

## **BIBM 673: Ministry with Children and Families**

Abilene Christian University – Graduate School of Theology

Fall 2006      September 21-23; October 19-21      BSB #122

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**Mission of the GST:** to equip men and women in effective missional leadership in ministry in all its forms and to provide strong academic foundations for theological inquiry.

**Course Objectives:** to increase students' awareness of the theological and biblical underpinnings of children's ministry; to examine the contexts of children's lives and spiritual formation (family, church, school, and community); to explore the spiritual, intellectual, and social formation of children; and to learn skills necessary for effective children's ministry, especially as regards the pastoral care of children.

### **Course Competencies and Measurements:**

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| 1. Develop a biblical and theological framework for constructing a theology of children.  | 1. The competency will be met by the completion of book reviews that critique and analyze research and synthesize ideas, and by the completion of the reading response papers.  |
| 2. Examine the contexts and patterns of children's development into whole persons by:<br>a. Formulating research questions to guide one's observation;<br>b. Synthesizing observed data into a comprehensive whole;<br>c. Grounding theory in observation<br>d. Practicing techniques of participant observation, which will allow students to judge the validity of preexistent research in the light of their own findings;<br>e. Using interviews and observation understand the dynamics of churches and families and their interactions. | 2. The competency will be met by the completion of Project 1, in which students report their findings, systematize them in dialogue with research in the field, defend their conclusions, and formulate questions for further research. |

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| <p>3. Assess and evaluate critically the inner workings of children's ministries by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Formulating questions regarding the background and current practices of a children's minister;</li> <li>b. Observing the minister in action and interpreting that action;</li> <li>c. Examining the context of ministry in a church setting;</li> <li>d. Investigating the management structure of the ministry.</li> </ol> | <p>3. The competency will be met by means of site visits, on which students will reflect, and by means of Project 2, which examines ministry systems and critiques them.</p>   |
| <p>4. Demonstrate empathy for the needs of children and become competent in their pastoral care.</p>   | <p>4. The competency will be demonstrated in the review of the book <i>The Pastoral Care of Children</i> and discussion thereof, as well as in students' assessment of video presentations on child abuse and boundary issues.</p> |
| <p>5. Recognize and classify the unique ways in which children manage crises and developmental transitions.</p>  | <p>5. Completion of readings and interviews will meet this competency, as will the review of of the movie <i>Ponette</i>.</p>  |
| <p>6. Review current research on children's ministry.</p>  | <p>6. This competency will be met through the reading response papers and the review of <i>Will Our Children Have Faith</i>.</p>   |

### Course Assignments:

1. **3 review papers**, each four (4) pages in length. Due dates appear in the schedule below. Two essays are book reviews, and the third a movie review. The book review should do more than merely summarize the book. It should offer a detailed critical reflection on the book's treatment of the issues it addresses, as well as your own ideas on those issues. The movie review, similarly, will discuss issues relating to the moral, intellectual, and spiritual development of children raised by the film.
2. **2 projects**. See separate attachments for descriptions of each project. For the first project, observe two children, make field notes on your observations, and present your findings orally to the class in a 10-15-minute presentation (**September 23**) and in written form as an eight-page paper (**due date September 30**). For the second project, pick a *local children's minister*, interview him or her, and observe and analyze the program he or she supervises **or** choose a church you

are attending and describe, analyze, or observe the children's program within the whole context of the church's ministry. Report your findings and resultant theology of ministry in a 15-18page paper (**due Dec. 1**) and 20-25 minute an oral presentation (**October 21**). See the project descriptions below.

- 3. Reading response:** Read textbooks (as assigned on the schedule) and the distributed articles, and prepare short answers based on your readings. (The questions will be given during the each class session (**due Sept. 23 and Oct. 21**)).

### **Grade Distribution:**

3 review papers	30%
Project 1	20%
Project 2	40%
Reading Response	10%

### **Grading Scale:**

92-100 = A, 83-91 = B, 74-82 = C, 65-73 = D, < 65 = F

### **Grades can be measured as follows:**

- A Shows superior command of the evidence and the ability to employ relevant theory to great effect in the interpretation of assembled data. The A project or review can raise new questions in the context of previous scholarship. An A project also shows flawless English grammar and rhetoric.
- B Shows strong command of the evidence and some ability to form independent interpretive judgment. A B project shows near flawless English grammar and rhetoric.
- C A C project has some grasp of the relevant evidence and a general awareness of the central theoretical issues covered by the course but shows little ability to form independent scholarly judgment. Serious English compositional flaws may lower an otherwise A or B project to a C.
- D/F A D project shows serious gaps in assembling or understanding evidence or failure to grapple intelligently with the issues raised. An F project demonstrates a lack of awareness of the major issues of the course. A paper that could have been written without benefit of taking the course is a failing paper.

### **Course Format:**

This course is designed to have multiple formats of learning. It uses class discussion, guest speakers, panels, video presentation, class presentations, case studies, and small groups, along with lecture.

