Syllabus

Mississippi Course of Study

COS 123: Formation and Discipleship

April 25 – June 4, 2022

Millsaps College, Jackson, MS

(Online Instruction)

Rev. Dr. Safiyah Fosua

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# Course Description and Objectives:

This course grounds the student in the theology and core practices of personal congregational formation and discipleship.

*Students will be able to:*

1. Articulate a theological basis for the Wesleyan emphasis on spiritual disciplines and practice them as a means of grace.
2. Explain and implement the General Rules and the practices of small groups in a congregation.
3. Educate and resource a congregation in the disciplines of Christian formation.
4. Organize congregations to help people discern their callings and gifts for ministry.

# Your Instructor:

Safiyah Fosua will be your instructor for this course. Safiyah is a retired elder of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference of the UMC and a retired associate professor of the Wesley Seminary in Marion, Indiana. Safiyah served under appointment for more than 30 years and her ministry experiences spanned from the local church to missionary service, to service as director of preaching ministries for the General Board of Discipleship, to her final appointment as professor of spiritual formation before retirement. Rev. Dr. Safiyah Fosua is married to the Rev. Dr. Kwasi Kena and lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

# Online Modality:

This course will be conducted completely online using the Zoom application for synchronous (face-to-face) sessions on weeks 1,3, and 5, and a learning management platform, *Course Connect* for online discussions on weeks 2 & 4. Your papers will also be submitted to the instructor and returned to you through *Course Connect*.

# Required Textbooks:

There are three required textbooks for this course and a number of online resources and videos will also be used. Please feel free to order used copies or Kindle e-books to suit your needs.

Matthaei, Sondra H. *Formation in Faith:* *The Congregational Ministry of Making Disciples*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 2008.

Thompson, Marjorie J. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 1995.

Wimberly, Anne E. S. & Evelyn Parker. *In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 2002.

\*Several required online readings are listed for selected assignments.

\*\*Several *curated* resources are listed for your personal reference library. Curated resources should not be considered required reading but may prove helpful for assignments or for your final exam.

# Guidelines for Written Assignments.

* 1. **Format**: All **papers** submitted via Course Connect should be in **.doc** or **.docx** format. If you are not using Windows software, it is also acceptable to submit papers in PDF format. *Always begin filenames with your name*, then the *title of the assignment*. Examples: [firstinitial.lastname – assignment title] = **" S.Fosua Sermons.docx**
  2. **Documentation**: Please always *cite your sources* whenever you are quoting or summarizing from a text, even if it is obvious or mentioned in the assignment. Provide at least author's name, title, and page number, even in discussion assignments. **Please see the plagiarism section of this syllabus for more information.**
  3. **Style**: Chicago Manual of Style documentation is expected for bibliographic references and any quoted or paraphrased materials. Basic information about this style may be found at The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL). For this course we will be using the Notes and Bibliography (NB) options. <https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style_guide/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html>
  4. **Due dates**: All assignments are due on the date specified by the syllabus. Written assignments submitted more than 3 days after the due date *may be accepted* with a 10% penalty. Late discussion posts will attract a 25% penalty. For all late assignments, please contact your professor.
  5. **Feedback**: I will make every effort to provide feedback and grades on all on-time submissions within ten days of the due date.

Guidelines for Online Discussions:  
  
**Identification:** Students - please adhere to the following **naming convention** for your initial discussion posts: "[name] - [assignment title]"  
  
So, e.g. *“Safiyah Fosua – Means of Grace”*  
  
This will help your professor identify the posts you are responding to when she/he grades your discussions.  
  
**Content:** Discussion assignments are similar to group or all-class discussions in the classroom context. While these are not "writing assignments," you should still be careful with grammar, spelling, documentation, and formatting in your discussion posts and comments. Posts need to have *substance* in order to count. Short comments like, “I agree,” or “Good work,” will not count toward your week’s assignments. The posts that count grade wise will need to advance the discussion in some significant way.  
  
**Climate:** We encourage you to remember that the discussion room may be full of many opposing views on any given topic. We encourage you to view differences of opinion and belief as opportunities to learn from one another. Do engage your neighbor’s thoughts charitably. It is at the professor’s discretion to remove any posts or comments he or she thinks cross the line.

**General instructions:**

If you are responding to another post, click “reply.”

In your responses, compare, contrast, and/or question another’s postings.

**Late discussion posts** -- Discussions are part of your interactive learning experience. You receive points for sharing as well as for interacting with others in the discussion forums. Late initial posts do not contribute to this process of interactive learning. Therefore *a 25% deduction will be recorded* for initial posts that are offered after the closing date of each discussion.

