

COS 123-Formation & Discipleship
UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Spring 2016

Rev. Dan Gildner
dgildner@united.edu

This course begins face-to-face and concludes online

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course grounds the student in the theology and core practices of personal and congregational formation and discipleship.

II. TEXTBOOKS:

Required Reading:

Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. ISBN: 978-1576838976

Marlene D. LeFever, *Learning Styles: Reaching Everyone God Gave You to Teach*. ISBN: 978-0781451178

Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. ISBN: 978-0664239244

Kevin M. Watson, *The Class Meeting: Reclaiming a Forgotten (and Essential) Small Group Experience*. ISBN: 978-1628240580

Supplementary:

Jack Seymour, *Teaching the Way of Jesus*.

Norma Everiste, *Church as Learning Community*.

Anne Wimberly & Evelyn Park, *In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church*.

Sondra Matthaei, *Formation in Faith: The Congregational Ministry of Making Disciples*.

Recommended:

Parker Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*.

Greg L. Hawkins & Cally Parkinson, *Move: What 1,000 Churches Reveal about Spiritual Growth*.

III. COURSE OBJECTIVES:

Students will be able to:

1. Articulate a theological basis for the Wesleyan emphasis on spiritual disciplines and practice them as means of grace.
2. Explain and implement the General Rules and the practices of small groups in a congregation.
3. Educate and resource a congregation in the disciplines of Christian formation.
4. Organize congregations to help people discern their callings and gifts for ministry.

IV. SCHEDULE

On Campus Weekend: March 11-12, 2016

Before you arrive:

1. **Read pages 11-35 of *Learning Styles*, completing the 'What's My Learning Style?' section on page 29-30.**
2. **Bring an item from your life that tells a story or marks an occasion of a time when you felt significantly formed by the Spirit of God. Be prepared to share about that season or event: What was happening in your life? How did God form you? What was your role in the formation? How did it affect life change? We will take time to hear one another's stories.**

Friday

1:30–2:30 pm Arrival, check-in; refreshments available

2:30–5:00 pm Class session

5:00-6:00 pm Dinner – Thie Fellowship Hall
6:00–8:30 pm Class session

Saturday

8:00–8:30 am Light breakfast/beverages available
8:30–11:00 am Class session
11:15 am-12:00 pm Chapel – Thie Fellowship Hall
12:00–12:45 pm Lunch – Thie Fellowship Hall
12:45–2:30 pm Class session

On Campus Topics:

- Defining the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ of distinctive Wesleyan discipleship
- Understanding how learning styles, cognitive development and church ethnographies affect discipleship systems
- Tracing your own formation
- Developing strategies to form, reform or maintain healthy discipleship processes in the church
- Jesus style discipleship and formation

Online Work: March 13 – April 30, 2016

A Note on Writing

Follow approximate length given for each item of written work. Written work should be double-spaced, 12-point, Times New Roman font, with 1” margins. No cover page is needed.

Put your name, the course number and date on the first page. Please add page numbers too.

If you quote from a printed text, you must use quotation marks and note the source (including pages) in parentheses at the end of each usage. Quotations should never be more than a sentence or two long. For assigned texts, you may abbreviate the titles by using the first letter of each word in the title. For example, *The Class Meeting*, could be abbreviated, (TCM, pp. 24-25). If you refer to books that are not listed on the syllabus, please footnote them so that you can give proper credit.

DESCRIPTION OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Learning Style Course Review (2 pages)

Description: Each student will submit a 2-page paper evaluating the on campus teaching through the lens of LeFever’s 4 learning styles. Which learning style(s) were emphasized? Which were minimized? How could the teaching strategy have been more effective for more types of learners?

Due Date(s): March 19, 11:59 pm.

Grading: **20 points**

2. Wesleyan Theological Framework (7-8 pages)

Description: After reading *The Class Meeting* and incorporating conversations from class:

1. Describe your current ministry context. Where is it (rural, urban)? How would you describe its identity? Its members? (1/2 page)

2. Chapter 1. Discuss the strengths and weakness of the three types of small groups discussed in the chapter. Which ones have you experienced? How effective were they in making disciples? Which type does your current context(s) focus on and why? (1 page)

3. Chapter 2. Summarize the role that class meetings had in early Methodist revival. How would you describe the difference between a class meeting and most church small groups? (1 page)

4. Read the section in *The Book of Discipline* covered in Paragraph 104, pp 75-78 “The Nature Design, and General Rules of our United Societies.” Draw a comparison between the General Rules that stem from John Wesley and Kevin Watson’s text. (1/2 page)
5. Chapter 3. Summarize the Wesleyan theological argument for class meetings. (1 ½ pages)
6. Chapter 4. Describe both the author’s reasons to reclaim the class meetings and your reaction to them in light of your context. (1 page)
7. Chapters 5-8. Write out a summary of the author’s plan that you could give to a colleague who was starting a church with a commitment to discipling others through class meetings. How should they begin? What are the key roles? Etc.? This may be an outline with bullet points. (2-3 pages)
8. Look again at your context. Share your thoughts as to how this text intersects your understanding of how disciples are made in your church(es). (1/2 page)

Due Date(s): April 2, 11:59 pm.

