

# YOUTH AND FAITH PASSAGE (CE 33-612)

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Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

January Term 2012

Meets MWF 8am – 12:30pm; TTH 8-11am; W 1:30-3:30pm

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\*\*\*This syllabus is subject to revision\*\*\*

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## Course Description

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The aim of this course will be to broaden our understanding of Christian education and its role in engaging in spiritual development and faith formation with youth. The course will explore the human development and culture of the millennial generation, the context necessary for spiritual development to take place, and various pedagogical models that can be used in providing youth a “faith passage” from adolescence to young adulthood.

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## Course Goals

(This class addresses the following goals determined by the CE faculty)

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**Knowing:** To know practices and disciplines of Christian education and formation and to understand how these are affected by differing cultural contexts. (This also includes knowing major approaches to faithful teaching and learning.)

**Doing:** To examine, assess, and lead a variety of approaches to teaching and learning appropriate to a particular faith community. This goal includes experience or practice in the following:

- To be able to read, evaluate and engage the culture of a congregation and its community with particular sensitivity to culture, race, class and gender.
- To teach Christian practices and faith in intentional ways to address the developmental and faith issues of people in congregations.
- To coordinate and lead a congregation in its educational ministry.

**Being:** To be a theological educator who seeks to liberate and empower persons to be co-creators of the reign of God in our multi-cultural and multi-faith environment. This goal includes the following:

- To be a reflective teacher and leader who can empower others in the congregation to be reflective and open to transformation.
- To be a Christian disciple who continues to engage in the practices that develop and deepen faith.
- To understand oneself as a critical and open participant in an ongoing theological tradition.

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## Course Texts

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### **Required Texts:**

Baker, Dori (editor) ***Greenhouses of Hope: Congregations Growing Young Leaders Who Will Change the World***, Alban Institute, Inc., 2010, ISBN: 9781566994095 (Retail Price: \$18.00 at Cokesbury.com)

Corbman, Marjorie ***A Tiny Step Away from Deepest Faith: A Teenager's Search for Meaning***, Paraclete Press, 2005; ISBN: 155725429-X (Retail Price: \$9.95 at Cokesbury.com)

Currie, Elliott, ***The Road to Whatever: Middle-Class Culture and the Crisis of Adolescence***, Picador, 2005; ISBN-10: 0805080007 (Retail Price: \$18.00 at Cokesbury.com)

Dean, Kenda Creasy, ***The Godbearing Life: The Art of Soul Tending for Youth Ministry***, Upper Room Books, 1998; ISBN: 0835808580 (Retail Price: \$17.00 at Cokesbury.com)

Dean, Kenda Creasy (editor), ***OMG: A Youth Ministry Handbook***, Abingdon Press, 2010; ISBN-10: 1426700083 (Retail Price: \$26.00 at Cokesbury.com)

Deustch, Nancy, ***Pride in the Projects: Teens Building Identities in Urban Contexts***, NYU Press, 2008; ISBN-10: 0814719929 (Retail Price: \$23.00 at Amazon.com)

Feinstein, Sheryl G., ***Secrets of the Teenage Age Brain (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)***, The Brain Store, 2009; ISBN-10: 1412962676 (Retail Price: \$35.95 at Cokesbury.com)

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## Course Assignments

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- 1) Regular attendance and on time, completion of reading assignments, completion of all papers, and informed participation in class discussions. In addition, we will be reading most of the texts communally (students will be responsible for particular parts of the text) and post notes of our readings for our peers. More information on this will be given on the first day.

- 2) Reflection paper: What is adulthood? How do you know you that it is reached? How can you tell that a youth is no longer a youth, but an adult? Is it clear cut? Murky? Are you an adult? How do you know? Write a personal reflection paper (500 – 750 words) exploring and answering these questions. Bring these papers with you on the first day of class. It will aid in guiding our introductory discussion.

**Due: First Day of Class**

- 3) Immersion into Youth Culture Paper and Presentation: On the first day of class there will be a list of movies, music, television shows, and texts that are popular within youth cultures. You will be asked to sign up to spend 3 hours immersed in your chosen media. Intentionally engage: What do you hear? What do you see? What did you learn? Write a critical reflection paper (500 – 750 words) placing in dialogue your immersion experiences with what we've read and discussed in class. Then, prepare a presentation where you will share your findings to your colleagues in class.

