

Newsletter

2008 Spring

Course of Study School of Ohio (COSSO)

From the Director's Desk



Wow! It has been a year since our last newsletter was published. It's time for us to be back in touch. It has been quite a year. We've had many transitions since we last met here on these pages. In addition to my being the new kid on the block, **Sister Joanmarie Smith** retired as Spiritual Formation Director. We are so grateful that she stayed on an extra year beyond her original plans. She gave so much to this program, and we were blessed. **Jessica Spillman**, our coordinator for the program, moved on to another position, one that fit in better with her continuing education endeavors. That position provided an offer she could not refuse. So we said goodbye with sadness, but also best wishes for her future. Jessica held a vital position in COS, and we greatly appreciated her work.

As we moved forward, we were blessed to have new persons come on board with us. **Rebeka Maples** joined us in summer, 2007, as the new **Spiritual Formation Director**. She has done a good job of developing our spiritual formation program, continuing much of what was previously done, and enriching the program with her own particular style and gifts. Spiritual formation is an important component of the Course of Study School of Ohio, and it is our desire to have all students partake of this offering. We also welcomed **Terri Litchfield** as our new **Coordinator** for the school. She dug in with both feet and hit the ground running. She and her husband, **Randy Litchfield**, developed our well-designed, informative, and easy to use, website. Hooray and thank God! It had been a while in coming. She is also learning the many details of her position and has



Centrum altar prepared for worship

begun to facilitate better communication with students, as well as provide ways for students to organize their upcoming participation at the school. Terri and I are still continuing to grow in our positions, and seeking to work out the kinks as we go along. We appreciate your continued patience as we seek to make this an even better and more smoothly running program. **Margaret Van Sickle** continues as our inspiring musician, and is also serving as our **writing coach**. **Jim Parnell** is our **sacristan and COS assistant**. Our Native American extension now has a new director, **Carol Lakota Eastin**. That extension is changing from being a regional program to a national program, while still remaining connected to Course of Study School of Ohio (COSSO).

IMPORTANT INFORMATION!!

In general, we, here at COSSO, are seeking to come into compliance with requirements of the Division of Ministry in Nashville. This means that we have to make a few shifts away from previous practices. For example, rather than starting the program with any course that is available, **students should begin with 100-level courses** before taking other courses. In addition, **500-level courses should be taken last. *If at all possible, 514 should be the last course taken*** because it seeks to integrate all that has come before. However, we do understand that *present scheduling may not allow that.*

Other things to keep in mind -- Hebrew Bible I (211) should be taken before Hebrew Bible II (411). New Testament I (311) should be taken before New Testament II (511). Other 200 – 400-level courses can be taken out of order. However, if you can possibly do so, it would probably be helpful if you could do the levels in order. Please keep these things in mind as you plan your future classes.

We understand that because of previous practices, we will have to phase in the above requirements on a gradual basis. However, if a student registers for a course outside of those requirements, the exception will have to be approved by the director. Nashville has also told us this about **allowing full-time local pastors to take more than four (4) courses per year:**

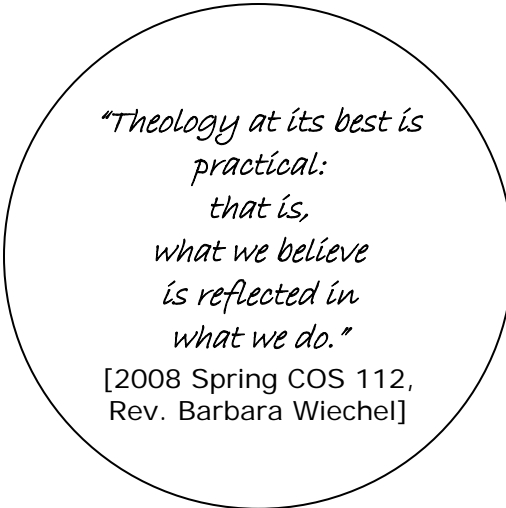
There are circumstances where we may approve of a full-time local pastor taking more than 4 courses a year. Although we try to discourage this practice, there are times when an exception to the standard policy is warranted. When there seems to be a legitimate reason for allowing a full-time local pastor to take more than 4 courses, the conference Board of Ordained Ministry or the Course of Study School Director may ask the staff of the Division of Ordained Ministry to make an exception to the administrative policies and grant the student permission to register for additional courses. In all cases this should be done only when the conference board of ordained ministry approves such a request. We will then make a decision on the matter and inform the COS Director and the conference BOM representative if the student can register for additional courses. [Robert Kohler, assistant chief executive in the Division of Ordained Ministry]

Part-time local pastors are also allowed to take only four (4) courses per year. If you have a legitimate reason for needing to take more than four, you too will have to ask for the approval of the Division of Ordained Ministry.

