

## INT 505 Practice & Theology of Christian Spirituality

Spring Semester, 2020

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.

### Student Outcomes

Students will be able to identify the major approaches taken to defining spirituality.  
Students will be able to describe the strengths and weaknesses of each approach.  
Students will be able to describe the relationship between spirituality and theology.  
Students will be able to craft their own definition of spirituality.  
Students will be able to offer cogent reasons for the definition that they choose.  
Students will be able to identify the core characteristics of Christian spirituality.  
Students will be able to describe the disciplines or practices at the heart of Christian spirituality.  
Students will demonstrate an understanding of the place of the church in Christian spirituality.  
Students will be able to describe the vital connection between spiritual practice and engagement with the needs of the world.  
Students will complete a Rule of Life.  
Students will demonstrate a knowledge of the purposes served by developing a Rule of Life.  
Students will be able to describe the relationship between their Rule.

### 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: I recommend that you buy this book, but we will not be reading the entire text. A copy will be on reserve in the library]

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. Familiarity with in class discussions and reading for the course will also be indispensable in completing the assigned assignments.

#### Journal

Each student will be required to keep a journal. Two entries for each class session are required and each entry should be a minimum of one page (type-written, **Single spaced**). One 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 second entry will be devoted to spiritual practice and a prompt will be provided for each reflection. The journal, in its entirety is due the last day of class. The journal should be submitted as a single, Microsoft Word document. Each entry in the journal should be 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 4 and 6 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 and will likely be reflected in the grade given to assignments.

Recording devices are prohibited.

Students for whom English is not a second language will be expected to submit the first draft of their work on the date due. They 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.

### Calendar: Topics, Readings, and Due Dates for Assignments

#### **February 6: Defining Christian Spirituality**

*Reading for Journal Entry One: McIntosh, Divine Teaching, ix – 15.*

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two: How do you define spirituality? What are factors that have shaped that definition?*

#### **February 13: Christian Spirituality and Thinking Theologically**

*Reading for Journal Entry One: McIntosh, Divine Teaching, 16-30.*

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Inventory your spiritual practice: What do you do on a regular basis that enhances your spiritual journey?

### **February 20: Christian Spirituality as Experiential and Sacramental**

*Reading for Journal Entry One:* McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 31-54.

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Re-read your baptismal vows. In what ways does your life reflect those vows?

### **February 27: Eucharist and Christian Spirituality**

*Reading for Journal Entry One:* McIntosh, *Divine Teaching*, 55-110; Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter on worship; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on worship.

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Describe worship in the church that you attend. Does it contribute to your spiritual journey? If it does, in what way(s) does it contribute?

### **March 5: Christian Spirituality as Individual and Communal**

*Reading for Journal Entry One:* Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter on study; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on study.

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* What is the church and what is its role or place in the spiritual life?

### **March 12: Scripture and Christian Spirituality**

*Reading for Journal Entry One:* Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, chapter on meditation; Foster, *Spiritual Classics*, readings on meditation.

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Following on the instructions given by Foster on page 30, practice meditating on a brief passage of Scripture using the first of the three methods Foster describes. Try “brooding” (as Foster describes it) on the truth of that passage 3 times in the course of the week. Describe your experience with meditation.

### **March 19: Prayer in Christian Spirituality: The Lord’s Prayer**

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

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Inventory your prayer life: (1) How often do you pray? (2) What kinds of prayer dominate your prayer life? In conversation with Foster’s reflection on prayer, what does this inventory suggest about the state of your prayer life?

### **March 26: No class, Spring break is March 23-27**

Mid-term Integrative Essay due March 27.

### **April 2: Prayer in Christian Spirituality: Notes on Kinds of Prayer**

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

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Pick one of the two “suggested exercises” that accompany the selection in *Spiritual Classics* (p. 46) on *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Record the results in your journal.

**April 9: Maundy Thursday, No Class**

**April 16 and 23: Christian Spirituality: Ascetic Practice and Rule of Life**

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

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Choose one of the three exercises suggested on p. 153 of *Spiritual Classics* and report on your experience.

**April 30: Spiritual Practice and The Journey Outward**

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

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Reflect with at least one other person on suggested exercise number 2 on p. 214 in *Spiritual Classics*. Ask God to reveal to you what that conversation tells you about the place of service in your life. Report on your experience.

**May 7: Final Thoughts**

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

*Exercise for Journal Entry Two:* Consider in prayer: What one concern do you find most difficult to trust with God? Is there some small way in which you can surrender that concern? Reflect on the experience.

Final Integrative Essay with Rule of Life and Completed Journal due at 9am on Thursday, May 14.