## **Course Policies:**

**Attendance:** Come to class! If you must be absent, owing to significant illness or a major family crisis, please notify the professor in advance.

**Respect for Colleagues:** Treat your fellow students with the respect you want for yourself.

**Classroom Virtues:** The GST invites students to participate in a process of theological and spiritual formation. Knowing how to think theologically comes by habit and by imitation, not simply by acquiring isolated facts. The assumption here is that books alone are insufficient for addressing difficulties of life and forming people into the image and likeness of God. Pursue “intellectual, moral, spiritual excellence,” the result of which is the formation of the whole person with such qualities as *desire for truth in the context of love, humility, honesty, openness, courage, wisdom, stewardship, hopefulness, and prayerfulness*.

**Timeliness:** Hand in your assignments on time. Assignments submitted late without prior permission will receive significantly lower grades.

**Come to class prepared!**

## **Required Textbooks:**

Grossoehme, Daniel H. *The Pastoral Care of Children*. Haworth Pastoral Press, 1999.  
May, Scottie, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell, *Children Matter*. Eerdmans, 2005.  
Ratcliff, Donald (ed.), *Children's Spirituality: Christian Perspectives, Research, and Applications* (recommended). Cascade, 2004.  
Westerhoff, John III, *Will Our Children Have Faith* (rev. ed.). Morehouse, 2000.  
Distributed articles

## **Related Readings:**

Anderson, Herbert & Susan B. W. Johnson, *Regarding Children: A New Respect for Childhood and Families*. Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.  
Beckwith, Ivy, *Postmodern Children's Ministry: Ministry to Children in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Zondervan, 2004.  
Berryman, Jerome, *Godly Play*. Harper Collins, 1991.  
Bottigheimer, Ruth B., *The Bible for Children : From the Age of Gutenberg to the Present*. Yale University Press, 1996.  
Bunge, Marcia J. ed., *The Child in Christian Thought*. Eerdmans, 2001.  
Bushnell, Horace, *Christian Nurture*. Yale University Press, 1967.  
Coles, Robert, *The Spiritual Life of Children*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990.  
Cully, Iris V., *The Bible in Christian Education*. Fortress Press, 1995.  
Dawn, Marva J., *Is It a Lost Cause?: Having the Heart of God for the Church's Children*. William B. Eerdmans, 1997.  
Francis, Leslie J and Jeff Astley, *Children, Churches and Christian Learning*. SPCK, 2002.

- Gardner, Howard, *Frames of the Mind*. Basic Books, 1983.
- Garland, Diana R., *Precious in His Sight: A Guide to Child Advocacy*. New Hope, 1996.
- Graue, M. E. and Walsh, D. J. *Studying Children in Context*. Sage, 1998.
- Hay, David and Rebecca Nye, *The Spirit of the Child*. Fount/Harper Collins, 1998.
- Hickman, Hoyt L et al., *The New Handbook of the Christian Year*. Abingdon Press, 1992.
- Ingle, Clifford (ed.), *Children and Conversion*. Broadman Press, 1970
- Jutila, Craig et al. *Children's Ministry that Works* (rev. ed.). Group, 2002.
- Krych, Margaret, *The Ministry of Children's Education*. Fortress Press, 2004.
- LeFever, Marlene D., *Creative Teaching Methods*. David C. Cook, 1985.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie, *Let the Children Come*. Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Ratcliff, Donald (ed.), *Handbook of Preschool Religious Education*. Religious Education Press, 1988.
- Ratcliff, Donald E. (ed.) *Handbook of Children's Religious Education*. Religious Education Press, 1992.
- Richards, Lawrence, *A Theology of Children's Ministry*. Ministry Resources, 1983.
- Sisemore, Timothy A., *Of Such is the Kingdom: Nurturing Children in the Light of Scripture*. Christian Focus, 2000.
- Stonehouse, Catherine, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey*. Baker, 1998.
- Strange, W. A., *Children in the Early Church: Children in the Ancient World, the New Testament and the Early Church*. Paternoster, 1996.
- Strommen, Merton P. & Hardel, Richard, *Passing on the Faith*, Saint Mary's Press, 2000.
- Thompson, Marjorie J., *Family the Forming Center*. Upper Room Books, 1996.
- Wigger, J. B., *The Power of God at Home: Nurturing our Children in Love and Grace*. Jossey-Bass, 2003.
- Zuck, Roy B., *Precious in His Sight: Childhood & Children in the Bible*. Baker Books, 1996.

## Course Schedule

### Unit One: Foundational Framework for Children's Ministry

*Thursday, September 21, 1-5*

- **Introduction to the Course**  
Children's Ministry Today
- **Biblical, Theological, and Historical Framework**  
Nurture, formation  
Theology of Children  
Parents and Children

**Readings:** May, et al, pp. 3-72.

**Book Review Due** (Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*)

*Thursday, September 21, 6-9*

- **Developmental Framework**  
Physical, Social, Moral, and Intellectual  
Children's Spiritual Formation  
An Integrated Perspective

**Readings:** May, et al, pp. 73-111; Estep, "Spiritual Formation as Social: Toward a Vygotskyan Developmental Perspective", 141-164.

