Formation 1a  
PT510a DA-h-D  
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
Fall, 2015-2016

Rev. Gary Eubank, D. Min  
Co-Director  
Contextual Ministries  
geubank@united.edu

Rev. Dan Gildner  
Co-Director  
Contextual Ministries  
dgildner@united.edu

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:
In this course, students are placed in covenantal community groups where they will begin to name and refine both an understanding of self-identity and of call. The group serves as the crucible of learning and sharing one’s spiritual autobiography, weekly theological reflections on life, academy and practice, expressions of spiritual disciplines and early conversations of calling.

Meeting Times:
Face-to-Face:  
Formation Retreat,  
Monday, Sept. 14-Thursday, Sept. 17, 8:30-5:30

Online:  
9 Weeks:  
September 21 – November 21

II. TEXTBOOKS:
Required Reading:

Suggested Reading:
Floding, Matthew, ed. Welcome to Theological Field Education. ISBN: 978-1566994071
Kula, Irwin, with Linda Loewenthal. Yearnings: Embracing the Sacred Messiness of Life. ISBN: 978-1401309138

III. GOALS:
This is a core course that introduces students to field education, spiritual formation and accountable community. Students will develop a collection of personal narratives that will become both the introduction of their spiritual autobiographies and a statement on ministry call. In this course, students will show an awareness of their own spiritual development characterized by mature self-acceptance and self-direction.

IV. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:
Upon completion of the course, a student will be able to:
1. Identify in personal stories the significant spiritual events that shape one’s understanding of self and call.
2. Identify personal, professional and spiritual goals for the field education experience.
3. Examine how the practice of a spiritual discipline contributes to a life and ministry anchored in Christ.
4. Compare and contrast the challenges with the gifts of living in covenantal community.

V. LEARNING/TEACHING STRATEGIES:
This semester of ministry formation integrates a variety of teaching/learning strategies:

1. Attendance/participation at a Formation Retreat and online group sessions
2. Establishment of a ministry group covenant
3. Submission of written assignments
4. Readings with corresponding papers and/or group presentations
5. Group discussion
6. Participation with members of the MIN group in evaluation

If one begins Field Education this semester:

7. Creation of a Site Covenant with United, mentor and site placement
8. Service in an approved contextual ministry site during the school year for 10-14 hrs/week for 30 weeks (See the Field Education Overview document for detailed information).
9. Meeting with Site Mentor at least 4 hrs/month to reflect on ministry and learning
10. Meeting with facilitator and mentor near the end of the fall semester to review the student’s ministry experience and learning and to revise/update the student’s goals

VI. CALENDAR OF TOPICS AND READINGS:
(all times EST)

Pre-Work
The online ‘shell’ will be made available to students on Friday September 4. Each student is expected to share his/her spiritually significant event at the Formation Retreat.

Formation Retreat (Sept 14-17)
All students must attend all of the Formation Retreat on September 14-17 at Christ UMC in Kettering Ohio. Arriving late or leaving early warrants failure of the course.
Monday, September 14 – Thursday, September 17 (8:30 am-5:30 pm each day)
Retreat Contents: Covenant-making and group formation, sharing of significant events, creating a genogram, semester overview and naming expectations for the online semester.

Week One (Sept 21-26)
Tasks:
1. Visit your MINgroup shell’s “Virtual Coffee Shop” forum and share one significant event, moment or breakthrough that has occurred since the retreat. Comment as you are led.
2. Interact with the devotional material as directed by the ‘Devotion’ forum.
3. Read Artisanal Theology (AT), Foreword & Introduction (vii-xxi), Chapters 1-3 (1-51, 58-67), Appendices A and B.
4. Read Let Your Life Speak, Chapters 1-2 (1-36).

