EDU 6085 – Moral Issues in Education

Course Introduction

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| Seattle Pacific University |  |
| School of Education | Office |
| Autumn Quarter,  | Phone  |
| Online via Canvas | Email:   |

**School of Education**

**Mission Statement**

To prepare educators for

*service* and *leadership*

in schools and communities by developing their professional

*competence* and *character*

within a framework of

Christian faith and values.

**The SOE’s Four Commitments**

The School of Education's mission statement and the mission statement and education plan of Seattle Pacific University share a common commitment to themes, informed by our Christian faith and values as articulated in Micah 6:8: And what does the LORD require of you? …to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

The themes include the commitment to l**eadership** and **service** in the community, and the commitment to **character** and **competence**. All of these commitments are focused on the professional and personal growth of our graduates, and speak to the conception of educator as master of a particular discipline, but also as a person who finds meaning and hope in a professional vocation, a "calling."

For this reason, the commitments include professional **competence**, and **leadership** in one's area of responsibility, but they also include a commitment to **character** and to a larger vision of **service** to the educational community and beyond. Through its integration of service, leadership, character, and competence, the School of Education's mission captures the distinctiveness of a Christian university that prepares educators who are capable and committed to having a positive impact on the learning of a diverse community of K–12 students.

I. Course Description (from the catalog): Educators face multiple ethical issues influenced by religious values and perspectives. This course examines how Christian theology shapes the theory and practice of education, and helps educators develop a theologically, philosophically, historically, and politically informed framework for taking ethical leadership in both public and private schools.

Professor’s Introduction: I will identify my learning objectives in section II, but my overall philosophy of graduate education is to attempt to gather resources that stimulate meaningful reflection and not uniformity of thought or conformity to my own view. Since I am not seeking agreement or conformity, I do feel free to “profess” occasionally, which means I will let my own opinions known while trusting graduate students to form their own responses and opinions, and indeed themselves bring knowledge and beliefs that might impact their peers. Each student in the class will assuredly encounter some ideas with which (s)he passionately agrees, or disagrees, which makes learning enjoyable. Many students know that this morality/religion/faith and education course meets a requirement by the larger university that every graduate school devote one course to examination of SPU’s Christian faith, addressing the Christian Scriptures and other assigned texts. In a diverse city such as Seattle – though SPU’s online reach transcends the city and even state and country - students might either select SPU for their graduate work for reasons of its Christian identity, OR they might select one of SPU’s graduate education programs for the specifics of its programmatic requirements or, hopefully, its quality and not for religious or spiritual reasons at all. No matter one’s motivation, each student will inevitably have to practice respect; Christians will find that there a plurality of approaches to the faith, and students coming for other reasons must admittedly tolerate a required class where the institution they have chosen asks that they interact with its identified faith. BUT, in acknowledging this reality, I don’t mean to make it sound somber. I hope all students like much or all of the readings, and I hope our conversations are fruitful. I also look forward to reading your written work, and interacting with each of you individually through my feedback. NOW, let’s turn to the texts:

*The Charged Classroom: Predicaments and Possibilities for Democratic Teaching*, by Judith Pace. / *Religion in the Classroom: Dilemmas for Democratic Education*, by Jennifer Hauver James, et al. *Way of Love: Reclaiming the Heart of Christianity,* by Norman Wirzba / OPTIONAL: *Have a Little Faith; Religion, Democracy, and the American Public School.* Texts are all available in Kindle.

II. Learning Objectives and Assessments:

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| *Academic and professional objectives -* *SWBAT…* | *Related Assessment:*[See Assignments section] |
| Knowledge and critical thinking 1. Articulate the meaning and power of democratic education as a moral perspective, and describe ways that democratic ideals can guide educational practice, including reference to common obstacles facing teachers in this endeavor. 2. Identify critical issues in the intersection of religion and public schooling, and demonstrate knowledge of related laws, policies, and principles concerning fair treatment of religious matters, including the importance of teaching *about* religion in public school curriculum.3. Formulate and express provisional opinions on the multidimensional and surprisingly demanding notion that *love* is the definitive ideal characterizing Christianity, both in terms of God’s orientation toward humans and our responsive orientations toward God and one another.4. Synthesize your own worldview in a coherent framework - your beliefs about God, religion, faith, and morality as they relate to children and youth, and your knowledge about how to put such beliefs into practice. | ->Summary online responses to one holistic question posed for each of three books during the quarter and a summary/reaction to one or more essays from the “This I Believe” website->These objectives will also be present in the Inquiry Paper(s) and certainly in the *Moral Education Framework* (MEF) project |
| Research and application 5.  Identify and conduct productive research in the arena of religious and educational values.6. Present this research through substantial written work which reflects familiarity with the editing process and high standards of written expression.  | -> Inquiry Paper(s) **OR**->A *Moral Education Framework* (MEF) project integrating convictions arising from this course |
| Dialogue and presentation 7.  Effectively communicate with peers about complex and morally charged ideas, either face-to-face or online.  | -> *Responses* to one or more peer’s posting for each of three books and the “This I Believe” essay(s) during the quarter |