**Movie Review Due** ("Ponette"—A film by Jacques Doillon)  
**Abilene Public Library Call # 791.43 Pon**

### Unit Two: Contexts for Children's Ministry

*Friday, September 22, 8-12*

- **The Family (home)**

**Reading:** May, et al, pp. 150-172.

- **The Church and Community**

**Reading:** May, et al, pp. 115-149; Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry*, pp.71-122.

*Friday, September 22, 1-5*

- **Video, discussion and meal at Professor Kang-Hamilton's home**

*Saturday, September 23, 8-12*

- **Class Presentations and discussion**

### **Unit Three: Teaching/learning with Children**

#### ***Thursday October 19, 1-5***

- **Goals and Issues:** Age of accountability, conversion, baptism etc.  
Processes: Storytelling, Ritual, Worship

**Readings:** May, et al, pp. 173-189; 215-281; Waldref, “Families and Meaningful Worship”, 24-35;  
Zuck, “Of Such is the Kingdom of God: Children, Baptism, and Salvation,” 217-41.

#### ***Thursday, October 19, 6-9***

- **Curriculum:** review current curricula  
The Bible and Children

**Readings:** Alter, “Why the Bible is Good for Children (And Even Adults),” 33-44; Beckwith, “The Bible is for Children, Too,” pp. 123-139;  
May, et al, pp. 190-212.

### **Unit Four: Responsibilities, Ministries and Programs for Children’s Ministry**

#### ***Friday, October 20, 8-12***

- **The Role of the Children’s Minister**  
Vision, Goals, Skills, Ministries, Programs
- **Models for Children’s Ministry**
- **The Pastoral Care of Children**

**Reading:** May, et al, pp. 330-353.

#### ***Friday, October 20, 1-5***

- **Visit and Panel Discussion with Children’s Ministers**
- **Specialized Ministries and Issues for Children’s Ministry**
- **Video presentation: “A Sacred Trust: Boundary for Clergy and Spiritual Teachers”**

**Reading:** May, et al, pp. 282-329.

**Book Review Due (Grossoehme, D., *The Pastoral Care of Children*)**

#### ***Saturday, October 21, 8-12***

- **Class Presentations**
- **Resources for Children’s Ministry**
- **Overview and Challenges—“Will Our Children Have Faith?” or “Will Our Faith Have Children?”**

## Instructions for the Major Projects

### Project 1

The goal of the project is to help the student come to know children in the contexts of their lives (school, church, home, etc.), to discover how the children think and form perspectives on the world, and to understand their spiritual lives. To achieve this, you must listen to them, talk with them, share their feelings, and, in short, experience their worlds. You may wish to visit the child's school or playground, Bible class, or some other setting. Be sure to obtain the permission of parents and teachers to do this.

To complete this project, you must help two children complete three tasks:

- a. Draw a picture or describe of what they think of when they hear about God.
- b. Draw and/or tell about their favorite stories from the Bible (you might allow them to look through a children's Bible to help them do this).
- c. Have a conversation with them about going to church, praying, thinking about God, experiencing a faith community, responding to difficult situations, etc.

The children you study may be aged 4-12. One should be a girl, and the other a boy. And they should be from different families.

In addition, you should interview the parents of the children you study. You should formulate a list of questions about the spiritual lives of the children to ask of the parents: e.g., what kinds of religious questions does the child ask? how does the child respond to church activities? what kind of religious activities does the family engage in, and how are they structured? what rituals or traditions exist within the family and how does the child fit within them?

Both the 8-page paper and the 10-15-minute presentation should describe in detail the settings, duration, and nature of your interactions with the child. Reflect on each of the three assignments the child completed (drawing a picture related to God, telling or drawing a favorite Bible story, and the conversation about spiritual matters), and attach the work produced by the child as an appendix to the paper. The paper should conclude with your understanding of the lives of children based on this research project and your readings for the course. **The attached article by Cram, "Knowing God: Children, Play, and Paradox" will provide an excellent point of reference for your work.**

### Project 2

*Interview a children's minister* (not a lay leader) in a church in the community. Formulate a series of questions concerning her or his background, education, ministerial history, theology of ministry, practices, peer networks, administrative practices, relationships to parents and colleagues, interactions with school and community organizations, and other topics that seem relevant to you. Find out how she plans her week, trains and supports volunteers, develops curricula, operates through administrative structures, and works on her own spiritual development. If possible, visit the children's ministries led by your interviewee, attending Sunday worship, staff meetings, etc. **Or choose a church** you are

attending and describe, analyze, or observe the children's program within the whole context.

The 15-18 page paper should have the following components. The first two-thirds should formulate your findings from interviews and observations of your chosen children's minister or church. **The last third (5 pages) should offer your own considered theology of children's ministry. This is a chance for you to describe how you would/will implement a children's ministry. This section should include your theology of children, your understanding of the children's ministry's relationship to the community, etc. It should also include your understanding of the processes of teaching and learning.**