Week Two (Sept 27-Oct 3)
Tasks:
1. Watch the video from Brene Brown on Vulnerability.
2. Using the Kaltura video guides included in the course shell, follow the prompts in the ‘Vulnerability’ forum to submit a 2-3 minute video response to the vulnerability video by Thursday, 11:59 pm. Respond to another before Saturday 5 pm.
3. **Read** Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Chapters 1-3.
4. 2-3 page Weekly Reflection Report (WRR) 1 Due. Submit to drop-box by Friday 11:59 pm.

**Week Three (Oct 4-10)**

Tasks:
1. **Read** Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Chapters 4-6.
2. Watch the 'David Differentiated' video and respond as directed in the 'Know Thyself' forum by Thursday, 11:59 pm.
3. 2-3 page WRR 2 Due. Submit to drop-box by Friday 11:59 pm.
4. SMART Goals due. Submit to the drop-box by Saturday, October 10, 5 pm.
5. Site Covenant is due Saturday, October 10, 5 pm if beginning Field Education this fall.

**Week Four (Oct 11-17)**

Tasks:
1. Post in the 'Smart Goals' forum, a copy of your goals by Thursday, 11:59 pm. In addition, for each goal stated, offer a sentence behind how or why you chose that goal for this year. Respond to another by Saturday, 5 pm.
2. **Read** Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Chapters 7-8.
3. 2-3 page WRR 3 Due. Submit to drop-box by Friday 11:59 pm.

**Week Five (Oct 18-24)**

Tasks:
1. **Read** Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Chapters 9-10.
2. **Schedule a Group Hangout for this week.** The purpose of the hangout is to touch base, reflect on how the EHS reading is relating to your life and to offer prayer for one another.
3. 2-3 page WRR 4 Due. Submit to drop-box by Friday 11:59 pm.

**Week Six (Oct 25-31)**

Tasks:
1. Post in the ‘Coming Along’ forum a 100-word or more answer (a 2 minute video can be added instead) to: What has it been like to begin to write your spiritual autobiography? Where has it been helpful? Painful? Joy-filled? Any surprises?
2. Respond to two others in the ‘Coming Along’ forum by Saturday, Oct 31, 5 pm.
3. 4-6 page EHS paper due in the drop-box by Saturday, Oct 31, 11:59 pm.
4. 2-3 page WRR 5 Due. Submit to drop-box by Friday 11:59 pm.

**Week Seven (Nov 1-7)**

Tasks:
1. **Read** Let Your Life Speak Chapters 3-6.
2. Post in the ‘Vocation Take 1’ forum, reflect a bit on Parker Palmer’s idea (page 13 and following of Let Your Life Speak) of finding true self by reflecting on childhood’s desires. Post as per the forum’s directions by Thursday, 11:59 pm. Reflect on at least two others’ posts by Saturday, 5 pm. These posts should be helpful as your prepare to write your paper due next week.
3. 2-3 page WRR 6 Due. Submit to drop-box by Friday 11:59 pm.

**Week Eight (Nov 8-14)**

Tasks:
1. In the ‘Vocation Take 2’ forum, write one paragraph on how you understand your calling/vocation in light of your work and God’s revelation to you this semester. How does the
Palmer text intersect with your understanding of call? Post by Thursday, 11:59 pm and comment on each other post by Saturday 5 pm.
2. 2-3 page **WRR 7 Due.** Submit to drop-box by Friday 11:59 pm.
3. 2-page **Vocational Discernment paper is due** via drop-box by Saturday, November 14, 11:59 pm.

**Week Nine (Nov 15-21)**

**Tasks:**
1. Use the prompts in the ‘Assessment’ forum to prayerfully reflect upon your work this semester as well as the group’s covenantal commitments. Post by **Wednesday**, 11:59 pm and respond to all by Friday.
2. Offer a semester-conclusion blessing for your group—either a shared devotional reading or a personally-drafted blessing—by Friday in the Blessing forum.
3. Upload a **final draft of your spiritual autobiography** in the drop-box by Friday, 11:59 pm.
4. 2-3 page **WRR 8 Due.** Submit to drop-box by Friday 11:59 pm.
5. **Site Covenant is due if you begin** your Field Education in January or February.

