

Faculty Specific Publications

Theology

Articles / opinion pieces about teaching for the Faculty of Theology

Brunner, D. L. (2006). "The Potential of the Hybrid Course vis-à-vis online and Traditional Courses." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 9(4): 229-235.

Abstract: Face-to-face, hybrid, and online courses are part of the panoply of course options available to students and teachers in the twenty-first century. This essay tackles the promise of hybrid courses for enhancing student learning in seminary contexts. The author contends that the introduction of hybrid instruction prompts faculty to revisit questions about pedagogy and improves student learning.

Cahalan, K., C. L. Hess, et al. (2008). "Teaching practical Theology: Introducing Six perspectives." *International Journal of Practical Theology* 12(1): 35-87.

Abstract: No abstract

Casey, S. (2006). "Teaching the arts of Public Theology" *Christian Higher Education* 5: 37-54.

Abstract: While intense discussions are raging over the definition and status of public theology, within graduate theological education relatively little attention is being paid to the teaching of the practices of public theology. This article explores one venue in graduate theological education that attempts to equip seminary and divinity school students in the arts of public theology. This program, the National Capital Semester for Seminarians, is located at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC and is open to any student enrolled in a seminary or divinity school in North America. The article is a critical examination of the pedagogical goals and design of the program. In addition there is an examination of the skills and practices that comprise the arts of public theology. A central thesis of the article is that interest in the intersection of theology and public policy is currently high among students, yet there is a paucity of resources in typical graduate theological curricula to address this demand.

Delamarter, S., J. Alanis, et al. (2007). "Technology, Pedagogy, and Transformation in Theological Education: Five Case Studies." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 10(2): 66-74.

Abstract: No abstract

Farley, E. (2005). "Four Pedagogical Mistakes: A Mea Culpa." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 8(4): 200-203.

Abstract: The theological pedagogies which dominate degree-granting schools originated in the courses of study and graduate programs of the teachers. These pedagogies foster a deep rift between theology as an academic or scholarly discipline (science?) and the situations and interests of students. Students are taught to imitate what scholars do: interpreting texts, making formal arguments, and writing essays. Accordingly, theology recedes from the present and future of students including future clergy, having little to do with their religious life or career. By defining theology as scholarship, academic pedagogy obscures its primary meaning, the critical and creative thinking of the situations of life and world under the perspective of the Gospel. If theology's primary meaning is scholarly knowledge and its preoccupation with text interpretation and doctrinal exposition, the result will be to ignore religion's actual practices, especially its idolatrous tendency to literalize its own language and absolutize its institutional mediations. A pedagogy that reflects theology's primary meaning will focus on contemplation, reflection, and thinking and thus order methods, texts, and doctrines to that.

Foster, C. R., L. E. Dahill, et al. (2005). "Pedagogies of Interpretation in Educating Clergy." Teaching Theology and Religion 8(4): 204-217.

Abstract: In this essay the authors describe how four seminary educators pedagogically engage students in practices of interpretation and explore how the variations in their teaching practices shape the critical thinking they seek to cultivate in their students. The piece is excerpted from an ethnographic study of Jewish and Christian seminary educator teaching practices sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (*Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination*, Jossey-Bass Publishers, November 2005). The study explores how the classroom- and community-based teaching practices of seminary educators prepare students to integrate professional knowledge and skill with moral integrity and religious commitment in professional practice. In addition to the pedagogies of interpretation explicated here, we observed pedagogies that engage students in practices of formation, contextualization, and performance. Attention is also given in the study to the influence of pedagogies embedded in the traditions of seminary education on student learning and to the cultivation of spiritual and professional practices beyond the classroom in community worship and through strategies of field education and small groups.

Ganzevoort, R. (2008). "Teaching that Matters: A course on Trauma and Theology*." The Journal of Adult Theological Education 5(1): 8-19.

Abstract: This paper describes how practical theology may be taught in a relevant way, using an existing course on trauma and theology as a point of reference. The author sees praxis as a locus or source for practical theology. Theological themes are developed from actual experiences of (in this case) trauma. Consequences for teaching are identified in a programme that is praxis oriented, student centered, and experience near.

Lief, J. (2009). "Challenging the Objectivist Paradigm: Teaching Biblical Theology with J R R Tolkien, C S Lewis and Guillermo de Toro " Teaching Theology and Religion 12(4): 321-332.

Abstract: A brief narrative description of the journal article, document, or resource. The dissimilarity that exists between the historical and cultural situation of North American college students and the world described by the biblical authors poses a problem for theological and religious education. While the biblical authors tell fantastic stories of miracle and magic, the scientific and technological paradigm prevalent in western culture emphasizes the gathering of objective facts in the name of efficiency and pragmatism. Theological education tends to respond to this situation by embracing either a program of

historical criticism or a form of Biblicism, both of which reinforce an objectivist approach to education. What is needed in theological education is an approach that "re-mythologizes" the Bible, enabling students to hear the theological message of the text addressed to their cultural and historical situation. One way this approach can be encouraged is through the teaching of the biblical text in conversation with the contemporary stories found in popular culture.

