

STMM 561 Contemporary Christian Spirituality and Prayer

Spring Quarter 2008 Tuesdays 5:45-8:35 Hunthausen 100

Instructor: Christine Valters Paintner, PhD Office Hours: By appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is an introduction 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. Class sessions will include lecture, prayer experiences, small and large group discussion.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- To become familiar with the key themes of contemporary Christian spirituality and how these themes find expression in your personal spirituality.
- To experience and become familiar with a variety of prayer forms and practice those which express and enrich your personal spirituality.
- To deepen your process of self-reflection and reflection on your images of God and be able to articulate these.
- To reflect on and evaluate the social dimensions and pastoral implications of the different approaches to prayer and spirituality.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **ATTENDANCE & ACTIVE CLASS PARTICIPATION (30% of grade)**

This course is highly experiential and process-oriented. In order to acquire the skills that are needed, preparation and practice are required. Students are strongly encouraged to attend all classes as absences will affect one's grade. Students are required to demonstrate effective group skills by actively contributing to large and small group discussions indicating timely reading and critical theological assessment of assigned material, practicing good listening skills and active attentiveness, and using constructive peer feedback that includes honesty, challenge, and mutual respect.

- **REFLECTIVE ESSAY #1: Faith Development and Vocation (4-5 pages) (20% of Grade)**

Reflecting on James Fowler's work on stages of faith development and vocation, discuss what it means for you to become an adult in a community of faith. Give a concrete personal example of the *process* of transition you have encountered in moving from one stage of faith to another. Please include reflections on what assisted you in this transition toward your own Christian maturity and vocation, as Fowler uses the term and how your sense of vocation changed between these two stages of faith. Feel free to draw on our other reading material to support your essay.

PAPER DUE: Tuesday, April 22nd

➤ **REFLECTIVE ESSAY #2: Two Outside Prayer Experiences (4-5 pages) (20% of Grade)**

One of the objectives of this class is to expose you to a variety of ways of praying and spiritual practices. To facilitate this objective, in addition to the prayer experiences in class, you are required to participate in two (2) out-of-class Prayer Experiences (see end of syllabus for suggestions) and write a 4-5 page double-spaced paper reflecting on them, integrating your experience with the readings, discussions in class, and your own ongoing spiritual journey. Please also tend to the communal dimensions of these experiences in your reflections. Consider your experience from both an insider and outsider perspective. The insider perspective takes into account your own personal experience and connections with your wider spiritual life and practice. The outsider perspective looks at the experience from a more theological and sociological perspective. What is the kind of spirituality being expressed? What images of God are operating?

PAPER DUE: Tuesday, May 20th

➤ **FINAL INTEGRATIVE PAPER: Creating a Personal Rule of Life** (30% of Grade)**

For your final project (8-10 pages double-spaced) you are going to create a personal rule of life. The goal of this project is to integrate your learning from the quarter with a concrete reflection on what a balanced set of practices for your own soul care would look like. Keep in mind the social dimensions of practices as well as the pastoral implications for your own life in ministry. Please be **specific in your references to reading, class lectures, discussions, and experiential exercises**. *It should be clear to me how your Rule has been shaped and impacted by this class since the primary purpose of this paper is to **demonstrate to me your integration** of the material.*

I invite you to consider these questions: Where do you need more balance in your life? Which practices will you engage in to help restore this balance? Does your Rule touch on the various areas we discussed in class? Are there topics that were raised in class that you feel resistant to examine in your own life? If so, how might you incorporate this avenue for growth into your Rule? How are you being invited to a more integrated spirituality and set of practices?

A Rule helps provide a structure for your life, somewhat like a trellis in that it provides both direction *and* room for growth, and it is deeply rooted in Christian tradition. If you don't like the word "Rule," consider an alternative such as "Compass" or "Guide." Spirituality is about a movement toward freedom, wholeness, and transformation so that we can grow in our ability to love the world. Does your Rule help to facilitate this end? Is your Rule so filled with practices that you are setting yourself up to fail?

