

Leading Theological Reflection in our Congregations
Meadville Lombard theological School
The Reverend Douglas Taylor
Fall 2009

Course Description

This course will explore the role of Adult Religious Education in the life of a congregation. Beginning with theory around Lifespan Faith Development, teaching styles, and teaching as a spiritual discipline, we will work toward the praxis end of the equation in which participants will write and lead samples of their own course possibilities.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the developmental theory that undergirds our current UU Lifespan Faith Development practice.
- To explore differing teaching and learning styles with a particular focus on Fowler's stages of faith development
- To consider our roles amid the 'spiritual multiculturalism' of our congregations
- To practice writing and leading adult courses in theological reflection for our congregations

Course Requirements

- Class Participation: taking part in class activities and conversations, keeping up with the reading, taking part in the final projects
- One brief assignment: mock up of a congregational curriculum grid for one year
- Three short papers (400 – 500 words): 1 or 2 page write-ups, with consideration of Fowlers stages of faith development, of possible curricula you could create
- One longer paper (800 – 1000 words): engaging our spiritual multiculturalism through the lens of your own theological perspective
- Final project/presentation: craft and lead a sample Adult Religious Education offering.

Texts

- Essex Conversations Coordinating Committee. *Essex Conversations. Visions for Lifespan Religious Education*. Boston: Skinner House Books, 2001.
Selections Andrews, Harper, Riley, Ryan, Silver
- Fowler, James. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. HarperOne; new ed, 1995.
- Groome, Thomas. *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent*. Crossroad General Interest, 2001.
- Palmer, Parker. *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. Jossey-Bass, 1998.
- Tisdell, Elizabeth. *Exploring Spirituality and Culture in Adult and Higher Education*. Jossey-Bass, 2003.

Session Plans

*Prologue: **Defining our terms and ourselves*** (first week)

Finding out who's in the room and where we mean to go together

*Act One: **Theories, Styles and Such*** (first few weeks)

Fowler's stages of faith development, Teaching styles, Learning styles, overview of Lifespan Faith Development theory as practiced in the UUA today, and some RE history for context

*Act Two: **Playing with the Themes, Testing some Ideas*** (middle weeks)

Teaching as a spiritual discipline, Curriculum planning, Spiritual multiculturalism, and Minister-as-educator & Educator-as-minister

*Act Three: **Engaging the*** (last few weeks)

Practice in writing and leading Adult Religious education courses, Praxis, Final project/presentations, and Shared feedback

*Epilogue: **Redefining our terms and ourselves*** (last week)

Where are we now? Where do we go from here?