

STMA 571 CRITICAL ISSUES IN SPIRITUALITY

Winter 2010 - Weekend Format

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore typical human and cultural dynamics (issues) and patterns that emerge as supports and blockages in the development of one's relationship to God, self, others and the rest of creation. Student presentations panels will be an important part of the process of learning. Some of the topics we will be considering are: distinction between spiritual direction and pastoral counseling; cosmological assumptions and beliefs; multi-cultural awarenesses; grief and trauma; sexuality; sexual abuse; depression, dark night, desolation; addiction and co-dependency; midlife and aging, healing and other topics raised by student's concerns.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide knowledge and skills to engage with a variety of human and cultural factors that support and/or impede psycho-spiritual growth.
2. To clarify the primary focus of the spiritual direction relationship in distinction to therapy/pastoral counseling.
3. To deepen awareness of the blocks and supports in one's own psycho-spiritual growth.
4. To provide spiritual directors with competencies that enable them to determine the need for professional referrals.

REQUIRED READING

Bogard, Paul. ed. (2009) *Let There Be Night: Testimony on Behalf of the Dark*. Reno, NV: University of Nevada Press.

ISBN: 0-87417-328-4 (paperback)

Fischer, Kathleen. (2006) *The Courage the Heart Desires: Spiritual Strength In Difficult Times*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

ISBN: 0-7879-7595 (paperback)

Weaver, Andrew J. et al. *Reflections on Grief and Spiritual Growth*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

ISBN: 0-687-06508-9 (paperback)

Wegela, Karen Kissel. (1996) *How to Be a Help Instead of a Nuisance: Practical Approaches to Giving Support, Service and Encouragement To Others*. Boston, MA: Shambala.

ISBN: 1-57062-150-0 (paperback)

A packet of articles to be read before the first weekend. It will be available for purchase at STM (front desk) after December 10th, 2009.

RECOMMENDED READING

- May, Gerald. (1988) *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing Of Addictions*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins.
ISBN: 0-06-112243-2 (paperback)
- Vest, Norvene. ed. (2000) *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction*. Nashville, TN: Morehouse.
ISBN: 0-8192-1814-6 (paperback)

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Faithful attendance and participation in all class discussions, processes and activities.**
- 2. Read all the assigned readings and reflectively engage with the authors' ideas and your own experiences and understandings.**
- 3. Keep a reflective notebook on the readings done for class.**
Some helpful questions:
 - A. What concrete implications for the practice of spiritual direction/pastoral practice do I find in the text? What implications do I agree with? Disagree with? Why?
 - B. How does the reading help me to work towards a personal definition of spiritual direction/pastoral practice? What is it? What qualities would describe the relationship and my style of engaging in ministry?
 - C. What are my personal stumbling blocks in regard to living out my desired truth/qualities/ style of spiritual direction/ministry?
- 4. Two required papers.**
 - A. **A Reflection paper (3-6 pages) due by January 9, 2010.**
You may send the paper to cosmicdancer@comcast.net or bring it to class.

What is it in me that really prevents me from trusting/believing/ experiencing that God loves me? What is MY NO point or major block in my spiritual unfolding?

You might find it helpful to reflect on your own spiritual direction/retreat experiences or love relationships where you might have encountered your shadow/resistance to your deeper wholeness. You may also find it helpful to write this paper after reading Gerald May's book.

AND/OR

What has encouraged and opened me to believe/trust/ experience God's love for me?

You might find it helpful to recall one particular time in your life when this awareness was poignant for you.

B.. An Annotated Bibliography of FIVE important sources on your topic/critical dynamic.

Students will select a critical issue or dynamic that they have a particular interest in exploring further, such as: sexuality, grief, trauma, addiction, aging, multicultural awarenesses, cosmological assumptions, healing , shame, body, etc.

Make enough copies for each member of the class You will hand these out during the second weekend when you make a short presentation on the issue you selected. Further details will be given during our class time together.

Grade Distribution:

Paper and Annotated Bibliography	40%
Class Participation and Presentation	60%

PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST WEEKEND - January 9 & 10, 2010

- 1. Read texts by Bogard, Fischer, Wegela and the packet of Articles** listed as Required Reading, taking appropriate notes and engaging in personal reflection.
- 2. Write the Reflection Paper. Due: January 9, 2010.**
- 3. Fill out the attached Questionnaire and send it to Alexandra** via e-mail, cosmicdancer@comcast.net or post, 1104 21st Avenue East, Seattle, WA 98112) by December 30th, 2010.

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Questionnaire

Name: _____ **Phone#** _____

Ministry/Work: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Denomination: _____ **Program/Year:** _____

Your favorite animal at the moment _____

Name three goals you hope to achieve for yourself during this course:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

In what ministry do you plan to engage the learnings from this course?

What fears or concerns do you have about this course?

Name one dynamic or issue in spirituality that you have encountered in your own work/ministry:

Name one spirituality dynamic or issue from the world in which we live that you have been concerned about recently:

Name one critical issue/dynamic in spirituality that your own experience has brought to your attention:

Name a spiritual practice or resource that you have found helpful:

Would you be open to create a sacred space for class that would be a visual reminder of the presence of Mystery (God)?

Would you be willing to lead a short prayer (song, chant, poem) in class to focus us at the beginning of class or after the break?.

What situations/activities help you to learn best?

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

Please return completed questionnaire by December 30th, 2010 to:

cosmicdancer@comcast.net

or

**Alexandra Kovats, csjp, PhD
1104 21st Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98112**

Thank you!