

INT 505 Practice & Theology of Christian Spirituality

Spring Semester, 2022

Tuesday, 2-4pm CST, Online and Synchronous

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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

What will students know when they leave class?

- The student will leave the class with a sound, basic definition of spirituality and the challenges that arise in defining it.
- The student will be able to identify the core characteristics of Christian spirituality.
- The student will have a basic familiarity with Christian practice and disciplines, an understanding of their purpose, a sense of how those disciplines are related to one another and their place in the worship and life of Christian communities.
- Students will be able to define the connection between spirituality and theology.
- They will be able to describe the vital connection between spiritual practice and engagement with the needs of the world.
- And they will be able to explain the purpose behind the development of a rule of life.

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.

Journal

Each student will be required to keep a journal. Two entries for each class session is required and each entry should be a minimum of one page (type-written). 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 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 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.

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

February 1: 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 8: 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 15: 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 22: 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 1: 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 8: 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 15: 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 22: No class, Spring break

Mid-term Integrative Essay due March 29 at class time.

March 29 and April 5: 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 12 and 19: 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 26: 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 3: 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 CST on May 14.