



## COURSE SYLLABUS

### School of Theology

Course Title:	<b>Children, youth and families: a practical and theological approach to ministry in the church and beyond</b>		
Course Code:	<b>THEO 3900</b>	Term:	<b>2019SS</b>
Day/Time:	<b>June 17 – 21 9 AM – 4 PM daily</b>	Location:	<b>T140 Thorneloe University</b>
Instructor:	<b>The Reverend Dr. Valerie Michaelson</b>		

### I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course builds a biblical and theological foundation, explores faith development issues, and formulates a rationale for ministry to and with children, youth and families.

Canadian young people live in a fast paced, perpetually connected world. Mental health challenges are at an unprecedented high. They face complex questions about gender, sexuality and identity; many traditional family structures have reconfigured; and the world in which they live, learn and develop can feel more violent and chaotic by the day. And in all of this, Canadian young people also have more opportunities, resources and protections than ever before. It's a context that is full of paradoxes, but one thing is certain; it's not a simple time to be a child or a teenager. And it's not a simple time to be in ministry. The ways that we approach our ministries to and with young people and their families need to reflect the complexity of these and other contemporary challenges.

In this course, we will live in questions about our contemporary Canadian context, and seek the scriptures and our traditions to shape our responses. I approach ministry as a practical theologian. Because of this, I will work with you to build a conceptual framework for your ministry to and with children, youth and families that is based on a strong biblical and theological foundation, and that is informed by contemporary research on culture, adolescent development and families. You will not leave the class with any one *formula* or *program* to follow in your ministry or home. Rather, you will gain problem solving skills that you can apply in a wide variety of contexts (home, church, community contexts and beyond), with the end goal of helping young people to flourish.

Some of the major questions we will explore in this course include:

- What theological principles and biblical insights can help me shape children, youth and family ministry that is responsive to the real challenges of today's families in Canada? And further, how does our theology inform our practice, and how does what we see in our practice shape the theological questions we need to ask?
- How can insights from developmental psychology, health and education research inform my work with youth and families?
- What resources does the Christian tradition have to offer? To what responsibilities does the Gospel call us? And when it gets really messy, where can I go for help?

A wide range of literature, including digital resources, will be explored. Students will have the opportunity to use their assignments to explore their own interests as long as they relate to the broader course goals. Active learning is a high priority in this class, and a key component of the instructor's pedagogical strategies. Come prepared to wrestle with complex questions, to be challenged and to grow.

## **II. LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. Articulate a theological/biblical vision of youth and family ministry that is appropriate to their own context
2. Demonstrate an awareness of ways that church leaders can support parents in the home
3. Construct practical, theologically-informed and evidence-based resources to facilitate the faith development of teenagers
4. Evaluate the wide range of practical resources that are available in the area of youth and families
5. Demonstrate an awareness of issues that face First Nations, Inuit and Métis children in Canada today in particular, and explore the role of Canadian churches in reconciliation.
6. Examine critical issues facing families today, and design practical strategies to engage with these issues in the youth and family ministry context.
7. Appraise your own current ministry context with the goal of recognizing what is going extremely well, and also identifying areas where your ministry can grow in depth or would benefit from trying some different approaches.

## Textbook(s)

Students have an option of choosing between one of three text books. Please choose the one that is most relevant to your own learning goals.

- Option 1: Beckwith, I. *Formational Children's Ministry (ēmerision: Emergent Village resources for communities of faith): Shaping Children Using Story, Ritual, and Relationship*. Baker Books, 2004.
- Option 2: Mark DeVries and E.F. Palmer. *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).
- Option 3: Yust, Karen Marie. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

## Course Requirements

N.B. *Students auditing this course will be expected to complete all required readings and participate fully in class. Auditing students will not submit assignments for grading. If desired, auditing students may submit the Resource development assignment for practical feedback.*

### 1. Required Reading and Class Participation: (15%) Ongoing

Each student is asked to come to the first class having read at minimum the first two chapters of one required text. Please come prepared to share a short, favourite quote from one of the readings that represents something you think is important in the lives of children in or outside the church. **(15% of final grade). 10% of the final grade will be based on attendance and in-class participation, and 5% will be based on a self-assessment of one's own participation and engagement in class.**