# Class Calendar, Assignments:

*Read, before April 25, 2022:*

Matthaei, Sondra H. *Formation in Faith:* *The Congregational Ministry of Making Disciples*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 2008.

Thompson, Marjorie J. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press. 1995.

Wimberly, Anne E. S. & Evelyn Parker. *In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 2002.

**Pre-Course Assignment:**

### Due Date: April 29, 2022

Topic: *Means of Grace and Habits of the Heart*

Modality: Online, Course Connect

Instructions:

Reading assignment:

“Opening Ourselves to Grace,” <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gbod-assets/generic/Opening_Ourselves_to_Grace.pdf>

Video assignment:

Smith, James K. A. [Wheaton College]. (2016, August 31). “You Are What You Love: Genesis 1:1-2:4.” [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/-xVV4lrOBXI>

Curated Reference:

“Opening Ourselves to Grace, Six-week Bible Study” <https://igrc.brtapp.com/files/s3files/downloadableresources/six_week_bible_study.pdf>

There is much to be learned at the intersection between the historic Methodist theology of the means of grace and the actual habits of our hearts. Anyone who has ever struggled with keeping a devotional schedule, or who balks at prayer realizes that our habits often tug us in a direction that ignores God. One goal of this course is to help ministers and their congregations resolve this contradiction.

## Pre-Course Discussion:

In the discussion forum labeled *Means of Grace and Habits of the Heart* (inside Course Connect):

1. First, write a short one-sentence definition of the means of grace.
2. List as many of the means of grace as you are able to remember from the readings.
3. Finally, reflecting on the video with Dr. Smith, write a short (250 word or less) reflection on how your day-to-day habits (and the time you spend in these habits) *reflect or fail to reflect* your lived *commitment* to observe the means of grace as a way of life.
4. End your reflection with ways you would like to adapt or change your spiritual habits and plans to increase your participation in the Wesleyan means of grace.

In future discussions, you will be asked to interact with members of the class. For this first discussion, you will only be graded for your responses.

**Final Discussion date: April 29, 2022, 5 pm CST**

**Points: 50 points (5% of grade)**

## ZOOM CLASS

## Date: Friday, April 29, 2022

Topic: *Spiritual Practices*

Modality: Zoom (Face to Face) Class

Time: 7 pm – 9 pm CST (8 pm – 10 pm EST)

Reading Assignment:

*Soul Feast:* review the entire book before class.

Video Assignment:

Foster, R. J. (2011, November 3). “The Sanctuary of the Soul “[Video File]. Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/4R87Hl52fgY>

Instructions: Come to class prepared to discuss the readings, the video, and the topic, spiritual practices. And prepare for an occasional pop quiz on the readings!

## ZOOM CLASS

## Date: Saturday, April 30, 2022

Topic: *Developing a Rhythm of Life and Self-Care*

Modality: Zoom (Face to Face) Class

**Time: 7 pm – 9 pm CST (8 pm – 10 pm EST (Note time for this week only)**

Reading Assignment(s):

* *Soul Feast:* review the entire book before class.
* “The Importance of Self- Care for Ministry.” <https://www.pulpit.org/the-importance-of-self-care-for-ministry-leaders/>
* “Clergy Self-care Strategies for Good Times and Bad.” <https://alban.org/archive/clergy-self-care-strategies-for-good-times-and-bad/>
* “UM Rule of Life.” <http://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/covenant-discipleship/2015_UMRuleOfLife_Pamphlet.pdf>

Video Assignment(s):

* “The Starving Baker. “[Video File]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/31849683>.
* “The Missing Ingredient in Self-Care, “[Video File]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Eupk56SG76M>

Instructions: Come to class prepared to discuss the readings, the videos, and how spiritual practices contribute to a rhythm or *rule of life*. And prepare for an occasional pop quiz on the readings!

### WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT: Sermon Series

## Due Date: May 6, 2022

Now that you have been immersed in Wesley’s theology of the means of grace and explored a number of ways that the Christian family observes the spiritual disciplines, it is time demonstrate how to use what you know in ministry.

Develop a *detailed* outline for a three-part sermon series on three different means of grace that introduces the congregation to each action and provides practical ways for members of the congregation to practice each of the means of grace that you select (including Holy Communion).

Your sermon outlines should show evidence of biblical and theological reflection and should also evidence course of study readings, your personal readings and personal research. Remember to include appropriate documentation for any materials that are not original.