Grading: **80 points**

3. Personal Formation (4 pages)

Description: Reflect upon both your life of faith and the insights gained from *Soul Feast* by Marjorie Thompson. The chapters listed below are from her book.

1. Chapter 1. Reflect on the understanding of spirituality as the “Christ within” to which Thompson refers. Write your own definition of “spirituality.” What is the importance of practicing regular spiritual disciplines? Which disciplines have been most helpful in your spiritual journey? Explain. (1 page)
2. In Chapter 2, Thompson teaches steps to practice *Lectio Divina*. Write out how to read Scripture via Lectio Divina. How do you do it? What texts could they use? Refer back to your in class work. This should look like a handout you’d give to a Sunday School teacher. (1 page)
3. Write a working Rule of Life compiled from Chapter 10 of Thompson’s book and the work we did in class. (1 page)
4. Reflect upon your Rule. Which disciplines or practices from Thompson’s book are included and why? Which are not on there and why? What are your next steps? (1 page)

Due Date(s): April 16, 11:59 pm.

Grading: **40 points**

4. Discipleship Strategy (9-10 pages)

Description: From all the course resources (all required reading, course lectures and conversations, online work) and especially *The Complete Book of Discipleship* (chapters and page numbers listed below are from Hull’s book), build a workable, Wesleyan discipleship model for your context. This model should address the following:

- What have been the key moments in your faith development?
 - Who was involved and when?
 - How does your journey shape your belief about how discipleship should be done?
- Biblical Discipleship (23-47):
 - What is a disciple?
 - How are disciples formed?

- Story of Discipleship (73-110):
 - Choose one person in this chapter (not John Wesley) whose discipleship influence resonates with what you believe about discipleship. Why did you choose them? What might they speak to your current context?
- How will your church intentionally form disciples? (Chapter 10 and Appendix A)
 - Note how this will be done for persons at different places in faith.
 - Is there a model you're working from?
 - What will you 'teach' and why? How do learning styles affect your strategy?
- Who will be the team to develop this and how will they be trained?
- How do spiritual gifts and service fit into your strategy?
- How does leadership/servant development fit?
- How will you as Pastor help shape an environment where formation happens?
- What is the one next step (SMART goal style) that God is asking you to take to form disciples at your church (SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely)?

Due Date(s): April 30, 11:59 pm.

Grading: **100 points**

V. CALENDAR:

Theological Framework

Week 1 – March 13-19

Reading: *The Class Meeting*, Chs. 1-4

Reading: *Book of Discipline* ¶104, "The Nature Design & General Rules..."

March 19 – *Learning Style Course Review paper due*

Week 2 – March 20-26 **HOLY WEEK**

Week 3 – March 27-April 2

Reading: *The Class Meeting*, Chs. 5-8

April 2 – *Wesleyan Theological Framework paper due*

Personal Formation

Week 4 – April 3-9

Reading: *Soul Feast*, Chs. 1-5, focus on Chs. 1-3

Week 5 – April 10-16

Reading: *Soul Feast*, Chs. 6-10, focus on Ch. 10

April 16 – *Personal Formation paper due*

Discipleship Strategy

Week 6 – April 17-23

Reading: *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, Chs. 1-5

Week 7 – April 24-30

Reading: *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, Chs. 9-12, Appendix A & B

April 30 – *Discipleship Strategy paper due*

VI: SEMINARY STANDARDS:

- 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.
- 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.

VII: USING ONLINE RESOURCES:

Information about how to access United Online and where to find help can be found on the seminary website at <http://www.united.edu>.

VIII. EVALUATION:

- 75% Papers
- 20% Online Forums
- 5% On Campus Attendance

Online Forum Grading

For the community of learning to be most effective, we all need to be engaged. You have seven days for each module. You must find time during those seven days.

- Your initial post each week is due by Thursday, 11:59 pm.
- Your responses are due by Saturday 11:59 pm.
- Church duties are not an excuse for absence. Your appointment to a local church takes into account the need for school preparation. As part of your appointment, you are expected to be present.
- Specific grading methods and rubrics will be discussed when we meet March 11/12.

The total scores determine the grades assigned according to the following scale:

100 – 95	A
94 – 90	A-
89 – 88	B+
87 – 84	B
83 – 80	B-
79 – 75	C+
74 – 70	C
69 – 00	F

UW–Unofficial Withdrawal (A student stops attending prior to semester's end)
 W–Withdrawal (A student officially withdraws by the proper date)

IX. 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.