BAPTIST MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
RE 422 Special Studies in Religious Education - New Convert Assimilation

COURSE SYLLABUS
Developed: Fall 2015

Instructors:
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Textbook:
ISBN: 978-0310593706

Required Reading:
(A digital copy of this dissertation will be available to students.)

Course Description:
This course is a supervised study designed to develop selected skills in the field of religious education. Selected skills for this course include investigating research methodology by exposing students to Masters level research. Recent research on new convert assimilation/spiritual growth will be explored.

Course Objectives include, but are not limited to, the following:
Upon completion of this course you should be able:

- Articulate your philosophy of spiritual growth.
- Understand differences between quantitative, qualitative and philosophical/historical approaches to research.
- Apply research findings to ministry.
- Select a new convert assimilation/spiritual growth strategy for use in the local church and compare or contrast it with content of the course.
Assignments:

Read *Teaching for Spiritual Growth.* 10%

Read *Describing the assimilation experiences of new converts: a phenomenological study.* 10%

**Interview - transcribe, compare findings with dissertation.** 20%

The 2015 Paschal Lectures will focus upon the findings of Dr. Attebery’s recent research on the assimilation of adult new converts. Additionally, the course will focus upon research methodology at the doctoral level. Dr. Attebery’s dissertation utilized a qualitative research method known as a phenomenological study. As indicated in the third chapter of his dissertation, trustworthiness of a qualitative study increases if the research method is repeatable. This assignment intends to provide students with the opportunity to repeat the basics of Dr. Attebery’s research by conducting an interview with an adult new convert.

Students must conduct an interview with an adult new convert as described in Dr. Attebery’s dissertation. After students have read *Describing the assimilation experiences of new converts: A phenomenological study,* they should reread chapter 3 with particular attention to the section on ethical concerns. Students must then:

- Modify Appendix B, Participant Informed Consent Form, to fit the current class. Submit the revised form by **September 11, 2015** to Dr. Attebery for approval. Note that students may select non-BMA churches but must explain to the professor, and ultimately to the new convert, “why” he or she was selected. In a genuine study, criteria must be objective and/or well-reasoned. Students must receive approval from Dr. Attebery before conducting interviews!

- Conduct items 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8 according to the plan of action listed on pages 73 and 74 of the dissertation. Students must complete each step thoroughly and use Appendix C, New Convert Participation Interview Guide. Students must bring hard copies of the transcripts and signed Participant Informed Consent Forms to class on **September 30.**

- Students must prepare a written analysis that compares/contrasts the results of their interviews with the Dr. Attebery’s findings in chapter 4 of his dissertation. **Due September 30, 2015.** Students should provide the professors with hard copies of their papers for use on September 30.

Attend lectures and Wednesday class. 20%
Students in this course must attend the seminary’s 2015 Paschal Lectures held September 29-October 1 in the seminary’s Dorman Memorial Chapel. The schedule includes a series of four separate lectures presented on September 29 and October 1 at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Students must create a reaction paper in response to the lectures (**Due October 15, 2015**).

On September 30, the class will also meet from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. in the Grimsley Building. This meeting will include a panel presentation focused upon research methodologies used for doctoral dissertations. Students should also prepare to discuss, evaluate, and defend the findings of their interviews with new converts.

**Write your philosophy of spiritual growth (2-5 pages)**

Based on biblical principles, the textbook, and class interaction, submit your philosophy of spiritual growth. (This assignment will be discussed in more detail during the week of class. **Due November 5, 2015**.)

**Select a strategy for new convert assimilation/spiritual growth for a local church.**

(10-15 pages) (This assignment will be discussed in more detail during the week of class. **Due November 12, 2015**.)