Adult Believers in a Postmodern Context  
Summer 2015

Dr. Jane E. Regan  
reganje@bc.edu (best contact)  
617 552 8448

What are the dynamics that make adults ready and able to live effectively as people of faith in our contemporary postmodern context? What does it mean to be a believer in such a context and how are adults supported in the maturity of faith? Theology, psychology, and education theory all have a contribution to make in addressing these questions. Focused consideration is given to contemporary theories in adult development and adult learning. Attention is given to the implications of this for the parish/congregation, but broader applications are also considered.

Course objectives:  
At the end of the course the students will be able to:  
• articulate the characteristics that mark a post-modern context and the impact it has on believing, faith, and the process of faith formation.  
• describe a developmental theory that bring post-modernity into dialogue with human knowing  
• explain the dynamics of transformative learning and its implications for forming faith  
• name the ways in which the course’s key concepts apply to their own pastoral setting

Course approach and format  
Set in an online context, this course has many of the same characteristics on a face-to-face (f2f) course, though this is generally accomplished in a different way. As with a face to face course, the aim is to build a learning community that examines core concepts set out by key texts. At the core of our cooperative learning in this course is a series of texts that serve to mark out the basic outline of each session's theme. It is important preparation for class to carefully read the text, engaging in a process of conversation with the text.  
Conversation with the text - what does this mean? We approach any text on a variety of levels: on one level we follow the narrative of the text, asking questions about the explicit events or images being presented or the ideas being explored. At a second level we are attempting to enter into the world being set out in the text. Here the focus is not simply on attending to the words of the text, but also understanding the "world" of the text: the world that allows the ideas being presented to have meaning and to be meaningful (Tracy). A third level involves our entering into the text from our own world – the world of the reader. Our experiences and perceptions of those experiences shape the way we read and interpret a text -we approach the text with our own pre-understandings (Gadamer) that provides the basis for our understanding of the text.
Most of us do pretty well with the first level of reading, but it is actually the second and third levels that are of interest to us here. It is only by acknowledging and entering into the process by which my world shapes my engagement with the text and the text in turn shapes my world that I can authentically say that I “know” the text.

To assist this process, keep in mind a series of questions as you read a text:
1. What section on the text is unclear? Why is it unclear?
2. With what in the text do you strongly react – in either agreement or disagreement? What is the source of the strong response?
3. If you had the opportunity to be in conversation with the author, what would you say or ask?
4. As you were reading, what experiences came to mind? How are these challenged and/or affirmed by the text?

Class Format
We gather as an online community of learners, we bring to the learning process our experiences, our understandings of ourselves as women and men, as people of faith, as ministers in church and world. The responsibility of each participant is to enter authentically into the text, to engage in conversation with active listening and honest speaking, and to make application of shared insights to the understanding of him/herself as believer and as minister. My responsibility as teacher is to provide a context and a hospitable space for engaging in these readings, conversation, and reflection. All participants share in the responsibility for the learning of all.

For Students with Disabilities:
If you have a disability and will be requesting accommodations for this course, please register with either Kathy Duggan (kathleen.duggan@bc.edu) Associate Director, Academic Support Services, the Connors Family Learning Center (learning disabilities and ADHD) or Paulette Durrett (paulette.durrett@bc.edu), Assistant Dean for Students with Disabilities (all other disabilities). Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

Academic Integrity Policy:
Plagiarism is the act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one’s own. Penalties at Boston College range from a grade penalty to dismissal from the University. To avoid plagiarism, any use of another’s words or ideas must be fully cited. If in the original wording, quotation marks or blocked, indented quotations must be used. For more information regarding plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity, please consult the STM website.

Bias neutral and Inclusive Language:
Language is not fixed or static, but is constantly evolving and changing as society's attitudes and practices change. Be aware of the development of new forms of expression that endeavor to describe persons in non-discriminatory ways that are appropriate, respectful and just. In accordance with the Chicago Manual of Style and generally accepted contemporary canons of
scholarship, the expectation is to use bias neutral language in academic writing. In addition to gender inclusive language, conscientious effort should be made to use appropriate language with reference to race, ethnicity, disability, age, religion, social status, etc.

Requirements

Participation in online conversation the heart of the course is at the point of intersection between the texts that we are considering and your experience, insights and contributions. That point of intersection takes place primarily in the online discussion; your participation constitutes 50% of your grade for this course.

Expectations:
- At least three substantive posts per week. This is a minimum requirement and, if well completed, constitutes a grade of "B" (See “Criteria for Evaluating Posting” in Canvas for some helpful suggestions.)
  - Two posts in response to the questions/discussion topics; these are to be posted no later than midnight on Wednesday of each week.
  - One post in response to someone else's post or as a way of furthering the discussion; these are to be posted no later than midnight on Friday of each week.
- Careful read of the post of other participants.
- Completion of all online polls, surveys and quizzes.

Two short essays are written over the course of the semester providing the opportunity for reflection on ideas and integration of readings. Focus questions following. The paper should run approximately 900 - 1200 words.

Essay 1 - Due Monday, June 1 by 11:59 PM
Explore the implications of Kegan’s orders of consciousness for a ministerial context that interests you. Your essay of no more than 4 pages should include:
  - a brief description of the ministerial setting;
  - a discussion of the orders of consciousness that might be represented in those involved in the ministerial setting;
  - a description of the dynamics that would support and encourage the order of consciousness and/or transition;
  - implications of this for the ministerial setting.

Essay 2 - Due Friday, June 12 by 11:59 pm
What are the implications of transformative learning for how we engage in supporting adult believers in a post-modern context? Your essay of no more than 4 pages should include:
  - a description of what you understand to be the core dynamics or elements of transformative learning
  - the link that you see between transformation learning and the post-modern context
  - implications of this for a ministerial setting
This syllabus is in process and subject to minor changes. The final syllabus will be available 4/11/2015

**Book review.** To add breadth to your understanding and application of this material, you will read an additional text and write a 3-4 page review of the book. See “Book Review” on Canvas for more information. The review should include:

- a brief summary of the content of the book
- a discussion of the strengths and contributions of the text
- an examination of the weaknesses of the text and/or the area in need of further development
- a final paragraph or two indicating the helpfulness (or lack thereof) of the text for your ministerial setting.

**Note that the Book Review is due no later than June 19**

**Approximate “weight” of each element toward final grade:**

- 50% Participation online
- 30% Short essays
- 20% Book Review

**Course Outline and Readings**

**Unit One: Postmodernity, Faith, and Knowing**


**Unit Two: Orders of Knowing in a Postmodern Context**

- Kegan, Robert. *In Over Our Heads*. Chapters 3 - 10

**Unit Three: Transformative Learning**

This syllabus is in process and subject to minor changes. The final syllabus will be available 4/11/2015


**Unit Four: Facilitating Learning in a Postmodern Context**

- Palmer, Parker J. Chapter 5: “To teach is to Create a Space...” Chapter 6 “In Which Obedience to Truth is Practiced.” In *To Know as We Are Known: A Spirituality of Education*. 69-105. 1st ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983