If possible, consider taking a day of retreat to reflect on how you are being invited to live into a particular way of life for this next season. Consider your community when creating your Rule as well – family, small faith groups, congregation, etc. Share your Rule with a spiritual director or close friend and get their input as well. This will not be the final Rule for the rest of your life. We are all on a journey, so I encourage you to re-visit your Rule regularly and make changes where necessary as you discover what works and what doesn't.

FINAL PROJECT DUE: Tuesday, June 10th by 4:00 p.m. in Christine Paintner's faculty box at STM. Hard copies of papers only please, no emailed attachments.

Recommended Books on Creating a Rule of Life: *Living Faith Day by Day: How the Sacred Rules of Monastic Traditions Can Help You Live Spiritually in the Modern World* by Debra Farrington or *At Home in the World: A Rule of Life for the Rest of Us* by Margaret Guenther.

Additional Online Resources on Creating a Rule of Life:

http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/items/ecourse/item_2839.html

(this is a link to an e-course Debra Farrington wrote for Spirituality & Health magazine, which gives you a simplified—but still quite helpful—version of the material in her book)

**If there is another final project that would be more helpful to you in integrating the above elements, please feel free to consult with me about alternatives. I am also open to final projects that integrate creative expression with written reflection, again please feel free to talk with me about this.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Au, Wilkie & Noreen Cannon. *Urgings of the Heart: A Spirituality of Integration*

Bass, Dorothy, Editor. *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*

Fowler, James. *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*

Rakoczy, Susan. *Great Mystics And Social Justice: Walking On The Two Feet Of Love*

Rolheiser, Ronald. *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality*

Suchocki, Marjorie Hewitt. *In God's Presence: Theological Reflections on Prayer*

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Commins, Gary. *Becoming Bridges: The Spirit and Practice of Diversity*

Edwards, Denis. *Ecology at the Heart of Faith*

Killen, Patricia O'Connell. *Finding Our Voices: Women, Wisdom, and Faith*

Merton, Thomas. *New Seeds of Contemplation*

Neafsey, John. *A Sacred Voice Is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience*

Rohr, Richard. *From Wild Man to Wise Man: Reflections on Male Spirituality*

CLASS SESSIONS:	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS DUE
<u>April 1:</u> Introduction to Spirituality	
<u>April 8:</u> Spiritual Development & Vocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please read all of <i>Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian</i>
<u>April 15:</u> Spiritual Practice, Shadow Self, & Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Practicing Our Faith</i>, ch 1 (Times of Yearning, Practices of Faith), pp. 1-12 • In <i>Holy Longing</i>, ch. 1-3 (What is Spirituality?, Current Struggle with Christian Spirituality, Nonnegotiable Essentials), pp. 3-72) • In <i>Urgings of the Heart</i>, ch 1-5 (Holistic Spirituality; Abandoned Self, Codependency, Perfectionism, Envy) pp. 7-94
<u>April 22:</u> Contemplative Prayer & Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Practicing Our Faith</i>, ch 6 (Keeping Sabbath), pp. 75-90 • In <i>Great Mystics and Social Justice</i>, ch 1, 2, 5, 7 (Prayer or Action?, Mystical Experience: The Common Call, Mary and Martha, Thomas Merton), pp. 1-20; 71-98; 117-134 • In <i>Urgings of the Heart</i>, ch 6 (Overwork) pp. 95-113 <p>PAPER DUE: Reflective Essay #1 on Spiritual Development and Vocation</p>
<u>April 29:</u> Liberation Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Holy Longing</i>, ch. 8, (A Spirituality of Justice and Peacemaking), pp. 167-191 • In <i>Practicing Our Faith</i>, ch 3 and 4 (Hospitality, Household Economics), pp. 29-58 • In <i>Great Mystics and Social Justice</i>, ch 8-10 (Dorothy Day; South African Voices; Mysticism, Suffering & Political Love), pp. 135-208
<u>May 6:</u> Sexuality, Embodiment, & Spirituality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Practicing Our Faith</i>, ch 3, (Honoring the Body), pp. 29-42 • In <i>Holy Longing</i>, ch. 4, 5, 9 (Christ as the Basis for Christian Spirituality, Consequences of the Incarnation for Spirituality, A Spirituality of Sexuality), pp. 73-110, 192-212 • In <i>Great Mystics and Social Justice</i>, ch. 3 (Catherine of Siena), pp. 21-42 • In <i>Urgings of the Heart</i>, ch 7 (Intimacy) pp. 114-132

