

STML 563 Contemporary Expressions in Spirituality

Valerie Lesniak, PhD

Fall Quarter, 2011

Wednesday, 1:30-4:20

Hunthausen Hall 100

vlesniak@seattleu.edu

206-296-6936

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 individual 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

Lesser, Elizabeth. **The Seeker’s Guide: Making Your Life A Spiritual Adventure**, New York: Villard, 1999.
ISBN: 0-679-78359-8

Tacey, David. **The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality**, London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
ISBN 978-1-58391-874-6

Pertinent articles can be found in a Reader which students can purchase at the SU Repro Department and are designated by a “*”. Students will be responsible to pay for the cost of the reproductions. Students will need to download a few articles from the web and are thusly indicated in the syllabus and ARE NOT FOUND IN THE READER.

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 expression in spirituality that they are interested in exploring. It may be a contemporary spiritual writer, artist, movement, publication, organization, website or emerging trend in spirituality that they find particularly interesting. Each student will be responsible for:
 - **Researching** their selected topic (Topics to be selected by October 12, 2011).
 - **Presenting their research findings in a 20 minute oral presentation** to the class on their topic. The presentations will be scheduled the last four class sessions that is the month of November. Six/seven students will present each class session.
 - **Writing and submitting a 5-9 page paper** assessing the significance of their selection by addressing the following five questions:
 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 a spiritual concern of the day?
 3. What are the particular strengths and limitations you find in their approach and description?
 4. How do you see this author/artist/movement/trend contributing to developing a new social and spiritual consciousness, global understanding and responsibility, and individual interconnectedness.
 5. Short bibliography of resources for your topic.

Papers are due November 30, 2011. 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%

Tentative Syllabus

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

Articles pertinent to first class topic:

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) "North American Spirituality," and "New Age Spirituality," 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.
- *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**, 1998/92:85-101.

September 21: Introductions and Getting started; mapping the landscape of spirituality

- 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 28: Postmodern World and the spiritual quest in the Pacific Northwest-
Reading Assignment:

- *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.
- *"Danah Zohar," in **Women In Search of the Sacred**, Anne Bancroft, Penguin Books, 1996, 57-78. ISBN 0-14-019494
- *Shibley, Mark A. "The Promise and Limits of Secular Spirituality in Cascadia," 33-52 and *Killen, Patricia O'Connell. "Memory, Novelty and Possibility in This Place," 65-88 in Todd, Douglas ed., **Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia: Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest**, Ronsdale Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-55380-060-6:

October 5: What does it mean to be "spiritual" and not religious?
Reading Assignment:

- Tacey, **Spirituality Revolution**, pp.49-123
- Lesser, Elizabeth. **Seeker's Guide** pp.3-86
- *Nelson, Marcia. "Oprah on a Mission", **Christian Century**, Sept.25-Oct.8, 2002, p. 20-25.

Resource articles:

*Schneiders, Sandra. "Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum," **Spiritus** 3 (2003): 163-185.

*Kraus, Rachel, "The Many Faces of Spirituality: A Conceptual Framework Considering Belly Dance," **Implicit Religion** April (2009); 12:1: 51-72 found on the web: <http://proxy.seattleu.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=41577748&site=ehost-live>

October 12: The Search for the Self: Resources and practices for the development of the Inner Self

Reading Assignment:

- Tacey, **Spirituality Revolution**, 127-171.
- Lesser, **Seeker's Guide**, 87-238

October 19: Hybrid Spiritualities and Movements

Reading Assignment:

- *Taylor, Barry. "Postsecular Soul Space," in **Entertainment Theology: New – Edge Spirituality in a Digital Democracy**, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008: 106-172.
- *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. (Article can be downloaded from website: www.fetzer.org)

http://www.fetzer.org/resources/resource-detail/?resource_id=17

October 26: Contemporary Spirituality: Spiritual Teachings, Pathways and Belongings
Reading Assignment:

- Tacey, **Spirituality Revolution**, 175-226
- Lesser, **Seeker's Guide**, 241-401

November 2: Student Presentations

November 9: Student Presentations

November 16: Student Presentations

November 30: Student Presentations

(N.B. No class will be held the day before Thanksgiving, November 23.)