It is our hope that these adjustments will not cause you too much inconvenience. In the long run, it will be to your advantage as the knowledge and skills you obtain accumulate.

We look forward to our continued work with COS students, districts, conferences, and judicatories.

Blessings and Peace,
Diane Turner-Sharazz, Director



*"Theology at its best is practical:
that is,
what we believe
is reflected in
what we do."*

[2008 Spring COS 112,
Rev. Barbara Wiechel]

MORE THAN NEWS: Spiritual Formation

From Rebeka Maples, Director of Spiritual Formation



Some background:

Spiritual Formation in COSSO has taken many forms through the years, and it continues to evolve, as do our spiritual lives. We have moved from covenant groups to retreat gatherings. And no doubt, there will be more developments on the journey, as the Spirit continues to lead us through Course of Study.

I was invited to be part of the COSSO staff in the summer of 2007, and since then I have grown closer to God and closer to the students and staff that make up this program. It has been a learning experience in many ways. Many students remember Sr. Joan Marie Smith who was the Director of Spiritual Formation after she retired from the faculty at MTSO. It is always a blessing to spend time with Sr. Joan Marie because somehow you know it is holy time. Sister was my advisor and spiritual guide when I was a student at MTSO, so it has been a humbling and rewarding experience to follow in her footsteps. She is still living in the Delaware area, and rumor has it that she may be doing some writing. If you haven't read her books on Christian Education and Spirituality, then be sure and check them out - you are in for a treat.

While I serve as the new director of Spiritual Formation, I am also serving as the pastor at Thurston UMC. I was ordained an elder in 2005 and graduated from MTSO with a specialization in spirituality in 2000. Before that I had completed a Ph.D. in Political Science from OSU and taught a variety of courses at Capital University and OSU. My areas of specialization include international and immigration politics, political theory, research methods, cultural and ethnic diversity, and African politics. All of this is to say, never say never to God; you never know where you may find yourself!

Spiritual Direction

In 2007 I completed a 2-year training program in Spiritual Direction, which gives me the pleasure of meeting with persons who are interested in going deeper in the spiritual life. Spiritual direction is really a misnomer because no one "directs" the spiritual life except God. Holy listening may be a better description of what takes place in spiritual direction. A person usually meets once a month for about an hour with a spiritual director, seeking where God is at work in one's life. Monetary compensation is usually expected for a spiritual direction session; however, COS students may participate in this service at NO CHARGE. Give me a call or email me if you would like to explore this during your next weekend course.

Spiritual Formation

Let's face it, there isn't much free time when you are on campus during a COS weekend. And so, our time is limited and valuable, in terms of Spiritual Formation. The worship and retreat times are opportunities to gather as a community and affirm our spiritual journey. And since God calls us to both solitude and community, students are also given suggestions for personal devotion time during their stay on campus. Everyone is encouraged to come to the communal gathering times at 3:30 pm on Friday, 8:00 am and 11:25 on Saturday. Students are also asked to sign in for these sessions. This gives us a way of monitoring our effectiveness in Spiritual Formation. Thank you for your cooperation and participation. And finally, please know that you are in my prayers during our COS weekends, and I regularly pray for you and your ministries.

Words Words Words

From Margaret VanSickle, Writing Coach



AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

"What do you mean, I'm guilty of plagiarism. I read the assigned material; I did research on the topic that I was supposed to write about; I "cut and pasted" information from the website(s) which the professor recommended; I wrote a paper of the proper length as required by the syllabus; what do you mean, I plagiarized?"

An Academic Honor Policy has been part of the COSSO Student Handbook ever since the handbook was first compiled. However, you will find an updated version of that policy in your syllabi for upcoming courses.

With the implementation of a letter-based grading system in the Course of Study School in Ohio, the Academic Honor Policy becomes a more significant in evaluation of student written work than it may have seemed to be in the previous "Pass/Fail" grading.

