

STMA 571 CRITICAL ISSUES IN SPIRITUALITY

Winter 2011 - Weekend Format

January 7-8, 2011 February 10-12, 2011

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will explore typical human and cultural dynamics (issues) and patterns that emerge as supports and/or blockages in the development of one's relationship to God, self, others and the rest of creation, especially as they manifest in the context of spiritual direction. The research of a topic and its presentation by students 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 awareness; grief and trauma; sexuality; sexual abuse; depression, dark night, desolation; addiction and co-dependency; midlife and aging; healing and other topics as raised by students' interests.

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.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Ability to reflect theologically on the central themes of the Christian Tradition.
2. Ability to discern and nurture spiritual experience in relationship to self and others.

REQUIRED READING

O'Murchu, Diarmuid. (2010) *Adult Faith: Growing in Wisdom and Understanding*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Wagner, Nick. Ed. (2006) *Spiritual Direction in Context*. New York, NY: Morehouse.

Weaver, Andrew J. et al. (2005) *Reflections on Grief and Spiritual Growth*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

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.

A number of articles are to be read before the first weekend. They will be sent electronically to those registered for the course by mid-December.

RECOMMENDED READING

May, Gerald. (1988) *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing Of Addictions*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins.

Vest, Norvene. ed. (2000) *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction*. Nashville, TN: Morehouse.

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 7, 2011.**
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 the 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 on the recommended text list.

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. (for second weekend)

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 awareness, cosmological assumptions, healing , shame, body, etc.

Send electronic copies for each member of the class, including the instructor before the second weekend. During the second weekend you will make a presentation on the topic you selected. Further details will be given during the first weekend class.

Grade Distribution:

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

PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST WEEKEND - January 7 & 8, 2011

- 1. Read texts by O'Murchu and Wagner, and the articles** provided electronically. Take appropriate notes and engage in personal reflection.
- 2. Write the Reflection Paper. Due: by January 7, 2011.**
- 3. Fill out the attached Questionnaire and send it to Alexandra via e-mail, cosmicdancer@comcast.net or mail to: 1104 21st Avenue East, Seattle, WA 98112) by December 30th, 2011.**

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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, 2011 to:

cosmicdancer@comcast.net

or

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

Thank you!