Litnemen, T., L. Hirsto, et al. (2010). "Personal goals and academic achievement among theology students." *Studies in Higher Education* 35(2): 193-208.

Abstract: Studying in higher education requires long-term commitment. Previous studies have shown that commitment, perceived competence, intrinsic motivation and work-life orientation are positively related to academic achievement. This study examines the kinds of goals theology students have at the beginning of studies, and whether these goals are related to academic achievement during their first three years at university. Personal project analysis was used to acquire information about first-year students' study-related personal goals and related evaluations. The evaluations were factor analyzed, and three clusters of students were derived on the basis of the factors: the committed, self-fulfillers and the non-committed. The results show that students, who perceived progress, were capable and had intrinsic reasons for their goals advanced more rapidly in their studies. The implication is that variation in academic achievement is at least partly a consequence of variation in orientation towards studying at the beginning of the study period.

Marshall, E. O. (2003). "Making the Most of a Good Story: Effective Use of Film as a Teaching Resource for Ethics." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 6(2): 93-98.

Abstract: Many faculty members reach for powerful clips or entire films to give background information to a topic or to provoke discussion. We do this because we have a sense that such materials engage students in a way that more theoretical texts, speculative discussions or even case studies do not. In the field of ethics, however, one meets resistance to employing narratives that are too engaging. The wary ethicist doubts that a medium that manipulates the viewer, engages the emotions, and elicits a personal connection to the characters is the best resource for ethical reflection. This paper argues that film, like other narrative forms, is indeed an appropriate medium for teaching ethics and suggests methods for doing so effectively.

Nieman, J. (2008). "The Idea of Practice and Why it Matters in the Teaching of Preaching." *Teaching Theology and Religion* 11(3): 123-133.

Abstract: The concept of practice helps us better understand how preaching works, as well as how we can teach that practice more effectively. This essay develops a compact but wide-ranging view of practices, reflecting the current scholarly discussion. It also argues that preaching is a particular instance of this larger concept of practices. Understanding preaching as a practice gives new perspectives on what preaching is and allows us to consider how to employ broadly recognized standards of excellence to evaluate particular instances of students' preaching. Further, this essay explores how the teaching of preaching is a practice in its own right. The value of this insight is that it allows us then to explore how the character of the teaching and the character of what is taught can be consonant with one another, and in ways that can guide. This essay is from "Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice," edited by Thomas G. Long and Nora Tisdale. Used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press.

Saines, D. (2009). "How do students learn Theology? ." Teaching Theology and Religion 12(4): 333-347.

Abstract: A brief narrative description of the journal article, document, or resource. This paper explores the way students learn theology through a small qualitative research project. It is undertaken in conversation with current higher education learning theory. This learning theory suggests that it is important to discover how a student conceptualizes learning and how they perceive the teaching environment. Students interviewed increasingly spoke of the value of this academic or more cognitive side of learning as they learned "deep approaches." Important in this movement to deep, transformational learning was the presence of a relational teaching environment in which peers and teachers played a crucial role. This present study offers support to the view that the tradition of the learning community remains important for deploying deep approaches to the learning of theology in higher education. The paper argues that these relational principals of teaching and learning remain important in the face of the increased use of technology-based tools and other pedagogical challenges to theological education today.

Willhauck, S. (2010). "God's Stuff: The Constructive Powers of Chaos for Teaching Religion." Teaching Theology and Religion 13(1): 64-70.

Abstract: Order and organization are valued in the classroom, and there is a prevailing understanding that chaos should be avoided. Yet chaos can also be potent space or a source from which new things spring forth. This article investigates biblical, scientific, and cultural understandings of chaos to discover how these contribute to a revelatory metaphor for teaching. It examines Catherine Keller's engagement with chaos theory in creation theology for pedagogical implications. Using a framework suggested in the work of Mary Elizabeth Moore, the author interprets powers and practices of chaos teaching and provides examples of how the metaphor plays out in the teaching of religion and theology.

Winkelmes, M.-A. (2004). "The Classroom as a Place of Formation: Purposefully Creating a Transformative Environment for Today's Diverse Seminary Population " Teaching Theology and Religion 7(4): 213-222.

Abstract: This essay draws on insights from studies on learning to explore the role of formation in the classroom. Studies of intellectual development, learning styles, and the physiology of learning are reviewed. Methodologies and models for encouraging formative learning in seminary classrooms are explored. This essay was written to address one of the issues that have focused the attention of the participants in the Lexington Seminar on Theological Teaching for the Church's Ministries, a project sponsored by Lexington Theological Seminary and supported by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. It will be included in Practical Wisdom: On Theological Teaching and Learning, edited by Malcolm L. Warford, a collection of essays intended to (1) affirm the teaching ministry of theological educators, (2) raise up and discern the diverse ways in which issues of teaching and learning present themselves in institutional contexts, (3) evoke new perspectives on the challenges facing individual schools, and (4) encourage faculty to make conversations about teaching and learning a crucial part of faculty life. Peter Lang Publishing will release the book in fall 2004. Additional information about the work of the Lexington Seminar is available on the Lexington Seminar's Web site <http://www.lexingtonseminar.org>