### 2. Annotated Bibliography: (25%) Due Monday, July 8<sup>th</sup>

Students will submit an annotated bibliography of their course reading. While some readings are required (these will be identified in the first class), you will also have the opportunity to cater your readings to your own ministry context. You must choose your own readings from the bibliography in this syllabus (an updated version will be provided in class). You are responsible for reading 400 pages (some of this will be your choice). Please choose articles intentionally: those that challenge you, those that help you explore new ideas and those that are especially pertinent to your own ministry context. Websites may account for up to 50 pages of the required reading. I will show you how to count website pages in class. **For each article/book/website you read, please include the citation and one (short) paragraph describing what you took away from the reading that contributes to your own vision of ministry for and with children.** Your final submission should be 5-7 pages long.

The purpose of this assignment is to give you a chance to explore and think critically about a broad range of literature in the area of children's ministry and children's spirituality. This reading will help you develop your own vision of children's ministry (learning objective 1) and will be applicable to learning objectives 2 through 9.

An example of the annotated bibliography format will be given in class.

### 3. Resource development (30%) Due Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup>

Creating positive experiences for children and families is central to children's ministry and to nurturing children in their spiritual lives. This assignment is very practical, and the end result will be twofold:

1. Some kind of practical resource that can be used in a ministry context
2. A 2 to 3-page rationale, which references your own theological vision of children, youth and/or family ministry, and that explains what you have created/developed and why.

Examples of this assignment will be given in class. This assignment has a lot of flexibility. In the past, students have developed some marvelous resources: a "Lego story" to be used in their church's summer camp; a handbook for churches to welcome children with autism or other exceptionalities; an illustrated children's book to introduce children to dementia; a resource to teach children to pray; liturgies and prayers for dead pets, first day of school and the start of summer holidays and a job description for a youth minister in their church. One student developed a short handbook for children who were experiencing their parents' divorce; another student developed an Easter event for the children in his own church. Other students have explored the theme of reconciliation as it relates to the TRC, to Indigenous children and to Christian churches in Canada. More examples will be given in class, and I will work with you to match your resource development goals to your ministry context and interests.

Depending on what you choose to do, this assignment will potentially demonstrate most (or even all) of the 9 course learning outcomes.

### 4. Final Paper: (30%) Due on Monday, July 29<sup>th</sup>

Drawing from class discussions, your own ministry context and supplementary readings, choose an issue or question related to children's ministry in the church to explore. **Students will consult with the instructor throughout the week of classes to agree on a topic and/or research question.** It is hoped that the question or issue the student chooses to explore will be of practical benefit to his or her own ministry context or to his or her personal interest in nurturing children, youth and/or families in the Christian life. Ideally, this paper will have a theological/ theoretical component and also consider practical implications. In the past, students have written about a diverse range of topics including: baptism; children with autism; consumerism; spiritual development; prayer; popular culture; involving children in worship; teaching children about money; mental health, intergenerational ministry; youth ministry; children and death, family ministry, training leaders and all kinds of other important topics. Through this assignment, you will demonstrate many, if not all, of the course learning objectives. Please choose a topic that you care about, and that you want to consider more deeply in your own life and ministry.

This paper should be in the range of 7-9 pages, double-spaced.

## Method of Evaluation

Evaluation is based upon the completion of the following assignments:

Required Reading and Class Participation (10% attendance and participation; 5% self-evaluation)	15 %	In class
Assignment 1: Resource Development (see description above)	30 %	July 8th
Assignment 2: Annotated Bibliography (5-7 pages)	25 %	July 15 <sup>th</sup>
Assignment 3: A Final Paper (7-9 pages)	30%	July 29 <sup>th</sup>
Total Grade	100 %	

Students should email all assignments to the instructor at: [valerie.michaelson@queensu.ca](mailto:valerie.michaelson@queensu.ca)

Under extenuating circumstances, late assignments may be accepted. Please consult with the instructor in advance of the due date if you need an extension. However, in order to have final grades submitted on time, absolutely no assignments can be accepted after August 5<sup>th</sup>.

## Course Schedule/Outline

Each day will begin with a morning reflection and a chance for students to share quotes. As a courtesy, please be in class promptly at 9am as this morning circle is integral to our learning together. We will also be sure to end promptly at 4pm each day. Please feel free to email me throughout the week with questions or comments about course material. I will set aside time in the evenings to respond.

