



HARDING SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

BMIN 5880 Christian Formation of Children

Syllabus

October 9-13, 2023, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Professors:

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"Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all." Mark 10:15

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides a theological foundation for ministry and mission to and with children. The class will present best practices to church leaders about how to nurture a Christian community that passes on the faith to children, cultivates spirituality within children, and empowers parents to disciple children. The course also highlights God's advocacy for all children and how fostering spirituality in children in hard places in our churches and around the globe promotes resilience.

COURSE GOALS

Intended Student Outcomes: Students who take this course will be able to:

1. Articulate a coherent, cohesive definition of children's spirituality from a Christian perspective.

This competency is developed through course readings and classroom discussion; it is

evaluated in the final integration/reflection assignment for which they develop a plan for one of the following three options:

- a plan for equipping parents to foster spirituality and resilience in their children, or
- a plan for fostering spirituality and resilience in the children in their children's ministry, or
- a plan for fostering spirituality and resiliency in the children with whom they work in their parachurch organization.

This definitional work is a key piece of this culminating assignment.

2. *Offer biblical and theological support for the idea that children are spiritual beings.*

This outcome is measured through the short introductory assignment on the biblical and theological support for children's spirituality as well as in the final integration/reflection paper.

3. *Evaluate children's curriculum biblically, theologically, and spiritually.*

This competency will be acquired through evaluating published children's curriculum biblically, theologically, and spiritually. This competency will be assessed in a post-course assignment in which the student will evaluate one published Bible class lesson for biblical accuracy, theological balance, and spiritual opportunity.

4. *Explain and articulate common feelings, needs, and challenges of children who have experienced loss, grief, or trauma.*

This competency will be acquired throughout the course from interacting with the course readings on resilience, trauma, and children's spirituality, and more fully in the experience with the guest speaker, Dr. Kim Scott. This competency will be evaluated in the "Best Insights" short paper, and ultimately in the final integration/reflection paper as the students describe the types of hardships the children in their settings may encounter.

5. *Understand and describe a variety of ways to promote, nurture, or enhance spiritual development in children.*

This competency will be developed throughout the course in class discussions over course readings and through experiencing a variety of hands-on activities designed to nurture children spiritually. It will be evaluated in the "Best Ideas" short papers, and ultimately in the final integration/reflection paper.

BOOKS AND READINGS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS (see reading suggestions for auditors in next section)

Required Texts for this Three-Hour Graduate Course

Allen, Holly C. (2021). *Forming Resilient Children: The Role of Spiritual Formation for Healthy Development*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic.

Gwinn, Casey, and Chan Hellman. (2019). *Hope Rising*. New York: Morgan James.

Other Required Readings for this Three-Hour Graduate Course (all chapters and excerpts listed below are available online):

Allen, Holly C., Christine M. Lawton, and Cory L. Seibel. (2023). *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community, and Worship* (2nd edition). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic.

- Chapter 11: “Practicing Spiritual Disciplines Intergenerationally,” pp. 190-203.
- Chapter 12: “Intergenerational Small Groups,” pp. 204-216.
- Chapter 13: “Intergenerational Learning Experiences,” pp. 217-230.

Allen, Holly C. (2012). “Curriculum and Children’s Ministry.” In J. Estep, R. White, & K. Estep (Eds.), *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.

- Chapter 12, pp. 239 – 252.

Allen, Holly C. (2002). *A Qualitative Study Exploring the Similarities and differences of the Spirituality of Children in Intergenerational and Non-Intergenerational Christian Contexts* (pp. 184-194). Doctoral dissertation, Talbot School of Theology, La Mirada, CA, 2002).

- Section titled: “Children’s Spirituality” (12 pages).

Bunge, Marcia, editor. (2008). *The Child in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

- Gundry, Judith. Chapter 7: “Children in the Gospel of Mark, with Special Attention to Jesus’ Blessing of the Children (Mark 10:13-16), pp. 143-176.
- Towner, W. Sibley. Chapter 14: “Children and the Image of God,” pp. 307-323.
- White, Keith J. Chapter 16: “He Placed a Little Child in the Midst”: Jesus, the Kingdom, and Children,” pp. 353-375.