By definition, plagiarism is "the act of presenting someone else's work as your own." This does not mean that you cannot use information from books, journals/magazines, internet sources, personal interviews, etc.; it simply means that you **MUST** give credit to the person whose ideas you have found helpful to your writing.

At its worst, plagiarism is stealing [See Exodus 20:15]. Because of the commitment each of you has made as a result of your calling to serve God, it is more likely that you might be plagiarizing because of carelessness or a lack of understanding about how to give credit for borrowed information. Whether plagiarism is intentional or unintentional—and often it is difficult to identify the distinction—plagiarism is a serious error to academic integrity.

The website for Westminster Theological Seminary describes the situation this way: "Whenever you borrow another writer's word or ideas, you must acknowledge the borrowing." The Hamilton College website identifies four categories of information for which source information [proper citation] must be provided:

- 1) direct quotations
- 2) paraphrases and summaries
- 3) borrowed ideas
- 4) facts that are **NOT** common knowledge

Information in public domain that would **NOT** need to be cited would be such information as "Water boils at 212° F." "There are five Great Lakes," "Grapes grow on vines." However, if the item of "common knowledge" has a controversial aspect, then you should include the source of your information. For example, "Statistics prove that older drivers are poor drivers" would need the source of the research that has been used to make that statement.

One of the most important suggestions that I give students who come to me for writing assistance is this: Do your reading far enough ahead of time that the information becomes part of your thinking. The more you think about the topic you have chosen (or been assigned) to write about, the more thoroughly you will "know" what to say that is relevant to the topic and accurately based on the research materials that you have used.

Becoming a "good" writer is one of those skills in life that is mastered (or at least greatly improved) by

practice, practice, practice. As a pastor, you will have many types of writing to do: sermons, newsletter articles, letters of request, letters of condolence, letters of encouragement to parishioners, letters of appreciation to those who have served the congregation in special ways, etc.

Use the opportunities you have as a COS student to learn from your mistakes by sending your papers to the writing coach. There's no punishment for making mistakes when the writing coach helps you correct them. The professors have the responsibility to evaluate your written work on the basis of the copy you submit in class for a grade.

Watch the COSSO website for additional writing hints and helps.

Sources:

<http://www.wts.edu/print>

Page.php?popup_section=academics&popup_path=/acadwts/plag...
[accessed 3/15/2008]

Sebranek, Patrick, et al, *Writers Inc.* Wilmington, Massachusetts:
Great Source Education Group, 2001.

2008 "Spring" COS -Weekend #1 Rescheduled Due to Winter Blizzard!

We had been following the forecasts starting on Wednesday which indicated that our area, as well as the areas from which most of our students would be coming, would only have flurries. Throughout Thursday the forecast for the window in which students would be traveling on Friday still looked fair, with perhaps a couple of inches of accumulation. By Friday morning, the forecast had changed dramatically, and we began to receive calls from students who would not be able to come. It was at that point that we decided we needed to cancel. The cancellation was posted to the website and emails were sent to all students by 10:30 am. The COS staff then attempted to call all students, using cell phones and emergency contact numbers when available. A Level 3 Snow Alert was issued by the sheriff's office on Saturday morning, shortly after 10 am. Several students made it to Delaware before getting the word that weekend classes had been cancelled. We are sorry for the inconvenience this caused.

Courses have been rescheduled for 3/28-29 for COS 413 and 4/11-12 for all other classes. Classes will also meet 4/25-26 as originally scheduled.

Congratulations 2008 Winter COS Graduates!!



William Sherry



Terry Teluch



Gary Sheesley

Views from the Coordinator

By Terri Litchfield



It's hard to believe that I've now been on campus for nearly six months and have experienced the 2007 Fall and 2008 Winter terms. (The start of the 2008 Spring term is another story...) I can tell you that I like it better when I know what's going on! Those first few weeks were tremendously challenging - trying to help students and answer questions when I had so many more questions than they did. Then, as well as now, I appreciate the patience and support students have extended.

My association with Course of Study actually began in 2004 when Jessica asked me to redesign the database used to process registration, billing and grade records. That experience provided me with an overview of the program; but wow, there's so much more to it.

