships.

The overarching purpose of the course is to provide occasion for the reflective integration of students’ practical site experiences with theoretical learning. Student experiences in the field serve as this course’s primary texts, and these will be critically examined in light of an array of multidisciplinary, multimedia secondary texts.

Each semester of the seminar is designed to provide space and structure for (1) student *exploration of the tasks, challenges, and possibilities of community partnership within liberal religious ministry* and also for the (2) *negotiation of vocational identity, theological voice, and forms of religious community through reflection on the variety and range of human experiences in diverse social contexts* (religious and otherwise).

While the fall semester focused on exploring, analyzing, and sustaining community, **the spring semester will focus on the meanings and varieties of religion and the religious, public theology, and vocation.**

Spring Semester Overview

The aim of this semester's work is to begin to integrate into our religious lives, theological practice, and vocational identities what we learned last semester about aesthetic attunement, social analysis, social ethics and the faces of oppression. As with the fall semester, our aim is to learn collaboratively in DT cohorts, in individual and full-group reflection, and through site work.

Towards all of this, this spring semester's themes move from inquiries into the locations and expressions of religion and religiosity, modes of theological expression, forms of public theological engagement, and work on vocational identity. Though our themes change, the logistical and pedagogical structure of the course remains the same. Faculty collaborate together weekly to provide various kinds of assignments for you to work on individually and in your DT groups. Each week you will need to be in conversation with your DT partners and collaborate to write and submit a memo reporting on your learning. As usual, and in keeping with the pedagogical and theological principles of this course, your site work remains your primary text. As with last semester, the faculty will prepare "jaminar" responses weekly.

Evaluations

In addition to the final synthetic project of the course, due **APRIL 30**, the instructors for this course understand that deep learning—especially integrated praxis-based learning—requires rich, layered forms evaluation. With this in mind, this course provides evaluation of your work from multiple perspectives: from your Teaching Pastor, from your Site Supervisors, from your Faculty, your own self-evaluations, as well as a thorough, cumulative evaluation (the First Review whereby the faculty determines your eligibility for degree candidacy) by the Faculty at the end of the Spring semester. Teaching Pastors will use a document provided to them in their TP Handbook to evaluate your work through the year; this will be due by **April 1** of the spring semester. Site Supervisors will use documents provided to them in their Handbooks to evaluate you by **December 15** of the fall semester, and by **April 1** of the spring semester.

First Year Review: The assignments of this class, in addition to the Career Assessment, constitute the materials for your first year review. In May, at the end of the class, the instructors will examine the following materials and determine if we are ready to advance you to "Candidacy for the Degree of Master's of Divinity". **ALL DOCUMENTS SHOULD BE POSTED BY STUDENTS TO LiveText M345D:**

- a) *Teaching Pastor evaluation – April 1 [submitted to student who will post to Livetext]*
- b) *Site supervisor Evaluation – April 1 [submitted to student who will post to Livetext]*
- c) *Student submits 1 page report of discussion with academic advisor – April 25*

- d) *Student submits 2- 3 page synthesis / response to TP and Site Supervisor Evaluations – April 25*
- e) *Submission of Career Assessment by May 1. NB: for those students going part-time, and not completing the Career Assessment, your First Year Review will be conducted once that assessment is complete. We will use the same information as cited above that has been provided as part of the course, and remains available through LiveText.*

In addition, to these several layers of evaluation, your instructors will request that you evaluate them and the course as a whole at the end of each semester (the appropriate document will be supplied by the faculty). In addition to these evaluations, students will receive brief feedback on their weekly memos.

Sample Weekly Flow

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	
Church, etc...	Faculty meets and posts Jaminar Begin work on new assignment View Jaminar	Work on assignment	Work on assignment	Meet with Dialogue group to discuss assignment	Post memo by 5pm	FREE TIME!!! (yeah, right...probably not!).	

TEXTS you will need to purchase:

Toni Morrison, Sula

Other texts will be provided by faculty and uploaded to LiveText

February Theme: The Where, How, and What of Religion/Religious

Week of January 30: TP Ministry Conversation

Individual Assignment: Discuss with your Teaching Pastor (TP) your current understandings of liberal religious and UU ministry. What do you take its primary

tasks and challenges to be? How do you understand the various offices of the minister, (e.g. priest, pastor, prophet, poet)? What strengths do you think you bring to ministry? What do you think you need to work on? Ask your TP how her/his earlier notions of ministry have changed or stayed the same through the years. Notes from this discussion will provide a baseline for later work in the semester, for your final synthetic project, and also of course for your DT conversation this week.

