

STML 563 Contemporary Traditions in Spirituality

Valerie Lesniak, PhD

Fall Quarter, 2009

Wednesday, 1:30-4:20

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This seminar, designed specifically for students who are following the M.A. in Transformational Leadership degree, is open and appropriate for all STM students interested in contemporary spirituality. This course provides a foundation for the interdisciplinary study of spirituality, in particular, for the variety of expressions found in contemporary spirituality. Current trends in spirituality will be assessed in light of their creative transformational potential in developing a new social and spiritual consciousness, global understanding and responsibility, and personal interconnectedness.

At the end of the course, students would have considered:

- Current trends that are emerging in contemporary expressions of spirituality
- What makes “experience” “spiritual” and not “religious”
- Some practical definitions and methods for the study of spirituality
- The spiritual concerns arising from the varying understandings of the human condition as found in contemporary spiritualities
- The contributions of psychology, the human sciences, the arts and contemplative traditions to the development of the “inner self” and authentic living
- “Hybrid spiritualities” and their roles in defining the current spiritual landscape
- Critical perspectives on reading and assessing current writings and movements in spirituality
- Methods for critically appropriating contemporary spiritual trends into one’s own personal life and praxis

Required Texts

Schlitz, Marilyn Mandala, Vieten, Cassandra, and Amorok, Tina, **Living Deeply: The Art and Science of Transformation in Everyday Life**, Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications, 2007.
ISBN 10:1-57224-533-6/ 13:978-1-57224-533-4

Tacey, David. **The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality**, London and New York: Routledge, 2004.

ISBN 978-1-58391-874-6

Todd, Douglas, ed. **Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia: Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest**, Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 2008.
ISBN 978-1-55380-060-6

Van Ness, Peter H., ed. **Spirituality and the Secular Quest**, New York: Crossroad, 1996.
ISBN 13-978-0-8245-0774-9 or 10: 0-8245-0774-6

The course will be using one chapter, "*Footprints of the Soul: Uniting Spirit with Action in the World*," from Nepo, Mark, ed. **Deepening the American Dream: Reflections on the Inner Life and Spirit of Democracy**, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005. ISBN 0-7879-7737-3, pp. 51-82. Students should be alerted that the whole book will not be used and therefore is NOT a required text.

Pertinent articles will be distributed throughout the course and designated by a "*". Students will be responsible to pay for the cost of their reproduction. The professor will notify students of this cost.

Course Requirements and Means of Assessment:

1. Faithful class attendance, active participation in class discussions and processes, a critical reading of assigned texts and completion of assignments.
2. Keeping of a notebook/scrapbook which will contain responses to the readings.
3. Students will select and research a contemporary spiritual writer, artist, movement or emerging trend in spirituality that they are particularly interested in exploring. Each student will be responsible for:
 - Researching their selected topic (Topics to be selected by October 7, 2009).
 - Presenting their research findings in a 20 minute oral presentation to the class on their topic. The presentations will be scheduled the last three class sessions.
 - Writing and submitting a 5-9 page paper assessing the significance of their selection addressing the following:
 1. What spiritual concerns does this author/artist/movement/trend seek to explore or meet?
 2. In what ways does this author/movement/trend respond to the spiritual concerns arising from their focus?
 3. What are the particular strengths and limitations you find in their approach and description? How do you see this author/artist/movement/trend contributing to developing a new social and spiritual consciousness, global understanding and

responsibility, and personal interconnectedness.

4. Papers are due December 2, 2009. Further delineation of the presentation and writing assignment will be given in class.

All written work will conform to STM guidelines for writing papers and will reflect graduate level standards

Computation of Final Grade:

1. Class Participation 60%
2. Class Presentation 20%
3. Final Written Assignment 20%

Preliminary Reading for First Class

Students are encouraged to begin reading David Tacey, *The Spiritual Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality* before the start of class as this text will frame our opening discussion. In particular, pages 1-46.

Students are also invited to read:

- *Lesniak, Valerie. "Contemporary Spirituality," (Essay) in **The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality**, edited by Philip Sheldrake, SCM Press in the U. K. / Westminster John Knox in the U.S.A., 2005: 7-12.
- *McGuire, Meredith. "Mapping Contemporary American Spirituality: A Sociological Perspective," in **Christian Spirituality Bulletin**, Spring, 1997, Vol 5, No. 1, 1-8.
- *O'Donohue, John. "Spirituality as the art of real presence," in **The Way**, 85-101.

Packets of these readings can be obtained at the STM Reception Desk.

Tentative Syllabus

(This syllabus may be changed by the instructor according to the needs and concerns of the students.)

September 23: Introductions and Getting started;

- What are the issues that we ourselves bring to the study of spirituality?
- What are some of the issues being discussed in the broader community about spirituality? In what ways do you agree or disagree with the

descriptions found in the Tacey, Lesniak, McGuire and O'Donohue readings?

- What is "spirituality?" What is "religion?"
- How would you describe "contemporary spirituality?"

September 30: Postmodern World and the spiritual quest- New Age Spiritualities
Reading Assignment:

- Van Ness, ed. **Spirituality and the Secular Quest**, (hereafter **SSQ**), pp.203-226.
- *Holland, Joe, "A Postmodern Vision of Spirituality and Society," and
- *Griffin, David Ray. "Peace and the Postmodern Paradigm," found in **Spirituality and Society**, ed. David Ray Griffin, New York: State University of New York Press, 1988. : 41-62; 143-154.
- Todd, **Cascadia**, pp. 1-29

October 7: What does it mean to be "spiritual" and not religious?

Reading Assignment:

- Tacey, **Spirituality Revolution**, pp.49-123
- Todd, **Cascadia**, 65-85
- *Nelson, Marcia. "Oprah on a Mission", **Christian Century**, Sept.25-Oct.8, 2002, p. 20-25.

October 14: The Search for the Self: Resources for the development of the Inner Self

Reading Assignment:

- Van Ness, **SSQ**, 227-302.
- Todd, **Cascadia**, 207-213; 241-262
- Tacey, **Spirituality Revolution**, 127-171.

October 21: Wisdom Seekers and spiritual practices: Hybrid Spiritualities and Movements

Reading Assignment:

- Schlitz, et.al. **Living Deeply: The Art and Science of Transformation in Everyday Life**.
- *Brown, Carolyn. "Footprints of the Soul: Uniting Spirit with Action in the World," from Nepo, Mark, ed. **Deepening the American Dream: Reflections on the Inner Life and Spirit of Democracy**, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005. pp. 51-82.

October 28: Contemporary Spirituality: Science, Nature and the Arts

Reading Assignment:

- Tacey, **Spirituality Revolution**, 175-226
- Van Ness, **SSQ**, 387-497
- Todd, **Cascadia**, 33-63

November 4: Student Presentations

November 18: Student Presentations

December 2: Student Presentations

(N.B. No classes will be held on Veterans Day, November 11 or the day before Thanksgiving, November 25.)

If you have, or think you may have, a disability that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs and arrange support services through Disabilities Service Staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100 (206) 296-5740.