Submit through Course Connect

**Length: 5 pages**

**Due Date: May 6, 2022**

**Points: 150 (15% of grade)**

## ONLINE DISCUSSIONS:

## Dates May 1-12, 2022

**Discussion Topic #1:** *Discerning the Call to Ministry*

Modality: Course Connect

Video Assignment:

Dr. Fosua’s Video Lecture on Calling

Instructions:

Begin with a discussion post of 250-400 words where you will:

* **Identify** 5 different biblical call narratives from the Old and/or New Testaments; provide scripture references and a brief synopsis of each.
* **Describe** what these 5 passages suggest about the many ways that God calls us to ministry.
* **List** 2-3 ways that these passages may be used in ministry to support members of your congregation in their discernment of a call to specialized ministry or pastoral ministry as vocation.
* **Read** the responses of at least 3 class members.
* **Engage** at least two class members in helpful dialogue about his/her responses.

**Discussion dates: May 1-12, 2022**

**Points: 100 points (10% of grade)**

**Discussion Topic #2:** The General Ruse of the UMC and Small Groups

Modality: Course Connect

Reading Assignment:

*The General Rules of the UMC* <https://www.umc.org/en/content/the-general-rules-of-the-methodist-church>

Video Assignments:

Watson, Kevin (2016, January 26), "The Wesleyan Band Meeting:  Seven Minute Seminary" [Video File]. Retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/9k-xPXH6B2E>.

Watson, Kevin (2014, 28 October), "Early Methodist Small Groups:  Seven Minute Seminary" [Video File]. Retrieved from:  <https://youtu.be/xBGSa9UnS8E>.

Instructions:

Read the *General Rules of the UMC*.

Then, watch the two short videos.

1. **Describe:** Your initial reaction to John Wesley’s General Rules,
2. **Discuss**:

* The challenges of using strict rules like those John Wesley imposed would present to your existing groups.
* The potential benefits of using this set of rules or a contemporary adaptation for the 21st century congregation.

1. **Share** ways that aspects of the General Rules might be incorporated into your small group ministries.
2. **Read** the responses of at least 3 of your class members.
3. **Engage** 2 of your class members in conversation about ways to introduce or reintroduce the General Rules to regular members of your small groups.

**Discussion dates: May 1-12, 2022**

**Points: 100 points (10% of grade)**

## ZOOM CLASS

## Date: Friday, May 13, 2022

Topic: *Stages of Spiritual Formation*

Modality: Zoom (Face to Face) Class

Time: 7 pm – 9 pm CST (8 pm – 10 pm EST)

Reading Assignment:

* *Formation in Faith,* review chapters 1—3.

Curated Reference:

* “What Every Child Should Experience” <https://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/childrens-ministries/Children_WhatEveryChildShouldExperience_2015.pdf>

Instructions: Come to class prepared to discuss the readings and the topic, stages of formation. And prepare for an occasional pop quiz on the readings!

## ZOOM CLASS

## Date: Saturday, May 14, 2022

Topic: Small Groups and Discipleship

Modality: Zoom (Face to Face) Class

Time: 9—11 am CST (10 am – noon EST)

Reading Assignment:

*In Search of Wisdom*: review chapters 1-4

Instructions: Come to class prepared to discuss the readings and the role of small groups in discipleship. And prepare for an occasional pop quiz on the readings!

## ONLINE SMALL GROUP PROJECT

## Dates: May 15—24, 2022

Topic: *Gifts for Ministry*

Modality: Course Connect

Reading Assignment(s):

* “Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts.” <https://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-images/laity/DiscoveringYourSpiritualGiftsEdited.pptx>
* “Spiritual Gifts Inventory.” <http://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/lay-servant-ministries/SPIRITUAL_GIFTS_INVENTORY.pdf>
* MBTI Free Online test <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/jtypes2.asp>

Video Assignment:

Dr. Fosua’s Video Lecture on Spiritual Gifts

Curated Reference:

* “Unwrapping Our Gifts.”

<https://equippedforeverygoodwork.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/unwrapping-our-gifts.pdf>

### Instructions:

* *Watch*: Dr. Fosua’s video lecture
* *Take* the spiritual gifts inventory provided and score your results.
* *Take* the online version of the MBTI and score your results. Read the descriptions of your four-letter type at the end of the test and explore other topics about your personality type.
* *Compare* results with members of your small group before the small group discussion described below.

