REED 70970/80970: Special Topics in Christian Education: Youth Ministry in Context
Semester Hours: 3
Brite Divinity School
Fall 2014

Instructor: Russell W. Dalton

Note: This course is designed to fulfill the second half of Brite’s Contextualization requirement and to serve as Brite’s foundational course in Youth Ministry.

Prerequisites: none

Description of Content:
Students will develop an understanding of theories of adolescent development, the place of adolescents and adolescent spirituality in contemporary American culture and apply those understandings to ministry in various contexts. The first portion of this course focuses on understanding today’s diverse adolescents, their worlds, and their needs in a variety of contexts and examines ways in which adolescents are a marginalized group in America. Students will write a paper and develop a workshop that will examine a particular group of adolescents in terms of their race, ethnicity, gender or sexuality or examine an issue vital to their current or future context of ministry. Finally, students will develop a comprehensive youth ministry program for a particular context of ministry.

Class Procedures:
Lectures, discussion, student-led seminar presentations, role-plays, individual outside of class fieldwork

Requirements and assignments:

Attendance and prepared participation in class is a requirement. Failure to attend class regularly and be prepared to participate will result in failure of the course.

1. Adolescent Development and Culture paper: Write a 12-15 page paper demonstrating your knowledge of adolescent development and adolescent culture. Demonstrate your knowledge by doing the following two things:
   a) Choose a movie or two episodes of a television show (The Perks of Being a Wallflower, Boyz N the Hood, Freeks and Geeks, Thirteen, Ghost World, Switched at Birth, Joan of Arcadia, Boys Don’t Cry, Saved, Mean Girls, My So-Called Life, or another film or television series approved by the professor.) Write about how the characters in the film reflect or counter what we have learned from course texts and other course content. Include quotes from those books, and your thoughts on how could a youth ministry have ministered to those characters.
   b) Go to a mall on a weekend or to a high school football game. Observe teenagers and the way the stores choose to market to teenagers. Write about how your observations reflect or contrast to what you saw in the film and what
we have learned from course texts, other texts and other course content. Include quotes from those books, and your thoughts on how a youth ministry might minister to the teenagers you see.

Note: You should approach this paper as a research paper on adolescent development and adolescent needs, using the course texts as your sources and the film or mall and football game outings as a repeated illustration of the points, rather than doing a “book report” on the film or description of the mall or game with a few passing references to the texts.

2. Specialization research paper and workshop. Write an 8 – 10 page paper and prepare a workshop on the subject to present in class to the rest of the class. This paper and workshop should be based on your research into a particular context of ministry, ministry with a particular group of teenagers, or a particular model of youth ministry suited to a particular context. Though your research may be based primarily on one book in the field, your paper should cite several sources. Several topics will be suggested from which you can choose. Get e-mail approval for your topic from the professor before you go too far into your research.

3. Comprehensive Youth Ministry Plan. (9-12 pages). This paper will be developed over the course of the entire semester. Imagine you are a minister charged with developing a comprehensive plan for youth ministry in your church. You are to present a report (a paper with footnotes) with a rationale and description of your approach to a knowledgeable search committee, deacon board, senior pastor, or other group. The first section of your paper should be an extended description of your ministry context and your understanding of the needs of teenagers in your context and then you will proceed to outline your goals for your ministry, what authors and models of youth ministry influence your approach, and descriptions of concrete programs to achieve your goals. You should be taking notes on your reading throughout the semester to develop this paper.

Advanced degree students will need to complete a fourth assignment:

4. Prepare and teach a partial class session. In negotiation with the professor, the student will prepare a partial class session to teach to the rest of the class based upon or related to some of the course’s required reading.

Texts:

Required:


Kenda Creasy Dean, Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church (Oxford University Press, 2010). ISBN 0195314840. $24.95

Kenda Creasy Dean, et. al., omg: A Youth Ministry Handbook (Abingdon Press, 2010),


Recommended:


In addition, students will be given a list of books from which to choose that will help them develop their second assignment.

**Grading procedures:**

- Adolescent Development & Culture paper: 33 1/3 %
- Specialization report and workshop: 33 1/3 %
- Comprehensive Youth Ministry Plan: 33 1/3 %

For advanced degree students, each of the four assignments will account for 25% of each student’s final grade.

Positive consideration will be given for class participation. Failure to attend class regularly will result in lower grades and possible failure of the course.

Note: This is a tentative course plan. Some details of this course may change.