<p><u>May 13:</u> Spirituality & the Arts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Practicing Our Faith</i>, ch 13 (Singing Our Lives), pp. 179-194 • In <i>Great Mystics and Social Justice</i>, ch 6 (Evelyn Underhill), pp. 99-116 • ***"Responding to Beauty's Call: The Shape of an Aesthetic Spirituality," <i>The Way: Journal of Contemporary Spirituality</i> (Oct 2005), Christine Valters Paintner, pp. 36-47 • ***"Using the Arts in Spiritual Direction and Discernment," <i>Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction</i> (Sept 2006), Christine Valters Paintner, pp. 47-53 (**I will email you PDF files of these articles)
<p><u>May 20:</u> Spirituality of Nature & Place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ** A Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative from the Social Affairs Commission, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops http://www.cccb.ca/site/Files/pastoralenvironment.html (download from website) • Poetry by Mary Oliver, Wendell Berry, David Wagoner, Linda Hogan <p>PAPER DUE: Reflective Essay #2 on Outside Prayer Experiences</p>
<p><u>May 27:</u> Discernment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Practicing Our Faith</i>, ch 5 and 8 (Saying Yes and Saying No, Discernment), pp. 59-74; 105-118 • In <i>Great Mystics and Social Justice</i>, ch 4 (Ignatius of Loyola), pp. 43-70 • In <i>Holy Longing</i>, ch. 10 (Sustaining Ourselves in the Spiritual Life), pp. 213-242
<p><u>June 3:</u> Community, Liturgy, & Spirituality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In <i>Practicing Our Faith</i>, ch 7 and 9 (Testimony, Shaping Communities) pp. 91-104; 119-132. • In <i>Holy Longing</i>, ch. 6-7 (Spirituality of Ecclesiology, Spirituality of Paschal Mystery), pp. 111-166
<p><u>Tuesday, June 10</u></p>	<p>** FINAL PAPER DUE by 4:00 p.m. to my faculty box at STM **</p>

OUTSIDE PRAYER EXPERIENCE SUGGESTIONS:

Please choose two *different* prayer experiences with which you are *unfamiliar*. Attending a worship service in a denomination other than your own is also a good option.

You are free to select a prayer experience that is not on this list, please just consult me first if you are unsure. This is just offered as a starting point.

Always check the website &/or call ahead to verify times, dates, and specific location

TAIZE:

St. James Cathedral, 804 9th Ave (First Hill), (206) 622-3559
Ecumenical Prayer with Music From Taize, Every Friday at 6:30 p.m.
<http://www.stjames-cathedral.org/>

LABYRINTH:

First Baptist Church, 1111 Harvard Avenue (First Hill), (206) 325-6051
Second Sundays 6:00-8:00 p.m.
<http://www.seattlefirstbaptist.org/>

Plymouth Congregational Church, 1217 Sixth Ave (Downtown), (206) 622-4865
First Friday and Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
<http://www.plymouthchurchseattle.org/>

COMPLINE CHOIR:

St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, 1245 Tenth Ave E (Cap Hill), (206) 323-0300
Every Sunday at 9:30 p.m.
<http://www.saintmarks.org/Music/compline.html>

JAZZ VESPERS:

First Baptist Church, 1111 Harvard Avenue (First Hill), (206) 325-6051
First Sundays October - May, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
<http://www.seattlefirstbaptist.org/>

EVENSONG:

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 4805 NE 45th St, (206) 522-7144
First Sunday of the Month, 5:00 p.m.
<http://www.ststephens-seattle.org/index.php>
(also a Contemplative Service the 3rd Sunday of each month at 5:00 p.m.)

SANCTORUM MASS:

Church of the Apostles (COTA), 4272 Fremont Ave N, (206) 851-8962
<http://www.apostleschurch.org>