Please recognize that I will be adapting the course based on the learning goals of the students who register, and we may not follow this schedule exactly as it appears.

### MONDAY June 17th

*Goal: to develop a dynamic, multi-dimensional theology of children, youth and families.* We will trace a broad range of thinking about children, youth and families in the Bible and in Christian thought, and use it to inform the biblical and theological principles which will guide our thinking throughout the week. We will take a close look at children, youth and families in our Canadian context, and set the stage for our conversations this coming week.

### TUESDAY

*Goal: to explore theological principle 1: Young people are gifts from God, sources of joy, fully human and created in the Image of God. They are valuable members of the community who have meaningful contributions to make.* Building on the few insights we have about Jesus as a child, we will explore the principles and practice of intergenerational ministry. We will learn principles of “meaningful participation,” and gain tools to achieve this in ministry contexts.

**WEDNESDAY**

*Theological principle 2: Children are developing beings in need of guidance, direction and teaching; they are moral agents, in need of formation.* Today we focus on education and formation. We will engage with a variety of pedagogical approaches, including active learning and enquiry-based learning. We will also gain an understanding of a “developmental assets” approach to supporting young people. Finally, we will integrate critical theological reflection and contemporary research evidence to explore issues related to discipline and discipleship in ministry and in our homes.

**THURSDAY**

*Goal: to explore theological principle 3: Children are vulnerable and merit special protection.* We will begin with two critical questions: what are we protecting our children **from**? And what are we protecting our children **for**? We will examine data that describes the mental health crisis in children and adolescents in Canada today, and discover what church ministries can offer in terms of support. We will discuss practical, evidence-based ways to help young people navigate the challenges of social media. We will learn strategies for helping young people develop resilience, and we will explore contemporary applications of spiritual practices that can be used to support children, youth and families.

**FRIDAY**

*Goal: to explore theological principle 4: Children reveal God to the adult world*

- Spirituality presentations
- Child theologies movement
- “The Seven Steps of Planning” – putting it all together
- What about Ishmael?
  - The TRC, inequities and reconciliation: what does this mean for our ministry?
- The possibility and hope of the church

## Course Readings

For this course, you are required to read 400 pages related to course material. All of this reading will inform your final paper and the resource that you develop.

Your reading must include the following three components:

1. Bunge, M. J. (2008). Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Children, Parents, and 'Best Practices' for Faith Formation: Resources for Child, Youth, and Family Ministry Today. *Dialog*, 47(4), 348-360. (12 pages) **Please read this article by Marcia Bunge before the first class. It will be posted on our course website.**
2. Depending on your ministry contexts and your interests, please read ONLY ONE of these three books:

- Option 1: Beckwith, I. *Formational Children's Ministry (ēmerision: Emergent Village resources for communities of faith): Shaping Children Using Story, Ritual, and Relationship*. Baker Books, 2004.
- Option 2: Mark DeVries and E.F. Palmer. *Family-Based Youth Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004).
- Option 3: Yust, Karen Marie. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

3. The rest of your 400 pages of reading may include anything from this list, including up to 50 pages from the websites that are included at the end of this list. Please curate your own reading list that makes sense to what you need to learn in this course in relation to your own ministry context and learning goals. Some of these are books that you can order from Amazon.ca. The articles are all available free online. I will show you how to access them during the first class.