DT Assignment: Process your TP conversations and submit a collaborative memo: Suggestive Questions: What did you learn from one another? What surprised you? Was there anything about which you significantly agreed or disagreed with one another?

Week of February 6: Where is "religion" I?

Individual Assignment: Map (however you like, through prose description or visual representation) the religious landscape *around* your community site: who's there and who isn't, what's there, what does it look/sound/smell like? [NOTE: you will be asked to reflect about the place of religion/religious *INSIDE* of your site next week.]

DT Assignment: Process your mapping exercise and submit a collaborative memo: Suggestive questions: What, if anything, made responding to this assignment difficult? What do you think you need to know in order to begin to locate religion/religiosity? How do you currently understand religion/religious? How did this understanding limit or facilitate your work through the mapping exercise?

Saturday February 11: Synthesizing: QUESTIONS TBA

Discuss Interview Assignment...for coming week's assignment

Week of February 13: Where is "religion" II?

Individual Assignment: Review provided documents on notions/definitions of religion/religious. Reflect upon the presence/absence of religion/religious *within* your site? Interview someone, or more than one person, from your site regarding their sense of the presence or absence of religion in the site. Try not to ask leading questions but to construct questions that will elicit how your interviewees identify/construe religion/religious.

DT Assignment: Process above and submit a collaborative memo: Suggestive Questions: Which one or which several views or definitions of "religion" from the provided documents do you find helpful? Did these help or hinder your ability to see "religion" *in* your site? In what sense, if at all, is the presence/absence of

religion/the religious *in* your site different from its presence/absence *around* the site? Does this signify anything to you? What did you learn from your interviews?

Week of Feb 20: Toward the theological...

Individual Assignment: read text selections posted on Live Text.

DT Assignment: Process readings and submit collaborative memo: in what ways, if at all, would the passages from the selected thinkers and texts “talk back” to what your interviewees said about the presence of religion/religious in from last week? Consider this question in reverse, too: in what ways, if at all, would your interviewees “talk back” to this week’s assigned texts/thinkers?

March Theme: Public Theology: Ways of Thinking and Practicing Engaged, Transformative Theology

Week of Feb 27: *Reading week: no DT’s this week, but you should go to your site.*

Week of March 5: Assignment TBA

Saturday March 10: Assignment TBA

Week of March 12: Assignment TBA (note: you should have completed Toni Morrison’s *Sula* by this point).

Week of March 19: Assignment TBA

Week of March 26: Spring Break

April Theme: Vocation

Week of April 2: Assignment TBA

Saturday April 7: Assignment TBA

Week of April 9: Final conversation with Teaching Pastor regarding personal, emotional, professional preparedness and the being/doing/knowing dimensions of learning for ministry.

Week of April 16: Process TP conversation and Site Supervisor Evaluation in your DTs. Also, consult with academic advisor re: academic progress, course selection and planning.

Week of April 23: Complete Self Assessment [rubric to be distributed], 1 page review of conversation with academic advisor, and 2-3 pp response to TP and Site Supervisor Evaluations [post all documents to Livetext M345D]

May Syntheses

Week of April 30: Final Assignment Due [no DT meeting or memo this week]

Saturday May 5: Final Assignment Discussion

FINAL PROJECT

As our syllabus states the Final Project for this course is due APRIL 30. This project provides an opportunity to collect our thoughts, gather our hearts, and think about what we've learned. Consider this assignment as an imaginative synthesis of the insights, wisdom, testimonies, heart-breaking and heart-gladdening stories and people you've encountered this past year. How can you represent what you've learned and felt and thought? Please use the following question as a prompt for your work: "What are you grateful to have experienced and to have been challenged by this past year?"

We give you multi-media freedom here. You could do something like write an 8 page paper that narrates your learning. You could write a series of poems. You could submit a photo-documentary. You could create a multi-media mosaic using "found" items (others poems, songs, images). These are just some ideas. Please approach this assignment as a gift to yourself and your classmates.

Please submit your final assignment to Livetext (no later than April 30) and send by email to the members of your Saturday small groups. Then, between April 30 and May 5 (our final Saturday conference call), please read/view/hear the final assignment submissions of the students with whom you will be chatting in your Saturday small-group discussion. You will each have up to 10 minutes to summarize your project in your small groups on Saturday May 5th.