### Small Group Project:

Together, as a group, plan a *Gifts and Temperament Discovery Day* for the congregation. Include:

1. A short meditation on the biblical importance of spiritual gifts,
2. Activities to help your members discover their spiritual gifts.
3. Time for discernment of spiritual gifts and temperament.
4. Prayers.
5. Suggestions for helping people discern ways of serving that fit their spiritual gifts and/or basic temperament.

**As a group, develop a 5-page outline of your plans.**

Submit your paper *as a group* through Course Connect.

**Small Group Project Due Date: May 24, 2022**

**Points: 150 points (15% of grade)**

## ONLINE DISCUSSION

## Dates: May 25-26, 2022

Topic: *Assessing Existing Congregational Formation Ministries*

Modality: Course Connect

You will prepare for our final weekend of classes by analyzing the groups that meet regularly as part of your congregation’s ministry.

### Instructions for this final discussion post:

1. Write a brief description of each group under your congregation’s ministry that includes:
   1. the size of the group.
   2. how often the group meets.
   3. how the group contributes to the discipleship of the members who participate.
2. Compare your notes with those of at least three of your class members.
3. Engage at least two class members in discussion.

**Discussion Dates: May 25-26, 2022**

**Points: 50 points, (5% of grade)**

## ZOOM CLASS

## Date: Friday: May 27, 2022

Topic: *Congregational Formation Ministries I*

Modality: Zoom (Face to Face) Class

Time: 7 pm – 9 pm CST (8 pm – 10 pm EST)

Reading Assignment:

* *Formation in Faith,* review chapters 4-5, appendices

Curated Reference:

* *Comprehensive Plan for Teacher Development*

<https://gbod-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/Christian_Education/Comprehensive-Plan-for-Teacher-Development-for-United-Methodist-Congregations.pdf>

Come to class prepared to discuss the readings and the topic of congregational formation ministries. And prepare for an occasional pop quiz on the readings!

## ZOOM CLASS

## Date: Saturday, May 28, 2022

Topic: *Congregational Formation Ministries II*

Modality: Zoom (Face to Face) Class

Time: 9—11 am CST (10 am – noon EST)

Reading Assignment:

* *In Search of Wisdom*: review chapters 5-6

Curated Reference:

* Intentional Faith Development <http://gbod.org.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera/entry_4026/19/Standards10-12-11.pdf>

Come to class prepared to discuss the readings and the topic of congregational formation ministries. And prepare for an occasional pop quiz on the readings!

# FINAL EXAM:

## Congregational Plan for Spiritual Formation and Discipleship Through Small Groups

## Due Date: June 4, 2022

Here is where we take the opportunity to put everything together! We learn about spiritual formation for the sake of our souls and for the sake of the souls we tend in ministry. Throughout this course we have looked at personal and corporate spiritual disciplines, the means of grace, the role of small groups in Christian formation, the General Rules of the United Methodist Church, gifts for ministry -- both laity and clergy, and discernment of calling. We have so many of these tools for ministry, yet so many congregations rely upon weekly worship and sparsely attended prayer meetings or Bible studies to carry the load of congregational formation.

The question you will seek to answer in this final written exam is how *you* plan to lead your congregation in formation and discipleship through these (and other) tools for ministry.

### Preparation for the Final Paper:

Earlier this week you looked at existing ministries and small groups meeting in your congregational setting and evaluated their current roles in spiritual formation. Begin with the questions: “Is what we are presently doing enough to nurture the congregation in the habitual practice of the means of grace and spiritual disciplines? What is needed to provide opportunities for individuals, families, and groups within the congregation to be spiritually formed as disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world?”

If you, like most leaders in the UMC today, have determined that what you are doing at this moment is not enough to promote the habitual practice of the means of grace and spiritual disciplines, and not enough to form disciples, then what *is* needed?

* Begin by taking a sustained look at your congregation. Later, you will use this information to write an ethnography.
  + Who are the people? (socio-economic analyses)
  + Where are they? (Rural, urban, suburban, center-city)
  + What challenges do they face? (Race, gender, one-parent homes, unemployment, education, etc.)
  + How old are they? (Generational breakdown of your membership and your active membership)
  + How would you describe their spiritual development? (Stages of spiritual development)
* After you have taken this sustained look at your congregation begin to think about the kinds of ministries that people in your ministry context really need to promote deeper engagement with God, faithful Christian engagement with their neighbors, and further development into earnest disciples of Jesus Christ that will transform a troubled world.

List the needed ministries or opportunities and describe them.