- Agrawal, Sandeep Kumar. "Faith-based ethnic residential communities and neighbourliness in Canada." *Planning, Practice & Research* 23:1(2008): 41–56.
- Anderson, David W. and Paul Hill. *Frogs Without Legs Can't Hear: Nurturing Discipleship in Home and Congregation*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2003.
- Berryman, Jerome. *Children and the Theologians: Clearing the Way for Grace*. New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2009.
- Bunge, Marcia J. "The Child, Religion, and the Academy: Developing Robust Theological and Religious Understandings of Children and Childhood." *The Journal of Religion* 86:4(2006), 549-579.
- Bunge, Marcia J. "'Our Calling in Education': Working Together to Generate a Strong Social Statement on Public Schools, Lutheran Schools and Colleges, and the Faith Formation of Children and Young People." *Intersections* Vol. 2006, No. 23, Article 4. (13 pages)
- Bunge, Marcia J. "Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Children, Parents, and 'Best Practices' for Faith Formation: Resources for Child, Youth, and Family Ministry Today." *Dialog* 47:4 (2008): 348–360.
- Csinos, David M. "'Come, Follow Me': Apprenticeship in Jesus' Approach to Education." *Religious Education* 105:1 (2010): 45–62.
- Csinos, David M. "Saturated Spirituality: Creating Environments that Nurture All Children." *Lifelong Faith* 4:3 (2010): 3–15.
- Csinos, David M. (2007). "The Biblical Theme of Welcoming Children." *McMaster Journal of Theology and Ministry* 8 (2007): 97–117.
- Csinos, David M. "Jesus Loves Which Little Children?." In *Exploring and Engaging Spirituality for Today's Children: A Holistic Approach*, edited by La Verne Tolbert (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014): 307–18.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy. *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy, Chap Clark, and David Rahn. *Starting Right: Thinking Theologically About Youth Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy, ed. *OMG: A Youth Ministry Handbook*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2010.
- Dean, Kenda Creasy. (2003). "The New Rhetoric of Youth Ministry." *Journal of Youth and Theology* 2:2 (2003): 8–19.
- Kinkaid, Julie. *Overturing the Tables: Consumerism, Children and The Church*. Toronto: United Church Publishing House, 2008.
- Ley, David. "The Immigrant Church as an Urban Service Hub." *Urban Studies* 45:10 (2008): 2057–2074.
- Mercer, Joyce Ann. *Welcoming Children: A Practical Theology of Childhood*. St Louis, MO: Chalice, 2005.
- Michaelson, Valerie, Peter Robinson, and William Pickett. "Participation in Church or Religious Groups and its Association with Health: A National Study of Young

- Canadians." *Journal of Religion and Health* 53:5 (2014): 1353–1373.
- Michaelson, Valerie, Tracy J. Trothen, Colleen Davison, Frank J. Elgar, and William Pickett. "Eucharistic Eating, Family Meals and the Health of Adolescent Girls: A Canadian Study." *Practical Theology* 7:2 (2014): 125–43.
- Michaelson Valerie. Good Soil: environments that help children thrive. Free download found at: <https://www.researchgate.net/project/Good-Soil-environments-that-help-children-thrive>
- Michaelson, Valerie, Tracy J. Trothen, Colleen Davison, and William Pickett. (2016) "Bodies and Behaviours: A Study of Body Image in Adolescent Girls and the Canadian Church." *Practical Theology* 9:1 (2016): 1–17. Please ask me if you would like a free version of this manuscript.
- Michaelson, Valerie, Fiona Brooks, Ivo Jirásek, Jo Inchley, Ross Whitehead, Nathan King, Sophie Walsh, Colleen Davison, Joanna Mazur, and William Pickett. "Developmental Patterns of Adolescent Spiritual Health in Six Countries." *Social Science and Medicine: Population Health* 2 (2016): 294–303.
- Michaelson, Valerie, Peter Robinson, William Pickett, and Linda Cameron. "Participation in Church or Religious Groups and its Association with Health: Part 2: A Qualitative, Canadian Study." *Journal of Religion and Health* 54 (2015): 1118–33.
- Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J. (2006). "Children and Religion in the Public Square: "Too Dangerous and Too Safe, Too Difficult and Too Silly"." *The Journal of Religion* 86:3 (2006): 385–401.
- Moltmann, Jürgen. "Child and Childhood as Metaphors of Hope." *Theology Today* 56:4 (2000): 592–603.
- Nye, Rebecca. *Children's Spirituality: What it is and Why it Matters*. London: Church House Publishing, 2009. (100 pages)
- Powell, Kara, and Brad M. Griffin. *Sticky Faith Service Guide: Moving Students from Mission Trips to Missional Living*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.
- Powell, Kara, Brad M. Griffin, and Cheryl A. Crawford. *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition: Practical Ideas to Nurture Long-Term Faith in Teenagers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Powell, Kara, Art Bamford, and Brad M. Griffin. *Right Click: Parenting Your Teenager in a Digital Media World*. Pasadena, CA: Fuller Youth Institute, 2015.
- Powell, Kara E., and Chap Clark. *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Ridgely, Susan. "Children and Religion." *Religion Compass* 6:4 (2012): 236–48.
- Roberto, John. "Our Future is Intergenerational." *Christian Education Journal* 9:1 (2012): 105–20.
- Yaconelli, Mark. *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- Yaconelli, Mark. *Growing Souls: Experiments in Contemplative Youth Ministry*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007.
- Yust, Karen-Marie, Brendan Hyde, and Cathy Ota. "Cyber Spirituality: Facebook, Twitter, and the Adolescent Quest for Connection." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 15:4 (2010): 291–3.
- Yust, Karen-Marie. "Toddler Spiritual Formation and the Faith Community." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 8:2 (2003): 133–49.
- Yust, Karen-Marie. "Creating an Idyllic World for Children's Spiritual Formation." *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 11:1 (2006): 177–88.