May, Scottie, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell. (2005). *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

- Chapter One: “Metaphors Shape Ministry” (pp. 3-25).

Shank, Harold. “The Decalogue and Justice for Children: The Value and the Vulnerability of Children.” *Journal of Christian Studies* 2:1 (January 2023).

BOOKS AND READINGS FOR AUDITORS

Recommended Texts for Auditors

Allen, Holly C. (2021). *Forming Resilient Children: The Role of Spiritual Formation for Healthy Development*. InterVarsity Academic. (Most importantly read chapters one, two, and three; then choose two or three other chapters that pique your interest).

Gwinn, Casey, and Hellman Chan. (2019). *Hope Rising*. New York: Morgan James, 2019. (Most importantly read chapter 2: “What is Hope?” and other chapters that pique your interest).

Recommended Readings for Auditors

Allen, Holly C., Christine M. Lawton, and Cory L. Seibel. (2023). *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community, and Worship* (2nd edition). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic.

- Chapter 11: “Practicing Spiritual Disciplines Intergenerationally,” pp. 190-203.
- Chapter 13: “Intergenerational Learning Experiences,” pp. 217-230.

Allen, Holly C. (2012). “Curriculum and Children’s Ministry.” In J. Estep, R. White, & K. Estep (Eds.), *Mapping Out Curriculum in Your Church: Cartography for Christian Pilgrims* Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.

- Chapter 12, pp. 239 – 252).

Bunge, Marcia, editor. *The Child in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

- Gundry, Judith. Chapter 7: “Children in the Gospel of Mark, with Special Attention to Jesus’ Blessing of the Children (Mark 10:13-16), pp. 143-176.
- Towner, W. Sibley. Chapter 14: “Children and the Image of God,” pp. 307-323.

May, Scottie, Beth Posterski, Catherine Stonehouse, and Linda Cannell. (2005). *Children Matter: Celebrating Their Place in the Church, Family, and Community*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. Chapter One: “Metaphors Shape Ministry” (pp. 3-25).

Shank, Harold. “The Decalogue and Justice for Children: The Value and the Vulnerability of Children.” *Journal of Christian Studies* 2:1 (January 2023).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS TAKING THE COURSE FOR CREDIT

Assignments/Grading: All papers are to be typed as double spaced, 12-pt font documents. Papers submitted during the week of October 9-13 may be submitted as hard copies; those due in November and December may be submitted on Canvas.

1. Biblical and theological support for children’s spirituality. From the readings, locate and summarize three biblical or theological insights that support the idea that children are spiritual beings. Three pages; 10% of final grade. Due **Monday, October 9** at the beginning of class. More detailed guidelines will be available soon.
2. Best four ideas regarding experiences/activities that nurture children spirituality (from readings). Four pages; 20% of final grade. Due **Wednesday, October 11** at the beginning of class. More detailed guidelines will be available soon.
3. Best insights regarding loss, trauma, adversity, and grief children face. Three pages; 10% of final grade. Due **Thursday, October 12** at the beginning of class. More detailed guidelines will be available soon.
4. Curriculum Evaluation of one Bible class lesson, focusing on the biblical, theological, and spiritual aspects of the lesson. Three to four pages; 10% of final grade. **Due Friday, November 10** on Canvas at 11:59 pm. More detailed guidelines will be available soon.
5. Final Integration/Reflection Paper. This culminating assignment incorporates the principal aspects of this course: You will be creating a five-session plan for one of the following options:
 - equipping parents to foster spirituality and resilience in their children, or
 - preparing children’s ministers to promote spirituality and resilience in the children in their ministries, or
 - sharing with those who work in parachurch organizations how to nurture spirituality and

resilience in the children with whom they work.