* Next, take a first pass at arranging these ministries and activities on a church calendar. In order to do this, you will first need to take a brutally honest look at the existing church calendar.
  + What is already on the church calendar and how do these activities promote formation and discipleship?
  + Are there any activities that should gradually “disappear”?
  + How many activities are reasonable for a given week, month, or year in your ministry context. Remember that not every formational offering has to be weekly. A compelling case can be made for a yearly ministry discernment retreat or a quarterly gathering of men’s or women’s ministries.
* After you have produced a satisfactory “dream-calendar,” the next step is to think about leadership and staffing issues. Resist the urge to lead everything yourself. Even in the smallest of congregations there are gifts for ministry. Describe ways that you will identify and equip leaders (even in the tiniest of congregations) for the needed ministries of the church or circuit. It bears mention here that 2-3-4 (or more) church circuits are stronger when they share these offerings as a group.
* Look for ministry partnerships that could be formed with nearby congregations. Most of us are familiar with multi-congregation Lenten studies and services. Expand this thinking to include large events like ministry discernment retreats, vacation Bible schools, or opportunities to discover spiritual gifts – as you have already done in the spiritual gifts group project.
* Finally, what have you gleaned from the United Methodist General Rules to help you in this endeavor?

### Writing the Final Exam

Sections:

1. Begin your paper with an *ethnography*, which describes your congregation. (2-3 pages) This ethnography should include your research into the congregation’s:

* Geographical location
* Socio -economic conditions (occupations and salaries)
* Numerical distribution of age groups
* Stages of *spiritual* development
* Unique challenges

1. Continue with your personal assessment (as leader) of the needed congregational ministries and activities that will provide opportunities for deepened spiritual formation and deepened discipleship for this particular group of people. (3-4 pages)
2. Conclude with a plan for establishing needed congregational ministries and activities. (3-4 pages) This plan should include:

* A plan for identifying and developing ministry leaders within your congregation.
* An assessment of the possibility of local church partnerships.
* Timelines that are practical for your local church context.

Remember to use the Chicago Manual of Style format and to document appropriately.

Submit your final paper through Course Connect.

**Length: 10 pages**

**Due Date: June 4, 2022**

**Points: 250 points, (25% of grade)**

# Grading:

Means of Grace Pre—assignment 50 points or 5% of final grade

Sermon Series 150 points or 15% of final grade

Discerning the Call to Ministry 100 points or 10% of final grade

The General Rules of the UMC 100 points or 10% of final grade

Small Group Project 150 points or 15% of final grade

Assessing Existing Ministries 50 points or 5% of final grade

Final Exam 250 points or 25% of final grade

Synchronous Class Participation 150 points or 15% of final grade

Total 1,000 pts 100% of final grade

# Letter-Grade Scale

90—100% A

80-89% B

70-79% C

60—69% D

0—59% F

# Late Policy:

We are endeavoring to study in the middle of a storm – a pandemic. Every attempt will be made to help students succeed under such dire circumstances. Written assignments submitted more than 3 days after the due date may be accepted with a 10% penalty. Late discussion posts will attract a 25% penalty. For all late assignments, please contact your professor.

# Honor Code:

The Honor Code refers to our commitment as a Christian community to maintain academic honesty and integrity. The Honor Code of MSCOS requires that all material submitted by a student must be the student’s own work. Violations include cheating, turning in someone else's work as one's own, copying and pasting information directly from the internet into one's own work without citation, and plagiarism, which is to knowingly claim the work of another person as one’s own (including the lack of proper citation in a paper or other assignment). Any person found guilty of violating the Honor Code may be subject to one or more of the following actions: receiving a warning, failing the assignment, being removed from the course, failing the course, being placed on probation, and being expelled from MSCOS. Regardless of what the action is, communication about the incident will be sent to the student’s district superintendent and local pastor registrar. All MSCOS students are required to abide by the MSCOS Honor Code, and to seek to uphold the highest standards of academic and pastoral integrity.

# Plagiarism:

Papers must reflect your own thoughts, words, sentence structure, and ideas. Any use made of another author’s material must be acknowledged in the form of a citation (a footnote and/or bibliographic reference, appropriately formatted using the Chicago Manual of Style), whether or not the material was included in the form of a direct quotation. This applies equally to information from online sources and other websites. Please note that this professor does not regard Wikipedia articles as reliable scholarly resources. Importing online material – or any other material, whether written and published, or from a podcast, video, etc. –without formal written acknowledgement is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense, and a violation of the Honor Code. *Err on the side of caution and cite anything and everything you use to complete your assignments.*