The following websites (and others) will also be used in class. You may include up to 50 pages of reading from these websites in your annotated bibliography.

[www.fulleryouthinstitute.org](http://www.fulleryouthinstitute.org)  
[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)  
[www.churchesforchildren.net](http://www.churchesforchildren.net)

### **Style Guide**

Students may use either APA (author/date) or Chicago (footnote) format. Guidance for both can be found here: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>,

### **Attendance Policy**

Because this is an intensive course, attendance each day of the week is mandatory.

### **Academic Integrity Policy**

The University treats offences of academic dishonesty (i.e. plagiarism, cheating, and impersonation) as very serious matters. Penalties for such offences are strictly enforced and may include a failing grade on an assignment, failure of a course, and/or expulsion from the University.

### **Scholarships and Bursaries**

Every year, Thorneloe University offers a number of Scholarships and Bursaries to students registered in Thorneloe Programs and Courses. Scholarship Applications are available in September and are presented at Thorneloe University's annual Fall Convocation. Bursary Applications are available in January, May, and October. Application Forms are available in the Main Office, Theatre Foyer, and at <https://thorneloe.ca/>.

## Appendix: Grading at Thorneloe University

Percentile Numerical	Letter Grade	Definition	Description
90%-100%	A+	Exceptional	Exceptional analysis: thoughtful integration; creative synthesis; relevance and application across contexts; depth of insight; clarity, flow and connectedness throughout; careful attention to stylistic and formal details; coherence and unity are strong.
85%-89%	A	Outstanding	Superior Performance: comprehensive, in-depth understanding of subject matter; demonstrates initiative and fluency of expression; work is of outstanding quality that provides clear evidence of understanding of the subject matter.
80%-84%	A-	Excellent	Excellent: accurate work in which evidence of comprehension of the subject is clearly evident; well-developed integration and synthesis of ideas; evidence of ability to apply concepts beyond a single context; insight evident; clarity, flow and connectedness present; stylistic and format details present, but less refined; coherence and unity evident.
75%-79%	B+	Very Good	Very Good: clearly above average performance with knowledge of principles and facts generally complete and with no serious deficiencies.
70%-74%	B	Good	Good: solid knowledge of content; shows integration and synthesis of theory and opinion; less refined application beyond single context; shows clarity of thought and logical organization of ideas; maintains focus; less refined stylistic and format details; gaps in coherence and unity.
66%-69%	C+	Satisfactory	Satisfactory: basic understanding with knowledge of principles and facts at least adequate to communicate intelligently in the discipline.

60%-65%	C	Adequate	Adequate: work of adequate quality which suffers from incompleteness or inaccuracy; incomplete understanding/knowledge of content; inconsistencies in integration and synthesis; unrefined, vague, or absent application of concepts; rambling but leading to a point; inconsistent focus, sequencing, and/or connections; lack of attention to style and format; large gaps in coherence and unity.
55%-59%	D+	Passable	Passable: some understanding of principles and facts but with definite deficiencies; work where the minimum requirements of a course are barely satisfied.
50%-54%	D	Marginal	Minimal Pass: a passing grade indicating marginal performance; student not likely to succeed in subsequent courses in the subject.
40%-49%	E	Failure	Unsatisfactory fail: knowledge of principles and facts is fragmentary; student has failed to complete substantive course requirements.
0%-39%	F	Failure	Failure: minimum requirements have not been met and no credit is given for the course; knowledge of principles and facts is fragmentary; or student has failed to complete substantive course requirements. Lack of understanding/ knowledge of content; unclear, rambling, does not make a point; lack of integration and/or synthesis; lack of focus and/or concept development; little or no attention to style and format; lacking in coherence and unity.