

## ONLINE CLASSES OFFERED IN CANADA

**Administrative Mentor: David Harrison**

Email address: **D. Harrison**

Group #: EFMCAN03

**Status: This class is taking new registrations for the 2020 - 2021 academic year.**

Meeting Day: Sundays, 4:00 - 6:00 PM ADT

No EfM group within driving distance? Don't like to drive at night? Travel a lot? Go south for the winter or want to get to know people all over the country or world? Want to engage in serious theological discussion while wearing your pajamas and your comfy slippers? If any of these reasons work for you, then EfM On-Line might be the place for you to engage in theological study with a like minded community. **If you are interested in taking EfM On-Line, please E-mail the On-Line Coordinator: On-Line Coordinator -- EfM Canada**

### BACKGROUND

Education for Ministry is a program designed for laity to provide theological study and reflection rooted in the Scriptures and traditions of the Church. The EfM website, EfM Canada will provide a wealth of information on the programme, its mission, and an outline of the course of study, for all four years. EfM Online provides people who **cannot** attend a weekly face-to-face group an opportunity to participate in this course of study. Following is an overview of how the EfM Online program works and each person's responsibilities.

### MATERIALS

Participant fees provide for the conduct of the course and a set of materials to support the work for the year in which each student is enrolled. Textbooks are purchased by the student for the year in which they are enrolled.

In addition to the textbook, students will be provided with a Reading and Reflection Guide. This text is issued for each of the four years. It contains information on various types of theological reflections, spiritual autobiographies, planning your ministry, the conduct of a seminar group, and prayer and liturgy. Group lessons come from the Reading and Reflection Guide several times each year.

Since this is an online course, each student will need a computer and access to the Internet, (more technical details will be provided when a student registers). High

speed Internet access is essential. Students should expect to spend two and one half to five hours per week on the Internet as a result of time in the weekly meeting and time in other parts of the course. The course site for the weekly meetings and the discussion board is accessed through a website provided by The University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee. Each student will be assigned a user ID and password to allow access to the site.

## **THE COURSE OF STUDY**

The course consists of three kinds of activities: individual reading and study, participation in the weekly seminar, and work in the discussion board. Each type of activity is discussed below:

### **READING AND STUDY**

Each week during the year is set out in a calendar that guides the whole year of study. Biblical reading assignments are also made in the course materials for Year 1 and Year 2. There is typically a section in each of the textbooks that discusses the readings, many times broken into chapter and verse, and offers insights, interpretations, historical background, and other information on the readings. The mentor will post questions on the discussion board about each week's work.

### **WEEKLY SEMINAR**

Each group decides on the time and day of the week to meet online. Students try to log in about 15 minutes early to make sure the connection works and to let the others know who will be in the session. A group sets its own agenda including worship, sharing of where life is for everyone at that moment, and theological reflection (TR). For those not familiar with theological reflection, it will be covered in one of the very early sessions. Most of the session is dedicated to TR, it is the heart of EfM. The mentor will archive the entire session. That archive is available in its entirety at the website. If students miss a session, lose the connection, or are interrupted in some unavoidable way, they can still keep track of what happened during any particular weekly seminar. All posted course content and archives are confidential and can only be accessed by those enrolled in the particular online group.

### **DISCUSSION BOARD**

The discussion board is a bulletin board where members of the group discuss and reflect on their readings. Students post their thoughts on the board and read the posts of other students. It is an important adjunct to the readings and the live chat. Students may access the discussion board via the same website used for the weekly seminar. It

is available any time day or night. Students are free to comment on, take exception to, and make other comments as they see fit on any entry into the discussion board. Groups also discuss books, movies, etc. from time to time. As the group moves through the nine months work, all 36 weeks of questions and comments will be displayed so that students may go back and review any of them.

## **TIME REQUIREMENTS**

A common question is, “How much time will this take?” A traditional group meets for two and a half to three hours per week. Online groups, in Canada, meet for two hours per week. Students are expected to spend the additional time needed to keep up with the discussion board. Reading the textbook, the Bible and other works, doing the exercises, etc. will take more time. What each student takes away from EfM depends on how much time and energy they are will to devote to the course.

## **MENTORS**

The course is facilitated by a mentor or a pair of co-mentors. Mentors are trained and accredited by EfM Canada, and are retrained every year. The mentor’s job is just to be a mentor. They are not the experts, not the teachers, and not the disciplinarians. Mentors do participate in the discussions just like the other members of the class. This is an adult education forum. There are no tests, no grades, and no college credits. The mentor is not an expert in Theology. Mentors are trained to lead a discussion and facilitate Theological Reflection which will ideally bring each student to an insight and appreciation of the subject being discussed.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT**

Keep in mind there are no “right” answers. Be ready to disagree, be challenged by other students, and to challenge others. In one of the first sessions, a set of norms will be established by the group members that will guide the group in its discussions. Confidentiality is always one of the norms of an EfM group. Be prepared for a wide range of beliefs, traditions, interpretations, and opinions on the various subjects discussed. The best discussions include a wide range of opinions. Listen to classmates, think about what they say, compare it with what you believe, and think about why you believe what you do. The object is not to change anyone’s basic beliefs but to appreciate the fact that there is diversity in opinions on the material we study and to try to gain a perspective of how others think about these subjects.

## **RETREATS**

Some online groups conduct retreats during the year. These retreats are a welcome opportunity to meet the other group members and mentors for worship, discussion, problem solving, and to complete some of the requirements of the Reading and Reflection Guide. Retreats are not a requirement. Whether a particular group has retreats or not will depend on the location of the students.

## **SCHEDULE**

Some seminars are conducted about nine months (September to May) out of each year with summers off and a break for the Christmas Holidays. Other groups run year round.

## **FEE**

The participant fee for a year's study including the materials discussed above is \$350.00, plus the cost of the textbooks. Some dioceses and parishes, as well as EfM - Canada have scholarship money available to support EfM students, who are in need. The maximum size of an online group is ten students in addition to the mentor or mentors.