My faith, My way
Youth, Spirituality and Christian Practices
Monday, June 2, 2014 – Friday, June 6, 2014
1:30 – 4pm
Room: RSV

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Course Description:
Despite what many believe, youth ministry is more than pizza parties and mission trips. To be sure, a vital role of youth ministry is to aid in the spiritual formation of young people. But how might youth ministry deepen and expand a sense of spirituality in today’s youth? In this course we examine ways of carefully attending to the lives, contexts, and spiritual formation of adolescents. We will explore creative ways of nurturing youth spirituality through the lens of Christian practices. We move beyond simply rehearsing the “problems” of youth and explore how we can listen with youth as they explore their faith in personal and communal ways, with the goal of “making their faith their own.” Our approach is to invite participants into a conversation about the ways that Christian practices, which are individual and communal, ancient and contemporary, are powerful tools for helping young people grow in their faith journeys. In particular, we will discuss the ways that young people shape and are shaped by Christian practices, such as prayer, Sabbath, worship, testimony sharing, artistic narrative, and honoring the body.

Student Learning Outcomes
In this course, students will
1. Contribute to a genuine learning community by sharing from their experiences and remaining open to learning from the experiences of others, including their peers and the scholars we engage together.
2. Critically attend to the lives and spirituality of contemporary American adolescents.
3. Explore and assess spiritual practices with youth.
4. Envision ways to engage these spiritual practices with youth in your context.
Movements of the Course
Similar to ways that we share in formative practices in religious communities and life, this course will include each of the following elements each day.

- **Ritual** – we will begin class with a centering ritual connected with the themes and practices of that day. Students will be invited to help lead these rituals beginning on Tuesday.
- **Theory/Understanding** – we will wrestle with the theories and theologies of youth ministry and Christian spirituality; developing our understandings of the reading and discussing the ways that the theory or practice has been constructed over time and in different contexts.
- **Reflection** – we will think critically about the lives of young people, the theories we have discussed and the ways that Christian practices can shape the lives of youth.
- **Practice** – we begin to “try on” the practice, to allow it to shape us and to become shaped as we will live into it. This movement of the class will include direct engagement of variations on traditional Christian practices offering us examples of how we might engage in practices with youth.
- **Projecting (improved ministry)** – we will always leave room for connecting the theory and practices with our current ministry contexts. Here students will take the lead in creating/constructing/envisioning a way of living into this practice with youth in their own context.

**Required Texts:**
Please note that any articles and handouts online are noted with an asterisk (*) in the syllabus. Other texts are available for purchase in the bookstore:

**Required books:**


**Required chapters and articles:**
Course Expectations:
In order to establish a true community of learners, regular attendance and participation is expected and necessary. Students are expected to contribute through their Attendance, Attention, and Articulation. Students are expected to do the readings for each class (see schedule below) and come prepared to discuss and engage the readings. Students are invited to keep a journal reflecting on the guiding questions listed for each class and we will have time set aside on Friday to share the ways they anticipate engaging youth in practices in their current ministry contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic, Readings, and Guiding Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong> June 2, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Course Introduction and Expectations</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Why Christian Practices?</td>
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<td>• How can Christian practices shape youth ministry?</td>
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<td>• What practices are most attractive to youth? Formative for youth?</td>
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<td>• What are the strengths, contributions, and/or limitations of Christian practices for youth spiritual formation?</td>
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<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Dorothy Bass and Craig Dykstra, “Introduction” Practicing Our Faith. pp. 1-12</td>
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<td>• <em>Dean and Foster, The Godbearing Life.</em> pp. 105-122</td>
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<td><strong>Supplemental:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Tuesday</strong> June 3, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Testimony</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Where do we see God operating in the lives of young people?</td>
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<td>• How do we invite youth into telling their truths about God?</td>
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<td>• Do we offer youth examples of seeing and sharing how God is working in their lives? If so where?</td>
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<td>• What role does sharing of faith narratives have in the life of youth?</td>
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<td>• How might we as youth leaders listen more deeply to the needs/stories of contemporary youth?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Readings:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• <em>Wright, Almeda. “The Power of Testimonies.”</em></td>
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<td><strong>Supplemental:</strong></td>
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Wednesday  
June 4,  
2014

**Honoring the Body**
- What does it mean to honor our bodies? As temples of the Holy Spirit?
- In what ways do we honor the body? Dishonor the body?
- Although media and cultural images objectify young bodies, how might contemporary youth honor God through their bodies?
- What does the image of Jesus’ broken body teach us as members of the Body of Christ about honoring all bodies (poor, marginalized, gendered, differently-abled, etc.)?
- How might youth ministry integrate movement as embodied worship and prayer?

Readings:

Supplemental:
- Jon Sweeney, “How Do We Pray with Our Hands?” *Praying with Our Hands: 21 Practices of Embodied Prayer from the World’s Spiritual Traditions.* pp. 119-28

Thursday  
June 5,  
2014

**Worship**
- How can worship shape youth ministry?
- How do youth define/engage in worship?
- Is worship limited? Segregated? Tailored?
- What is the purpose of worship? In youth ministry?
- How might youth ministry empower youth to practice Sabbath and prayer as a way of life? What might this look like for today’s youth?

Readings:
- Fred Edie, *Book, Bath, Table and Time.* pp. 1-61

Supplemental:
Creating

- What are the connections between our stories and creative arts?
- Can art and creative narratives help us to experience the sacred?
- How might we as youth leaders inspire, deepen, and nurture creativity in youth through Christian practices?
- How can the arts assist youth in exploring difficult texts as well as challenging moments in life?
- How can embodied storytelling empower youth to make spiritual practices their own?

Readings:


Supplemental:

- Dean Blevins, “Narrative Teaching: Learning How to Teach the Story of God,” *Worship-Centered Teaching: Guiding Youth to Discover their Identity in Christ*. pp. 63-81,

** Please note that the professors always reserve the right to modify the readings and course schedule.
Recommended Websites And Journals:

- *Christian Education Journal*
- *Christian Higher Education Journal*
- Christian Educators of the 20th Century: [http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/](http://www.talbot.edu/ce20/)
- Duke Youth Academy: [http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/youth-academy](http://divinity.duke.edu/initiatives-centers/youth-academy)
- Emory University Youth Theological Initiative: [http://yti.emory.edu/](http://yti.emory.edu/)
- Interfaith Youth Core: [http://www.ifyc.org/](http://www.ifyc.org/)
- InterRelations Collaborative: [http://www.inter-relations.org/](http://www.inter-relations.org/)
- *Journal of Spirituality*
- *Liturgy Journal*
- Princeton Theological Seminary Institute for Youth Ministry: [http://www.ptsem.edu/iym](http://www.ptsem.edu/iym)
- Represent 2 Witness: [http://criticalfaith1.blogspot.com/](http://criticalfaith1.blogspot.com/)
- Sacred Dance Guild: [www.sacreddanceguild.org](http://www.sacreddanceguild.org) (877) 422-8678.
- *Teaching Theology and Religion*, Journal of Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion
- The Religious Education Association: [www.religiouseducation.net](http://www.religiouseducation.net)
- Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion: [http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/home/default.aspx](http://www.wabashcenter.wabash.edu/home/default.aspx)
- Yale Divinity School Ministry Resource Center: [http://www.library.yale.edu/div/mrc/](http://www.library.yale.edu/div/mrc/)
- Youth Hope Builders Academy, Interdenominational Theological Center: [http://youthhopebuilders.org/](http://youthhopebuilders.org/)