Your paper will

- describe the setting you are addressing, including the general demographics of the children represented in that setting (by your participants) along with *possible* or *common* difficulties or hardships among this population of children.
- share the means by which the ideas you outline in this paper will be communicated to the parents, ministry support staff, or parachurch staff who work with children in this setting, that is, where it might take place, how it will be promoted, and when it might take place (e.g., once a week, an all-day workshop, etc.).
- include your working definition of children's spirituality.
- a short section that biblically or theologically supports the idea that children are spiritual beings.
- offer an overview of each of the five sessions you plan to facilitate with the basic information for each session described, including a variety of spiritually formative experiences or activities you plan to share with your participants.

The paper will need to be at least 15 pages of text (thus, the title page and reference section will lengthen the paper to 17 or 18 pages). The body of the paper (the text) may be as long as 18 pages (with the title page and reference section expanding it to 19-20 pages). Nine of the twelve course sources must be cited in this paper (the two required books each count as one source, from the online readings, each of the ten required chapters is a single source). The paper is worth 50% of final grade and is due **Friday, Dec. 8**. More detailed guidelines will be available soon.

GRADING SCALE

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = < 60

ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND INFORMATION

Accessibility/Communication

Use the email addresses and phone numbers at the top of the syllabus to contact the two adjunct professors teaching this class.

Credit Hour Workload

For every course credit hour, the typical student should expect to spend at least three clock hours per week of concentrated attention on course-related work, including but not limited to time attending class, as well as out-of-class time spent reading, reviewing, organizing notes, preparing for upcoming quizzes/exams, problem solving, developing and completing projects, and other activities that enhance learning. Thus, for a three-hour course, a typical student should expect to spend at least nine hours per week dedicated to the course.

Textbooks

Textbooks can now be ordered through a link on the [HST website](#). The Textbooks tab can be viewed on the navigation bar on any page of the website. Check the book list provided under the Textbooks tab (<http://hst.edu/students/textbook-services/>) for correct ISBN's and editions to

insure correct ordering. A link provided there will take you to Amazon where you will only need to enter the ISBN to order your books. Online readings are listed on Canvas.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of Harding University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation should inform the instructor at the beginning of the course. Students with disabilities are also encouraged to contact Steve McLeod, the Associate Dean, at 901-761-1353.

Library Resources

If you have not taken 5990 (Advanced Theological Research) or took it more than a year ago, go to the HST Web site (www.hst.edu) for information concerning library services to students. Under the “library” tab you will find a link to and instructions for searching the HST online catalog. There are also instructions for using the following databases available through the library: OCLC FirstSearch, EBSCOhost, Infotrac, and Religious and Theological Abstracts. Contact the library for passwords to these databases. Also available are the research guides distributed in 5990. These annotated bibliographies list basic tools you will find helpful in your research.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty in all its forms is inconsistent with Christian faith and practice, and will result in penalties which could include a failing grade for the assignment, a failing grade for the course, dismissal from the course, and even dismissal from the school.

Canvas Online Learning System

This course uses Harding’s *Canvas Online Learning System*, which is accessed at <http://elearning.harding.edu>. If you have problems gaining access to Canvas, contact HU technical support (501) 279-4545. You will need your HST username and your password to log into Harding Pipeline. These are the same credentials you use to register for classes via Pipeline.

When you need to contact your professor via email, you may use the email system contained in the Canvas learning management system, although it is best to email directly to the professors’ email addresses.

Harding University gives each student an email address that also utilizes your user name. Many students use other email addresses as their preferred address. You can set your Harding G-mail account to forward messages to an alternative email address if you want; however, it is your responsibility to check your Harding email account regularly because this is the official Harding email address to which all Harding-related email will be sent.

