

DRAFT SYLLABUS

INT 505 Practice & Theology of Christian Spirituality

Thursday, 9:00 – 11:00am

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Course Description

An introduction to the theology and practice of Christian spirituality, both as it varies across the church's history and the diverse communities that are part of the contemporary church. Particular attention is given to the vital connection between spiritual practice and engagement with the needs of the world and to the approaches to Christian spirituality arising out of the Wesleyan tradition.

Course Objectives

Knowing: What will students know specifically in the course?

- The student will leave the class with a sound, basic definition of spirituality and the complexities that arise in defining it.
- The student will be able to identify the characteristics that distinguish Christian spirituality from other spiritual traditions.
- The student will leave the class with a basic familiarity with Christian practice and disciplines, an understanding of their purpose, a sense of how those disciplines are related, and their place in the worship and life of Christian communities.
- The student will leave the class with an understanding of the ways in which spiritual practice varies from community to community and the ways in which diversity finds expression in spiritual practice.
- Students will be able to identify the implied and explicit theological assumptions made by diverse approaches to Christian spiritual practice?
- Students will be able to describe the vital connection between spiritual practice and engagement with the needs of the world and systemic injustice of all kinds.

- They will be able to describe the relationship between spirituality and a concern for the earth's ecology (and the ways in which each informs the other).
- Students will be able to identify the distinctive contributions made by the Wesleyan tradition to the practice of Christian spirituality.

Doing: What will students be able to do or practice as a result of their learning?

- Lead from a spiritually centered approach to life and to their vocations
- Identify the implied and explicit theological assumptions imbedded in diverse approaches to Christian spirituality
- Guide others in grasping the richness and diversity of Christian spiritual practice
- Articulate the vital connection between spiritual practice and service to others and a care for the earth
- Describe and help others to understand the contribution made by the Wesleyan tradition against the backdrop of the diversity of Christian spiritual practice

Being: What will be key values, attitudes, habits and/or commitments promote in the course for faithful and righteous Christian learning, living, leadership and/or service?

- An awareness of the connections between spiritual practice and leadership
- A familiarity with spiritual practice that can inform their own lives
- An appreciation for the unique genius of varied approaches to spiritual practice
- The ability to encounter those differences in a fashion that is marked by mutual appreciation and sensitivity
- An appreciation for the vital connection between spiritual practice, social engagement, and the well being of the earth

Texts

Foster, Richard J. *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998. ISBN-13: 978-0340979266, ISBN-10: 0340979267. Price: \$29.99

Foster, Richard J. and Griffin, Emilie, eds. *Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000. ISBN-10: 0060628723, ISBN-13: 978-0060628727. Price: \$13.50.

McIntosh, Mark A. *Divine Teaching: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. ISBN-13: 978-1405102711, ISBN-10: 1405102713. Price: \$36.11.

Please note: The prices listed above are as posted at Amazon.com and in paperback. All three texts have been widely used and are available in other forms and at other prices.

Assessment

Attendance & Participation

Given the nature of the course material, attendance is essential. Students are expected to prepare and participate in class discussions. Taking notes will be indispensable in performing the other assignments.

Reading Journal

Each student will be required to keep a reading journal. One entry for each class session is required and each entry should be a minimum of one page (type-written). The entry should record items from the reading that provoked questions or insights and the student should plan to bring her / his journal to class in order to contribute to in-class discussion of the readings. The journal, in its entirety is due the last day of class. There are 13 entries and should be submitted as a single document with each entry clearly labeled. The journal must be complete and conform to the requirements in order to receive credit. 15% of the assessment will be devoted to the journal.

Integrative Essays

Each student will be required to complete two integrative essays. Each essay will address a question drawn from the material and students will be expected to respond, drawing in an integrative fashion on the reading and class material. The essays should not quote material from either source at length, but students will be required to demonstrate a familiarity with the reading and course material (citing the relevant author, title, and page numbers or dates).

Each essay must be between 6 and 8 pages in length (typewritten, double-spaced, one inch margins, 12 point font). The essays should draw critically and thoughtfully

from the material, but advance an argument, not simply summarize, list, or report on what was heard or read. N.B.: The language “critically and thoughtfully” is chosen intentionally here. These are analytical essays and language involving how the student “feels” about the material is not germane. Note, too, that these assignments will only be manageable if students remain current in their reading and actively participate in the class. 85% of the assessment is devoted to the student’s work on these essays.

Classroom Expectations

During class, the use of cell phones is strictly prohibited.

Students may use computers to take notes. Answering emails and internet browsing are prohibited. Such activities will distract from participation in class and inhibit the student’s ability to complete assignments effectively.

Recording devices are prohibited.

Students for whom English is not a second language will be expected to submit their work on the date due and have an additional week to submit an edited version of their work.

The grade given for assignments that are late will be docked 3 points for each day or part of the day that the assignment is late. All assignments are due at class time on the date designated in the calendar.

Taking notes will be essential to this class, both as a means of integrating the material and as a means of incorporating classroom discussion into the assignments. The instructor will not be posting lecture content or outlines.

Calendar: Topics, Readings, and Due Dates for Assignments

September 7: Defining Christian Spirituality

Reading: McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, ix – 54.

September 14: Christian Spirituality and Thinking Theologically

Reading: McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, ix – 54 (continued).

September 21: Christian Spirituality as Experiential and Sacramental

Reading: McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 54 – 110.

September 28: Eucharist and Christian Spirituality

Reading: McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 111 – 178; Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter on worship; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on worship.

October 5: Christian Spirituality as Individual and Communal

Reading: McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 179 - 228.

October 12: Scripture and Christian Spirituality

Reading: Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapters on meditation and study; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on meditation and study.

October 19: Prayer in Christian Spirituality: The Lord's Prayer

Reading: Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter on prayer; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on prayer.

Mid-term Integrative Essay due at class time.

October 26: No Class, Reading Day

November 2: Prayer in Christian Spirituality: Kataphatic and Apophatic Prayer

Reading: Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter on prayer; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on prayer (continued).

November 9 and 16: Ascetic Practice and Christian Spirituality

Reading: Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapters on simplicity and solitude; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on simplicity and solitude.

November 23: No Class, Thanksgiving Recess

November 30 and December 7: Spiritual Practice and The Journey Outward

Reading: Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapters on submission, service and guidance; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on submission, service and guidance.

December 14: *Final Thoughts*

Reading: Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter on celebration; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on celebration.

Final Integrative Essay and Completed Journal due at 9am on Thursday, December 21.