

Models and Method in Religious Education
Meadville Lombard Theological School
M421 Spring Semester 2009
The Reverend Betty Jo Middleton
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“The method is the message.”
--Angus MacLean

Course Description

Teaching is a significant aspect of ministry, whether in the pulpit, the counseling room, the community, the classroom, or working with religious education volunteers. This course will explore a variety of methods for teaching persons of all ages and developmental stages in religious community, with special attention to appropriateness for liberal religion.

Learning Objectives

- To create a community of learners
- To become familiar with structural models for religious education in use in Unitarian Universalist congregations
- To learn about several approaches to teaching—Best Practice, Subject Centered, Shared Praxis, Showing How, and others
- To experience, understand, and be able to demonstrate a variety of teaching methods and learning activities
- To consider criteria for appropriateness of methods to be used in religious education
- To look at readings, activities, and conversations through the lens of Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression

Required Reading

Daniels, Harvey and Marilyn Bizar. *Methods That Matter. Six Structures for Best Practice Classrooms*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers 1998. ISBN 1-57110-082-2

Essex Conversations Coordinating Committee. *Essex Conversations. Visions for Lifespan Religious Education*. Boston: Skinner House Books 2001. ISBN 1-55896-414-2. Selections: Bowens-Wheatley, Frediani, Harris, Harrison, James, Nelson, Parker, Tolley.

Middleton. *Online Reader for Religious Education Course Outline, Graduate Level*. www.uua.org/documents/middletonbetty/regradcourseoutline_reader.pdf. Selections. Blumberg, James, MacLean, Middleton, Morriss.

Moran, Gabriel. *Showing How. The Act of Teaching*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International 1997. ISBN 1-56338-187-7.

Palmer, Parker J. *The Courage to Teach. Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher's Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass 1998. ISBN 0-7879-1058-9.

Tapestry of Faith. Unitarian Universalist Online Lifespan Curricula. www.uua.org/tapestryfaith. Selections.

Wolfe, Aline D. *Nurturing the Spirit in Non-sectarian Classrooms*. Holidaysburg, PA: Parent Child Press 1996. ISBN 0-939195-17-8.

Materials to be distributed electronically or handed out in class.

And one of the following:

Hunter. *Conversations With Children*. Boston: Beacon Press 1961. (Available from instructor.)

Hurd, Tracey L. *Nurturing Children and Youth. A Developmental Guidebook*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association 2005. ISBN 1-55896-500-9

Patton. *Welcoming Children with Special Needs. A Guidebook for Faith Communities*. Boston: Unitarian Universalist Association 2004. ISBN 1-55896-479-7.

There will be suggestions for further reading on topics covered in the course.

Course Requirements

- **CLASS PARTICPATION.** Read the required material and take part in class activities and conversations. Self assessment. (25% of grade)
- **BRIEF PAPER.** Write a four or five page paper (1000-1250 words) on any of the structural models for religious education discussed. (15% of grade)
- **STORYTELLING.** Select, prepare, and tell a story to the class (about five minutes) and explain briefly why it was selected and the intended audience. (10% of grade.)
- **OBSERVATION.** Observe a teaching situation in a religious or community setting and give a brief oral report on methods used. (10% of grade)
- **GROUP INVESTIGATION.** Participate in a collaborative group investigation of methodology in the Unitarian Universalist Association's online Tapestry of Faith curriculum, with attention to age appropriateness, consistency with Unitarian Universalist values and principles, and adaptability for human differences. (20% of grade)
- **FINAL PAPER OR PROJECT.** Choose a topic related to the course to explore in depth for an academic paper or creative project. Paper should be 10-12 pages (2500-3000 words). Examples of projects include developing a mini-curriculum or lesson plans using appropriate methods, making a "two-minute video" (or a longer one), or designing a group investigation. Several pages of scholarly discussion and reflection must accompany any creative project. Discuss your topic and approach with the instructor by April 15. (20% of grade)

Session Plans

1. **Building the Community** **February 4**
Who we are, why we're here; how we learn, how we teach
Introductions: ourselves and the material
2. **Structural Models for Religious Education Programming** **February 11**
Classroom-based, educating community, home and family education, religious education without walls, workshop rotation, worship-education
3. **Nurturing the Spirit** **February 18**
Montessori, Godly Play, Spirit Play
Teaching as spiritual guidance
4. **Methods That Matter** **February 25**
Overview of Daniels and Bizar
Small group activities, learning centers.
5. **Story, Stories, and Storytelling** **March 4**
Teaching with the end in view.
6. **The Creative Process in Religious Education** **March 11**
Representing to learn. Classroom workshop.
Hands-on activities.
Telling our stories.
7. **Methods That Have Mattered** **March 18**
Authentic experiences. Field trip to examine materials from
The New Beacon Series, Multi-Media Kit Era, Futures Era
Telling our stories.
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8. **Showing How** **April 1**
Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice
Begin Group Investigations: UUA's online *Tapestry of Faith*
9. **Other Methods That Matter** **April 8**
Continue with Group Investigations
Discuss optional reading
10. **Mixed-age, Small church, and multi-generational religious education**
April 15

Continue with Group Investigations.
The Courage to Teach.

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| 11. Group Investigation
Present Group Investigation reports on <i>Tapestry of Faith</i> . | April 22 |
| 12. Working with Youth
Begin presentations of final papers or projects | April 29 |
| 13. Teaching and Learning with Adults in the Faith Community
Continue with presentations. | May 6 |
| 14. Evaluation and Celebration
Final presentations.
Self assessment.
What are your questions?
Suggestions for further study. | May 13 |