STMM 561 CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER
Fall Quarter 2010
Date: September 25-26 and November 12-14, 2010
Instructor: Alexandra Kovats, csjp, Ph.D. **Phone: (**206) 322 8560
E-mail: cosmicdancer@comcast.net **Room:** Hunthausen 100

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 and discussion.

OBJECTIVES

1. To become familiar with the key elements of contemporary Christian spirituality and how these themes find expression in one's personal spirituality.

2. To experience and become familiar with a variety of prayer forms that will enable one to practice those forms which express one's personal spirituality.

3. To deepen one's process of self-reflection and to be able to articulate one's relationship to the God of one's understanding.

4. To deepen one's appreciation for the sacredness of all life.

5. To reflect on and evaluate the pastoral implications of the different approaches to prayer and spirituality.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Bass, Dorothy C. ed. (1997) *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Cannato, Judy. (2006) *Radical Amazement.* Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books.
Keating, Thomas. (2007) *Invitation to Love: The Way of Christian Contemplation.* New York, NY: Continuum.
Rohr, Richard and friends. ed. (2006) *Contemplation in Action.* New York, NY: Crossroad.
Vennard, Jane E. (2003) *Embracing the World: Praying for Justice and Peace.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Steindl-Rast, David. (2008) *Common Sense Spirituality: The Essential Wisdom of David Steindl-Rast.* New York, NY: Corssroads.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Chittister, Joan. (1998) *Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men.* Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Fox, Matthew. (2008) *The Hidden Spirituality of Men: Ten Metaphors to Awaken The Sacred Masculine.* Navato, CA: New World Library

Ulanov, Ann and Barry. (1982) *Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer.* Atlanta: John Knox Press. .

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

FIRST WEEKEND

Saturday Morning:

Introduction to Course
Descriptions/images of Spirituality
Brief Historical Overview of Christian Spirituality

Saturday Afternoon:

Overview of Christian Spirituality continues
Key themes of Contemporary Christian Spirituality

Sunday Morning:

Spirituality: The Dance of the Mystic and the Prophet

Sunday Afternoon:

Spirituality: The Dance Continues
Pastoral Implications regarding Diverse Spiritualities

SECOND WEEKEND

Friday Night:

Divers Experiences of Spirituality: Gender, Culture, Sexual Orientation

Saturday Morning:

Overview of Christian Prayer

Saturday Afternoon:

Images of God
Prayer as Embodiment
Stages and Approaches to Prayer

Sunday Morning:

Prayer Rituals and Prayer Ways
Insights about Prayer

Sunday Afternoon:

Pastoral Implications regarding Prayer
Refocusing on Spirituality and Prayer

During both weekends we will participate in various prayer experiences in class.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS

1. **Attend all class sessions.** Consult with instructor if emergencies arise.

2. **Read** and **review assigned texts and handouts** and **reflectively engage with the author's ideas and your experiences and understandings.** Be prepared to discuss them in class.

3. **Establish/reaffirm a 15 minute daily prayer practice.**
   Participate and **reflect on the prayer experiences** during 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.

   Write up the interview in a 4-5 page paper (typed, double spaced).
   Due: September 25, 2010.

5. **Integration Paper**
   This **4-5 page** (typed, double spaced) **Integration paper** provides you with the opportunity to reflect on how the experience of this course and the readings have clarified and expanded your understanding and experience of prayer and spirituality. You may also choose to describe and elaborate on new practices of prayer you have decided to implement, comment on insights that challenged and/or surprised you, and articulate where you are in your own search for Mystery.
   Due Date: November 22 , 2010.

Grade distribution:

Written assignments:	Interview	25%
	Integration Paper	25%
Class attendance and participation		25%
Reading materials		25%

PRE-COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Read ***Radical Amazement, Contemplation in Action*** and ***Common Sense Spirituality*** 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. **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: September 25, 2010.

5. Please fill out the attached questionnaire and return it by e-mail or regular mail to Alexandra (Mailing Address: **1104 21st Avenue East, Seattle, WA 98112;** E-mail: **cosmicdancer@comcast.net**) by **September 13, 2010.** Your responses will help me to create and focus the course content and processes. **Thank You!**

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER
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NAME: _ **Phone #:** _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

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

Denomination: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

1. Name the courses/workshops you have taken in the last three years that focus on spirituality and/or prayer.

2. Name three goals you hope to achieve during this course for yourself.
   1.
   2.
   3.

3. What fears/concerns do you have about this course?

4. Name **a person** (living or dead) who has had a significant influence on your spiritual life. Describe that influence.

5. What image and/or name of God is most significant to you at this time in your life?

6. What topics/concerns emerge for you regarding spirituality and/or prayer in light of your own journey and your ministry?

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

8. 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.

9 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?

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

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

Due Date: September 13, 2010
Please return Questionnaire to: Alexandra Kovats, csjp, Ph.D.
1104 21st Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98112

or e-mail to:mailto:cosmicdancer@comcast.net

Thank You!