**Formation 1b begins ONLINE February 22, 2015.**

**VII: SEMINARY STANDARDS:**
A. **Inclusive language:** United Theological Seminary has an official policy regarding the use of Inclusive Language. The policy may be found in the Seminary Catalog and further explained in the Student Handbook. If you have specific questions, please see the instructor.
B. **Academic Integrity:** Student integrity regarding all work assigned in this class is a basic expectation of the Seminary community. A detailed policy regarding what constitutes a violation of academic integrity can be found in the Student Handbook.
C. **Online Confidentiality:** One of the highlights of the online classroom is that students can draw from the experiences shared during class discussions and in written work. However, it is imperative that students do not share information that is confidential, privileged, or proprietary in nature. In addition, students are expected to honor the privacy and confidentiality of their classmates by not disclosing online conversations with those outside of the classroom.
D. **Statement on Disability:** Any student who may need accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Registrar’s office.

**VIII: USING ONLINE RESOURCES:**
For information about how to access Online United and where to find help if you need it may be found on the seminary website at [http://online.united.edu](http://online.united.edu). Live support and help guides are available once you have logged into the United Online site in the upper right corner.

To get online help with the Student Portal, United mail, or any other system on campus, email: onlinehelp@united.edu.

**IX. EVALUATION**
A. **Assignments**
WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT EXPECTATIONS:
All papers should be written with the following guidelines: Double spaced, 12 pt. font, 1” margins, Times New Roman font. Grading Rubrics are provided for each written assignment.

1. Spiritually Significant Event

**Description:** Each student is asked to share, for 15 minutes with his/her MINgroup at the Formation Retreat, a Spiritually Significant Event from his/her life. We recommend coming with notes about how the event has shaped your spiritual journey, call to ministry and/or your entry into seminary.

- Share your event in detail; include how you felt about it then and how it shapes you today.
- This event should NOT BE your salvation story unless it involves the shaping of your call.
- The ‘event’ may actually be a story of a relationship that has formed you.
- You may bring in an object or picture that represents this event as a visual.
- Be creative - how can the sharing of this event assist your group in understanding who you are and where you’ve come from?
- Example: I (Dan) would bring in a football helmet from my hometown of Flint, MI to use as a reference point about the spiritually significant event of recognizing my call to ministry as I coached junior high football.

**Due Date:** Expect to share this in your first group session. This is graded pass/fail.

2. Weekly Reflection Reports

**Description:** Each student will submit a weekly reflection report to the group facilitator. The report will comprise a reflection on their personal, professional and spiritual journey for the week as per the document, **Weekly Reflection Report Guide**. Each report must be 2-3 pages. The student may also share these reflections with the MINgroup faculty guide or spiritual director, and site mentor if desired.

**Due Date[s]:** Reports are due at each week’s meeting time starting with week two. There will be eight reports submitted.

3. Spiritual Autobiography

**Description:** Using both the wisdom gained from your Genogram exercise and Appendix B from Artisanal Theology, each student will submit a 6-7 page, double-spaced (note, this is different than Appendix B’s spacing expectations) spiritual autobiography that will be shared with the group at a future date.

**Due Date:** November 20, 11:59 pm. Place another copy in your online Portfolio.

4. SMART Goals

**Description:** All students are asked to set personal, spiritual and professional goals for the 2015-2016 academic year. The creation of these SMART goals begins with the setting of goals for personal, spiritual and professional growth. Students will be given examples of these goals and a form within the first two weeks of the course. These goals will be talked about in your MINgroup but must be shared with your Facilitator. If one is beginning one’s Field Education this semester, these goals must be shared with one’s Site Mentor and reviewed during a site visit this fall with the facilitator.

