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## **Christian Spirituality Education Re-imagined: Piloting a Highlander-Inspired Course**

### ***Abstract***

I am in the process of piloting a Christian spirituality course based on the transformative educational methodology developed by Myles Horton and the Highlander Research and Education Center. I will explore whether a Highlander-inspired pedagogy offers an effective model for engaging diversity, practicing intercultural dialogue, fostering social change, and integrating theory and practice in the context of teaching Christian spirituality at the seminary level. The principles of teacher research and the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) will guide my analysis of the pilot course.

### ***Outline for Colloquy Presentation***

#### **Background—**

In my dissertation project I seek to demonstrate that the educational methodology developed by Myles Horton and the Highlander Research and Education Center (formerly the Highlander Folk School) offers an effective model for teaching Christian spirituality at the seminary level. What is Highlander's educational methodology? Why does the Highlander model make sense for seminary education?

#### **Methodology—**

As a teacher-researcher I will rely on best practices described by Check and Schutt in their chapter on "Teacher Research and Action Research" in *Research Methods in Education*, as well as insights from other scholars who engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). Intersectionality theory, which attempts to describe identity as multiple, co-constituted, and contextual, will provide the guiding epistemology for the educational research design and analysis of the pilot course. I contend that an intersectional approach (taking into account the co-constituted reality of race, gender, class, and religious diversity) offers the most effective perspective from which to engage educators and students as whole persons.

#### **Current questions, challenges, insights—**

The Spirituality & Social Change pilot course started in September 2015. I have developed a working syllabus for the class (in collaboration with faculty mentors), and both the course design and the dissertation project as a whole have received my institution's full approval. By the time REA meets in November our class will be at its midpoint. I anticipate that the colloquium will provide a space for me to present the unfolding project.

#### **Time for dialogue—**

Possible topics include: transformative pedagogy (Highlander methodology and others), SoTL, and the future of teaching and learning in Christian spirituality and theological education. I look forward to reflecting on the implications of the Spirituality & Social Change course and to exploring the process of teacher research with a group of fellow religious educators.

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