BMIN 5880 Christian Formation of Children Proposed Schedule October 9 – 13, 2023

Professor initials in parenthesis

	Monday, October 9	Tuesday, October 10	Wednesday, October 11	Thursday, October 12	Friday, October 13
Key areas of focus for the day	Introduction - Definitional work - Theological support	Embedding children’s spirituality in children’s ministry	Intergenerationality: The role of the whole church in the faith formation of children	Children in hard places, globally and locally	Equipping and empowering parents
8:00 – 10:00	Introduction: Children from 2 Kings 2:23-25 to Zech. 8:1-6 (HS) Overview & definitional work for spirituality and resilience (HCA)	A child named Ketannah—spirituality and resilience (2 Kgs 5) (HS) Children’s faith development & spiritual development (HCA)	Theological support for intergenerational engagement—Blessing (HS) Empirical & theoretical support for inter-generational engagement (HCA)	How nurturing children spiritually fosters resilience when children are facing trauma, grief, or loss. (HCA)	How adults (parents, children’s ministers, and others who work with children) can foster spirituality and resilience in the children in their care (HCA)
10:00 – 10:15	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10:15 – 11:45	Gen 1—Image (HS) Biblical and theological support for children as spiritual beings (HCA)	Five approaches to children’s ministry; strengths and challenges (HCA)	Teaching and learning intergenerationally (HCA)	Childist Studies—Recent trends and results (HS) Global and Domestic issues regarding children (HS)	Speaking blessing over our children <i>Visio divina</i> (HCA)
11:45 – 1:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
1:00 – 2:45	Nurturing children spiritually; Reading good books, asking good questions (HCA)	Space for contemplation and wondering - Godly Play - Labyrinth (HCA)	Embedding our stories in the Christian metanarrative (HCA)	Kim Scott: Guest lecturer on children and trauma, ACEs and resilience of at-risk children including foster children (HS)	Intro final integrative/reflective assignment: Developing a plan for equipping parents (and others) to foster spirituality and resilience in their children (HCA)
2:45 – 3:00	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break

3:00 – 5:00	Deut. 6:4-6 (HS) Student groups discuss Bunge 14 ----- Evaluating curriculum theologically and biblically (HCA)	The Child in Mark (HS) Student groups discuss Bunge 7 ----- Evaluating curriculum: knowing/being/doing; wonder; good questions; prayer (HCA)	Children in the Kingdom Student groups discuss Bunge 16 (HS) ----- Evaluating curriculum: metanarrative connections; spiritual disciplines (HCA)	Global and domestic achievements in dealing with at-risk children (HS) Student Groups discuss <i>Hope Rising</i> (HS)	Blessing and closure (HS and HCA)
Readings for the day:	Allen: Allen: <i>Forming</i> , Ch 1, 2, 3 Allen: Allen dissertation excerpt on children’s spirituality Shank: Towner, “Children and the Image of God,” ch. 14 in Bunge, <i>The Child in the Bible</i>	Allen: Allen, <i>Forming</i> , Ch. 7, 8, 9 May et al.: <i>Children Matter</i> , ch 1, “Metaphors Shape Ministry.” Allen, “Curriculum and Children’s Ministry,” Estep, White, & Estep, ch. 12, <i>Mapping Out Curriculum in Your church</i> Shank: Gundry, “Children in the gospel of Mark,” ch. 7 in Bunge, <i>The Child in the Bible</i>	Allen: Allen, Lawton, & Seibel, ch. 11, 12, 13, <i>Intergenerational Christian Formation</i> , 2 nd ed. Allen: Ch 6 in <i>Forming</i> Shank: White: “He Placed a Little Child in the Midst,” ch. 16 in Bunge, <i>The Child in the Bible</i>	Allen: Allen, <i>Forming</i> , Ch. 10, 11 Shank: Gwinn and Hellman, <i>Hope Rising</i> , Ch. 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 15 Shank, “The Decalogue and Justice for Children” JCS 2:1 (January 2023)	Allen: Allen: <i>Forming</i> , Ch 4, 5, 13
Written Assign- ments	Three-page biblical/ theological paper: Three biblical or theological insights from course readings that support the idea that children are spiritual beings.	One-page reflection on May chapter: Five approaches to children’s ministry; strengths and challenges.	Four-page spiritual experiences paper: Best ideas from course readings regarding experiences/ activities that nurture children spirituality	Three-page paper on adversity children face: Best insights from readings regarding loss, trauma, adversity, and grief children face.	