

April 4, 2014

Dear Pepperdine colleague,

Once again, the Center for Faith and Learning is pleased to sponsor a **Faculty/Staff Summer Seminar**. This time, I will lead a four-day seminar on Fyodor Dostoevsky's great novel of the Christian imagination, *The Brothers Karamazov*. **We will meet July 14, 15, 16, 17 in morning seminar discussions**, followed by lunch each day.

I have offered this seminar in years past, and the numerous faculty and staff who have participated have found the experience to be memorable. Many expressed gratitude at having the chance to study a classic work of literature through collaborative conversation. The seminar provides a hands-on opportunity to integrate faith and learning, and a chance to get to know colleagues who share a desire to encounter a "classic" that reveals new depths upon each reading.

The Brothers Karamazov is surely such a classic. Malcolm Muggeridge once mused, "Supposing one were asked to name a book calculated to give an unbeliever today a clear notion of what Christianity is about, could one hope to do much better than *The Brothers Karamazov*?" Evangelical author J.I. Packer has called Dostoevsky "the greatest Christian storyteller." Numerous people have testified to the ways in which this novel has renewed, even resurrected their faith. I've been blessed to teach this novel for twenty-five years, and have focused a good deal of my scholarly work upon it.

The Brothers Karamazov takes place in a small town in mid-nineteenth century Russia. It portrays the grief and joy of three brothers, their father, and their lovers. It can be read as a "narrative icon" in which the attentive reader can discern the transformative image of Christ. But this image emerges in a work that is Incarnational in form, and which thus raises some of the most vexing questions of human existence: the problem of innocent suffering, the tension between freedom and authority, the sheer difficulty of Christ-like love.

Participants in the seminar will be expected to have read the novel in its entirety by July 14, the day the seminar begins. A syllabus will clarify the sections of the novel that should be reviewed / reread before each day's meeting, and the questions that we will discuss that day.

Participants will receive **a copy of the novel**, be served a continental breakfast and lunch on each of the four days of the seminar, and receive a **stipend of \$500**, with the stipulation that they commit themselves to each day of the four-day seminar. The seminar will meet from 8:30 AM – 1PM each day between July 14-17.

Applicants should email a letter of application -- explaining why they would like to participate in the seminar and describing their role at the university, to: Paul.Contino@pepperdine.edu no later than Monday, May 5. Spaces in the seminar are limited to **fourteen**, so I exhort you to submit your application as soon as possible.

Thanks so much for considering this invitation. I hope your academic year comes to a good and graceful close.

Sincerely,

Paul

Paul J. Contino

Blanche E. Seaver Professor of Humanities

Associate Director, Center for Faith and Learning