Research Methods in Religious Education

REGR 8401
Spring 2016
Tuesday 7:00pm -8:50pm
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Course Description
The seminar is designed to create a community of colleagues in scholarly conversation. The conversation will: a) explore research methodologies and b) examine in depth themes current in religious education and of interest to the participants. The process offers guidance in the preparation of dissertation proposals. A series of proposals with different methodologies will be examined with the assistance of some guest speakers.

Pedagogical Process
1. We meet 14 times during the semester, for 1 hour and 50 minutes. (Tuesday 7:00pm -8:50pm)
2. The educative design is a dialectical conversation, structured to actively engage the contribution of each participant. It is not a lecture format.
3. Participants will take turns anchoring the conversation. Each anchor-person may structure the pedagogical flow as s/he sees appropriate to encourage good conversation. (See handout)

Course Objectives
• To explore research methodologies in religious education. Both humanistic (historical, philosophical, theoretical) and social science (qualitative, ethnographic, empirical, case study) methods of research will be examined. See Guidelines for Research with human subjects.
• To critically engage key content/themes in current religious education scholarship. These themes will be chosen in light of the participant’s interests and doctoral research.
• To illuminate the structure and format of a dissertation proposal.

A series of guest scholars will assist us in these endeavors.

Course Requirements
1. Participants read thoroughly assigned readings for each session.
2. Write 2 page summary each week, with observations and questions, on each reading assignment.
3. Participate in each class and contribute to the enrichment of the conversation on methodologies and content themes. (See guidelines).

4. Read and report on one dissertation utilizing the methodology you envision for your own work.

5. Preparing or completing a specific dissertation proposal is not a requirement of the seminar. This is the responsibility of the participant with his/her mentor.

Grade: Pass / Fail

Texts

Course pack will be available on e-reserve.
Password access is: researchmethods

Office Hours: Tuesday 3:30 -5:00pm
(Keating 303K) and by appointment.
Office phone: (718)(817-4817)

Home Address: 115 Cornell Ave.
Hawthorne, N.J. 07506-1120

Home Phone: (973)(310-3621)
(M-Th.9:00am-5:00pm).

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Notice: Please turn off all cell phones, pages and tape recorders during class.
Anchoring the Conversation

Function of the “anchor-person” is to create an environment and dynamic of conversation, and to maintain these throughout, renewing as necessary. This is more active than passive role. It entails:

- Focusing the conversation and engaging people as active participants from the beginning.
- Seeing to it that everyone has the opportunity to express him or herself around the theme of the conversation.
- Encouraging active listening by all participants, and seeing to it that each person is “heard”.
- Refocusing the conversation as necessary, e.g. bringing back to the theme or text if needed.

Preparation for All Participants

Generally, the task is to read the assigned texts carefully, consciously bringing your own culture, interests, and questions – your perspective to the reading.

Then assemble some notes – that reflect;

1. What I heard this text saying of itself- from my perspective
2. How I respond to and appropriate its insights, wisdom, proposals
3. The implications or resource I discern for religious education

To help us “honor” the texts of each day, the “anchor person” will bring a brief summary of what he or she heard from the text (No. 1 above), and a suggestion of the questions that should engage the group. No more than two (2) double-spaced pages.

He or she might begin the seminar time with a reflective moment, and should bring us back to “implications for religious education” before we end.