III. Grading Policy and Writing Options:

Students will participate in 5 separate online discussions this quarter: An informal introduction (this is kind of a freebie 10/10), 3 book posts, and one on a chosen “This I Believe” essay. Each of these 5 posting exercises are evaluated on a 10 point scale, totaling 50 points and counting for 1/3 of the course grade, which is then combined with *one* of the formal writing options below that count for 2/3 of the course grade.

Formal writing option A: Some graduate students want mainly to create a single substantial academic paper as an expression of their autonomous integration of all elements of the course. In this case, a student can choose *one* major integrative assignment, either the *Moral Education Framework* (MEF) or a Double-length Inquiry Paper that is due near quarter’s end and determines 2/3 of the course grade.

OR

Formal writing option B: Some graduate students either want more freedom in choosing a topic of interest, or want feedback by the time the first half of a course is over, and for these students a topical paper called the Inquiry Paper is due in the middle of the quarter, and a second similar topical paper is due near quarter’s end. Each of these *two* Inquiry Papers are *half* the length of the single term papers outlined in Option A, and each counts for 1/3 of the course grade, so equaling 2/3 of the course grade taken together.

Please note:

\*Formal papers will receive a *numerical equivalent of a letter grade (including pluses and minuses)*, which I feel is as precise as I can authentically be and remain fair, and which works with the Canvas system that only accepts numerical scoring. For Option A, the MEF or a Double-length Inquiry Paper, a rare A+ =100 pts, A=95, A- =90, B+ =85, and B=80. For everyone doing Option B with 2 shorter Inquiry Papers, the scores will be directly proportional but on a 50 point scale.

\*Formal writing is graded with rigorous attention to graduate-level writing standards, more formally applied than in our 5 online posts. *Mathematically*, for paper grades at the A or A- level, your overall course grade will not be higher than your paper grade(s). But for any paper grades in the C or B range, however, high online posting scores build up cushion points and can definitely raise your final course grade.

\*As a graduate school professor, I make every effort to have all students achieve at least a “B” grade in the course because this is de facto “good standing” as a graduate student, but beyond that I utilize all –‘s and +’s, differentiating performance by A, A-, B+, and B, and in some cases where a student’s *effort* is simply insufficient after my offer of assistance, C grades or lower.

IV. Professional Expectations:

*Disability support services*:

Students with academically-related disabilities need to contact Disability Support Services in the Center for Learning to request academic accommodations.  Disability Support Services sends Disability Verification Letters out to all your professors indicating the appropriate accommodations for the classroom based on your disability.

*Academic Expectations and Integrity:*

Student work must be turned in by its due date or it will be considered late and docked one letter grade, with possible additional penalties if the assignments remain uncompleted.  If special circumstances make timely submission impossible, please let me know and I will carefully consider your case and possible modifications to the policy.  No matter how late, an assignment can always be turned in for a possible C grade.

Conduct your studies with honor.  All of the work you turn in must be your own.  Violation of this requirement will necessitate a failing grade for the course.

Minimal standards for the readability of written work will be upheld.  If you struggle with organizing papers, constructing coherent paragraphs and grammatically correct sentences, punctuation, or spelling, please let me know early on so that we can arrange some assistance for you.

*Treatment of others:*  A successful learning community requires that each member, including the instructor, be treated with respect.  Respect in a face-face setting has to do with listening with and cordial dialogue, and the same criteria apply to an online context even though the interactions are mainly in writing.  It's all pretty intuitive; we know when we are practicing respectful community learning behaviors and we know when we are not.  Respecting others is an ongoing condition for enrollment in EDU 6085, or even staying in the graduate school itself.

*Respect for diversity*: The School of Education embraces and seeks the richness that diversity brings to our learning community. We acknowledge that all people bear the image of God regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, age, religion, political history, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, language and linguistic inheritance, country of origin, past participation outside of the culture of power. Our focus is to offer and enhance opportunities to all, including those who have traditionally been underserved by and under-represented in the institutions of our society. Our commitment is to increase the diversity of our faculty, staff, and students and to foster a hospitable climate for a diverse community reconciling all people (SOE Diversity Statement).