**Due: Friday, January 13<sup>th</sup>**

- 4) Conduct an interview with a youth. Explore the following questions:

- a. What is it like to be a youth in today's society? What do you have to deal with one on a day-to-day basis? What do you like about being a youth? What bothers you about being a youth?
- b. If you had to answer the question "Who Am I?" how would you answer?
- c. What has it been like growing up in your church? How has your church helped you deal with life?
- d. Who is God to you? How well do you think God understands what it's like being a youth today?
- e. What role has God and/or your church played, if any, in helping you answer the question "Who am I?"
- f. What do you wish your church would do differently for you and other youth in your church?

In a 1000 – 1500 word paper, reflect upon and critique the perspectives shared in the interview. Be in dialogue with the readings and discussions.

**Due: Friday, January 20th**

### 5) Final Paper/ Project: A Vision for Youth Ministry

In a 2000 – 2500 word paper, reflect on the current model of youth ministry taking place in your local congregation. Drawing from your assignments, readings, class discussions and personal reflection, offer your theological and educational vision for providing youth “faith passage,” and a model for implementation in your local church. Your vision and model should be offered in such a way that demonstrates you have engaged in dialogue with the authors we have read as well as class discussions.

**Due: by February 17 (recommended before spring term)**

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### Course Organization and Schedule

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**\*\*\*This schedule is subject to revision\*\*\***

Monday, January 9, 2012

Introductions; Review of Syllabus; Understanding the Millennial Generation; Review reflection papers

The Human Development of Youth: The Brain/Body Connection

Readings: *Secrets of the Teenage Brain*, (**Please Read before class begins**)

Tuesday, January 10, 2012

The Human Development of Youth: The Psychological Connection

Readings: *Pride in the Projects*

Wednesday, January 11, 2012

The Human Development of Youth: The Socio-Cultural Connection

Readings: *The Road to Whatever*, Intro, Chapters 1-3

Thursday, January 12, 2012

The Human Development of Youth: The Socio-Cultural Connection II

Readings: *The Road to Whatever*, Chapters 4-6

Friday, January 13, 2012

**Student Presentations**

Tuesday, January 17, 2012

The Spiritual Development of Youth I

Readings: *A Tiny Step Away from Deepest Faith*

Wednesday, January 18, 2012: The Spiritual Development of Youth within the Church

Readings: *The Godbearing Life*

Thursday, January 19, 2012: Transforming Youth Ministry

Readings: Greenhouses of Hope

Friday, January 20, 2012: Transforming Youth Ministry and Wrapping it all up  
Readings: OMG: A Youth Ministry Handbook

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## GRADING

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It is assumed that everyone in the class is capable of the work required to receive a “B” grade for each assignment. The following interpretations of the meaning of each grade have been developed to help class members identify the strengths and problems in their written work. The syllabus has provided detailed information on each assignment to limit the amount of “guess work” by students about what needs to be included and addressed in the assignment.

An “A” means the assignment is well crafted, reveals considerable insight, and moves beyond the range of the student’s knowledge to begin to construct new perspectives and meanings for the subject.

An “A-” means that the assignment is well crafted and probes the issues with considerable insight.

A “B+” means that the assignment is also well crafted.

A “B” means that the basic elements of the assignment are in place.

A “B-” means that the assignment lacks clarity or focus. It tends to explore issues superficially.

A “C+” means that the assignment lacks clarity and focus, tends to be superficial, and lacks personal insight into the issues being discussed.

A “C” means that the assignment does not move beyond the reporting of information from readings and class discussions to engaging them with the issues being discussed.

A “C-” means that despite some moments of focused discussion and insight, major gaps exist in the development of the argument or discussion.

A “D” is a grade of grace.

An “F” indicates that the assignment has not been fulfilled at any point.

Written evaluation/feedback will be given on all written assignments. In addition, class attendance and participation will be noted. All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Once all work is done, it will be weighed approximately as follows:

- 10% *Class attendance and participation (this includes your participation by taking and sharing reading notes with your peers)***
- 10% *Reflection Paper***
- 20% *Youth Culture Immersion***
- 30% *Interview***
- 30% *Final Project***