My favorite aspect of the position of COS Coordinator must certainly be welcoming students to campus for COS classes. And it's especially nice to finally be putting names and faces together. If you were here for the 2008 Winter term, you know that we are working on a COS Photo Directory. By the way, if you were one of the eight or so students with the unfortunate luck of having me take your picture, I hope you were able to get it retaken by Randy Litchfield. Somehow I managed to fry my camera card. We will continue to have a photographer available for getting photos, or you can bring one to campus on a flash drive, or email me a photo. If you provide a photo, please name it "lastname_firstname" so we can organize them easily. A sincere THANK YOU to Randy for his time. (And yes, we're related.)

Class Registration Notes:

Students can do several things to help COS class registration go smoothly.

- 1) Always use a registration form downloaded from the website. We've recently made some changes to the registration form based on current practices and will be posting the new form soon. (The changes are minor, and there are no fee changes; so the version currently posted will work fine until the new one is available.)
- 2) Register early - this will help ensure you get into the class, as well as help in our planning. Most classes are limited to 30 students.
- 3) Allow plenty of time to get the required signatures on your registration form before you send it to the COS office. When I receive forms without signatures, I must hold them aside and complete the processing later. This is inefficient since I often need to place follow-up calls or emails.
- 4) Include the registration fee of \$30 per course.
- 5) Shortly before or after the registration deadline for any course, registered students will receive an email confirmation from the COS office. Please check it carefully, and watch for additional announcements. If you don't receive this email confirmation, please contact me.
- 6) Approximately one month prior to the start of the term, invoices for the remaining balance, including tuition and housing fee (where applicable) are sent to students through the mail. Payment by the due date printed on the invoice will help us be ready for check-in on the first day of classes. Although we can accept payment at check-in, early payment is preferred so the check-in process is faster. Every invoice received and processed ahead of the term allows for speedier check-in - and a more relaxed coordinator!

TRIVIA QUESTION:

WHAT ITEM NO LONGER APPEARS ON THE REGISTRATION FORM?

(Answer at bottom of page)

Trivia Answer: Social Security Numbers. Please DO NOT use your SSN. If you don't know your student ID#, leave the PID# field blank. I assign temporary PID#s for those new to COSSO. Nashville assigns all permanent numbers.

Housing Notes

The on-campus room reservation procedures have changed. Major renovations took place within the last year or so, and rooms originally shared by two students now accommodate one student. As a result, fewer dorm rooms are available.

- 1) To reserve an on-campus dorm room, check the website to see if housing is full. At this time there's a note on the home page under Announcements for the upcoming term(s). When you send in your registration, include a housing deposit of \$40 per course for any weekend term or \$80 for the Summer Intensive term. When I receive your housing deposit, your name is added to the housing reservation list. When the housing manager knows how many rooms are available (closer to the start of the term), he will make room assignments based on when the housing deposit was received. Your housing deposit can be applied to registration fees or tuition fees if the dorm is full and you are unable to get a room. Rooms are \$40 per night = \$80 per weekend term. (Two Friday nights.)
- 2) Summer Intensive housing
On-campus housing for the two-week summer intensive term typically includes twelve nights beginning Sunday prior to the first class on Monday, and running through Thursday night of the second week. The housing fee for the Summer Intensive term is \$320 and includes meals as described below.

*"As contemporary Christians,
we are connected to these ancestors in the
faith, with all their strengths and flaws.
These ancestors can enrich and enliven
our own commitment to Christ."*

[2008 Spring COS 212,
Dr. Elise Feyerherm]

Meals

- 1) COS Weekend terms: Friday dinner, Saturday breakfast and Saturday lunch are included with tuition for all COS Weekend terms. Your nametag is your meal ticket. Some students don't eat in the cafeteria due to dietary or other reasons. There is no tuition adjustment, but we do let the dining hall know the number of students who WON'T be eating in the dining hall so they can prepare meals accordingly. Please indicate on your registration form whether you will be eating meals in the dining hall and respond to the email request for this information as the start of term approaches.
- 2) COS Summer Intensive term: On-campus housing fee for the Summer Intensive term includes breakfast and lunch on weekdays of the two-week term. Students are on their own for weekend meals and for dinner throughout the week.

*Terri is married to Randy Litchfield, MTSO Professor of Christian Religious Education. Randy will be teaching **2008 Summer COS 213: Formation for Discipleship**. Terri and Randy have one daughter, Erin, a senior in high school. Terri can be reached at tlitchfield@mtso.edu or COS@mtso.edu.*