**Due Date:** October 10, 5 pm.
5. Site Covenant

Description: Each student that begins his/her Field Education must submit a signed Site Covenant to the facilitator evidencing a relationship with a Ministry site for the academic year. A form will be handed out during the first week that guides the student and site in its completion. This form must be signed by the student and the site mentor before submitting. Note: Each student must have a site placement confirmed by a Site Covenant and also a Field Education Accountability Form in order to receive credit for this course.

Due Date(s): October 10, 5 pm if beginning this fall.
November 21, 11:59 pm if beginning in the spring.

6. Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

Description: Using Peter Scazzero’s, Emotionally Healthy Spirituality, students will write a 4-6 page paper that contains the following form and content:

• Opening – Should be one-two paragraphs including a brief summary of your paper
• Book Summary – Should be around two pages containing the main thoughts of each chapter
• Criticism & Challenge – Where is the author’s argument unfounded or where would you challenge the author in light of your life, experience and theological understandings. This section should be about one page.
• Integration - Reflect in a page:
  o Where have you been challenged by the book? Affirmed?
  o What is one discipline of either emotional health or contemplative spirituality that you will practice for a season? What draws you toward that discipline? What symptom of emotionally unhealthy spirituality will that discipline seek to combat?
  o What else in the book resonates with your self-understanding or discernment of call?
  o How does this “antidote” relate to your MINgroup’s ability to live out your covenant?
• Conclusion – a final paragraph summarizing your review and integration.

Each student will present to the MINgroup a portion of his/her paper.
Submit this paper to your facilitator and spiritual director/faculty guide.

Due Date: October 31.

7. Vocational Discernment

Description: Using Parker Palmer’s Let Your Life Speak, students will write a 2-page paper that covers the following:

• Describe Palmer’s approach to one’s discernment of call and vocation. What does Palmer say about how one’s understanding of self (see Ch. 2) affects one’s understanding of vocation?
• Respond to Palmer’s approach to vocational discernment in a paragraph or two and then include any other reflections on the book.
• In the last paragraph offer as clearly as possible your understanding of your call. What has God invited you to do/be about? Describe the uniqueness of your call. How does your understanding of self affect how you see your call? This will be revisited each semester.
• Submit this paper to your facilitator.

Due Date: November 14.
OTHER EXPECTATIONS

1. **Online Participation:** Each student will be assigned a grade based on his or her participation. Each student must participate in the weekly common meal, chapel and group time. Students who are absent for more than 1/6 of the course may be unable to complete the course with a passing grade. Requests for exceptions must be made directly to the facilitator prior to absences. Since PT511a and PT511b together total 3 credits, a student may not miss more than 3 academic hours (1 week online) each semester. Online participation is measured by participating in the group discussions, whether that requires posting in the forums as directed each week or being fully present in a Google Hangout. Only submitting written work for grading does not constitute weekly, online participation.

2. **Site Placement:** Each student is required to have a site placement (Field Education) and mentor confirmed by a signed site covenant at the beginning or close of the first semester (See assignment No. 5 above) and a Field Education Accountability form upon completion of the required field education hours. **No Formation credit can be received until this requirement is met.**

**B. Method of Assigning Grades:**

**PT510a (Formation 1a) and PT510b (Formation 1b) are together a 3-credit hour course.** Therefore, each student will be assigned one of the following grades for this semester, with a final grade awarded at the conclusion of PT510b:

- **IC – Incomplete** Continuing – This grade will be awarded for students who earn a C or better
- **F – The student did not earn a passing grade.**

In addition, each student will be given his/her estimated letter grade within 2 weeks of the course completion.

**If you do not complete both courses, you are required to re-take both courses.**

Grades will be assigned by the MNgroup facilitator in consultation with the faculty guide or spiritual director and the contextual ministries directors in accord with the standardized evaluation sheet. The various assignments will be weighted in terms of their value in relation to the whole of the work assigned.

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**X. COURSE EVALUATIONS:**

It is very important for students to submit course evaluations toward the end of the semester. Instructors do not see the student evaluations until they have submitted the students’ final, official grades. Students should feel free to evaluate the course without any negative ramifications.