

STMM 561 CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to **introduce** students to some of the important themes in contemporary Christian spirituality and to a variety of approaches to prayer. Students will apply these themes to reflect upon and articulate their personal spirituality. They will also be invited to explore the theological and pastoral implications of these different approaches to prayer and spirituality. Keeping a **reflection journal** is strongly recommended for this course as a means of gaining insight and growth into one's spiritual journey. Class sessions will include lecture, prayer experiences, reflective times, music and discussion.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Bass, Dorothy C. ed. (1997) *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Fiand, Barbara. (1999) *Prayer and the Quest for Healing*. New York: Crossroad.
- Leddy, Mary Jo. (2002) *Radical Gratitude*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- O'Murchu, Diarmuid. (2002) *Evolutionary Faith: Rediscovering God in Our Great Story*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Palmer, Parker. (1990) *The Active Life: A Spirituality of Work, Creativity and Caring*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Ulanov, Ann and Barry. (1982) *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.

A packet of articles to be read for the course will be available from SU Reprographic Services for the second weekend.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

- Brown, Patricia D. (2003) *Paths to Prayer: Finding Your Own Way to the Presence of God*. San Francisco: Jossey - Bass.
- Hart, Thomas. (2004) *What Does it Mean to be a Man?* New York: Paulist.
- Killen, Patricia O'Connell. (1997) *Finding Our Voices: Women, Wisdom and Faith*. New York: Crossroad.
- Palmer, Parker. ((2004) *a Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. San Francisco: Joseey - Bass.

PRE-COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Read ***Radical Gratitude***, ***Evolutionary Faith*** and ***The Active Life*** before the first weekend session. Please read the books with your "head and heart." Take notes (not to be handed in) and keep track of questions, resistances, "ahas" and concerns that emerge for you.
2. Establish or re-affirm a **15 minute daily prayer practice** at least a month before the course begins.

3. Choose **one** of the texts and write a 1000 word (four page, double spaced) typed, **reflection paper** about the book addressing the following:
 - a) What do you consider to be the main points made by the author in the book? Include quotes and page numbers where relevant.
 - b) Engage in dialogue with ideas from the text including some of your own reflections, experiences and questions.

Due: first day of class

4. Denominational Interview and Write Up

Seek out a spiritual and/or pastoral leader in your denomination and interview them about their understanding and experience of spirituality and their spiritual practices.

Suggested questions during the interview:

What is your understanding and experience of spirituality? What are some images or metaphors that support your understanding and/or your experience of spirituality?

Who are some of the people and authors from your denomination who have significantly shaped your understanding of spirituality?

Name and describe some significant insights and characteristics of your denomination's approach to spirituality. What do you consider its strengths and weaknesses?

Name and describe a book written by someone in your denomination that would help someone gain insights about your denomination's approach to spirituality.

What people and resources have been important influences on your spirituality and spiritual practices outside of your denomination?

Describe your spiritual practices. How they influence your living and ministry?

What suggestions would you offer for someone who is in the process of establishing a spiritual practice in their lives.

Ask them any other questions that seem important to you in order to better understand their spirituality.

Write up the interview in a 4 - 5 page paper (typed, double spaced).

Due: first day of class

5. Please fill out the attached questionnaire and return it by e-mail or regular mail to the Alexandra (as instructed on the form) by **January 6th, 2005**. Your responses will help me to create the course content and processes.
Thank You!

7. What themes/topics/concerns emerge for you regarding spirituality and/or prayer in light of your ministry?

8. What situations/processes/activities help you to learn best?

9. Do you feel called to lead a prayer in class?
(Focus at beginning of class or after the break, or a longer prayer experience.)

What form/type of prayer would you use? (e.g. Taize prayer, centering prayer, psalm reading, movement, guided imagery, a song, a poem, scripture, ritual, etc.) Please describe it.

10. Do you feel called to create a sacred space for class that would be a visual reminder of the presence of Mystery and an expression of spirituality?

11. Do you feel called to be part of a panel that explores spirituality in relation to gender (male/female) ethnicity, culture and sexual orientation?

12. Further comments/suggestions/information that would help me to respond to your learning needs....

Due Date: January 6th, 2006

Please return Questionnaire to: Alexandra Kovats, csjp, Ph.D.
1104 21st Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98112

or e-mail to: jutkacsjp@aol.com

Thank You!