Dr. David Csinos
Vancouver School of Theology Visiting Instructor
dcsinos@astheology.ns.ca

RE-IMAGINING MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH
SUMMER 2017

PURPOSE:
This course will explore the spirituality, theology, and practices surrounding holistic faith formation of children and youth. By digging deep into the purposes, goals, and presuppositions we carry with us into our experiences of children’s and youth ministry, students will learn about and generate best practices for walking alongside young people on the adventure of discipleship. In particular, this course will help students re-imagine children’s and youth ministry by exploring fresh perspectives and sharing innovative ideas. Topics include the spiritual life of young people, children, youth, and the Bible, the role of doubts and questions in faith formation, worshipping with young people, creating spaces of radical hospitality, fostering intergenerational relationships, and nurturing a thirst for justice among children and youth.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:
The course is designed to investigate faith formation with children and youth in faith communities. Having completed this course with competence, each student will be able to:

1. Articulate an understanding of the role the faith community plays in the Christian formation of young people that is informed by scripture, tradition, and contemporary research.
2. Relate the ways in which theologies of childhood and adolescence and views of spirituality affect practices of ministry with children and youth.
3. Understand the contextual nature of ministry with young people and describe their own ministerial call and context.
4. Articulate an awareness of best practices for faith formation, including the use of story, questions, participation, intergenerational community, hospitality, and social justice.

FORMAT AND CONTENT:
This is a one week intensive course worth 1.5 credit hours. Work in the course consists of classes including readings done ahead of the course, presentations, discussions, small group exercises, journalling, further assigned readings; two papers.

GROUND RULES:
1. Arrive and be ready to begin on time. Bring all readings and any other materials you need in order to contribute to the class.
2. Participate in class by actively listening and engaging in thoughtful conversation. Since this is an intensive course, there are no unexcused absences. Poor participation and
unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade in the course, as well as the learning of others.

3. Be open to new ideas and concepts, as this course may challenge your assumptions about childhood, adolescence, and ministry with young people.

4. Value and respect the opinions and views of all participants.

TEXTS:
Textbooks are readily available through amazon.ca or via the publisher (required texts are published by CopperHouse, available at woodlakebooks.com).

Required Texts:


Recommended Texts:


COURSE POLICIES:

1. Attendance: For an intensive course, VST requires 100% attendance.

2. Reading and assignments: Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.

3. Academic honesty: Students are expected to adhere to VST’s requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **Inclusive language:** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.

5. **Assignment and Course Evaluation:**
   - Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is “Not Approved”) including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.
   - Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.
   - For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.

6. **Late assignments:** Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

7. **Limitation on use of social media:** Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand. Please do not use electronic devices for any matters not pertaining to the course. Failure to adhere to this policy will negatively affect the final grade.

8. **VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment.** If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

**CALENDAR:**

Note that readings should be completed before the course begins. Review readings to prepare for class according to the following schedule.

3 July **Course Introduction: Children, Youth, and Faith Formation**

4 July **Checking Our Baggage: Theological and Philosophical Assumptions**

5 July **New Imaginations and Sacred Stories**
   - REVIEW: Faith Forward (2013): Chapters 6—10

6 July **Justice and Love**
   - REVIEW: Faith Forward (2013): Chapters 11—15
DUE: Reflection Paper

7 July  Nurturing a Lifetime of Faith
REVIEW: Faith Forward (2013): Chapters 16—21

31 August  End of Term (last day for submission of all written work for term)

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS, AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA:

1. **Class participation:** Students are expected to participate in class discussions, and do adequate preparation of in-class discussion exercises.
   
   Evaluative criteria: comments and questions show adequate preparation, an understanding of the assigned readings and exercises, and a readiness to apply readings to interpretive questions and insights.

2. **Reflection paper (Due 6 July):** During the week of class, spend a minimum of one hour reflecting and journaling on your faith formation experience as a child and teenager. This reflection might be about your experiences in church or outside of church. Some questions to think about include: *How did you experience God as a young person? What was your view of church as a child/teen? Who were the most influential people on your faith journey in childhood and adolescence? What was it about these experiences that led you to deeper faith as a child/teen?* Capture the highlights of your reflections in a 3-4 page reflection paper. This paper is to be double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman, with 1 inch margins.
   
   Evaluative criteria: concise and clear writing, deep reflection on one’s own childhood/adolescence, attention to above outline of assignment.

3. **Theology of Childhood/Adolescence Paper (Due 31 August):** Write a 7-8 page paper in which you articulate you personal (working) theology of childhood/adolescence. Material from this course, additional academic sources (see bibliography), your faith tradition, your engagement with scripture, and your personal experiences should be used as resources for this assignment. Remember, this is a working theology—your theology of childhood/adolescence may change over time, but I am interested in what it is at this moment. Your theology of childhood should respond to the following questions: *What, theologically, does it mean to be a child/adolescent? What theological themes are important to your theology (grace, sin, vulnerability, life, etc.) and how do they shape your working theology? What are the roles of children and youth within families and faith communities? What do young people teach us about what it means to be human (for example, what it means to live in community, to follow Jesus, to care for others, etc.)? What practices in the church and wider society challenge children and youth from living into their full potential? What is our responsibility as adult people of faith in helping young people live to their full potential, and what practices best accomplish these goals?* These questions are not exhaustive, and are meant to springboard you toward thoughtful engagement with children from a theological perspective.
   
   This paper is to be 7-8 pages, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman, with 1 inch
margins and Chicago-style footnotes. This paper must include research from at least 5 additional sources (i.e., not required texts); consult bibliography for some recommended sources.

Evaluative criteria: completeness, depth of reflection and insight, ability to explore complexity in interpretation, integration of course material, additional sources, scripture, tradition, and experience, attention to above outline of assignment.

4. **Audit students** are required to do all the reading and participate in the class discussions and exercises.

5. **Certificate students** are required to do all the reading, participate in the class discussions and exercises, and do the reflection paper.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:


McCoy, Brandon K. *Youth Ministry from the Outside In: How Relationships and Stories Shape Identity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013.


