Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
CE-663 / SP-650C
Spiritual Practices
Dr. Virginia A. Lee
Fall 2026
Tuesday morning
8:00-11:00am (central time)
Classroom TBD
DRAFT (as of March 2026)

Instructor: Dr. Virginia A. Lee
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Email is the best way to reach me. I am available via email from 8am Monday morning through 5pm on Friday evening. I will try to respond to your emails within a few hours, but no later than 24 hours. I will not respond to emails on the weekends.

Teaching Assistant:

Description – In this course, we will explore and practice a variety of spiritual practices for persons of all ages. We will consider the culture and history of various practices as well as vocational aspects and educational aspects, including the variety of ways of knowing. We will also explore the connection between spiritual practices and how we live out our faith in the world.

Course Outcomes
At the end of the course, learners

- Will have begun (or continued) sustaining life-long spiritual practices
- Will be able to practice and model a variety of spiritual practices for all ages and generations, particularly intergenerationally
- Will be able to make connections between their spiritual practices and their engagement with the needs of the world

MATM Degree Program Goals

1. To construct a critical, spiritually-grounded, practice-based self-understanding necessary for transformative faith formation
2. To evaluate educational strategies and approaches for emancipatory teaching and learning
3. To read and interpret shifting cultural and religious landscapes locally and globally

MDIV Degree Program Goals

1. Is developing a growing depth of understanding and practice in personal and corporate spiritual discipline(s)
2. Is developing the capacity to nurture further Christian formation through the practices of ministry ((e.g., prayer, liturgy, preaching, pastoral care, and teaching)
3. Is developing the ability to engage in critically informed analysis of gender, race, culture, social and economic structures that shape human beings and promotes prophetic inquiry and witness for the sake of justice

REQUIRED TEXTS

When ordering texts, please feel free to purchase used versions or to buy from other suppliers. There are many places to find used books – students, online, etc. Please do not pay exorbitant prices for any of these books. If you have problems accessing the books, please let me know.

Patricia D. Brown, *Paths to Prayer: Finding Your Own Way to the Presence of God*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2003.) ISBN: 9780787965655; $24.99 at Amazon https://a.co/d/5xUCYbC. $25.00 at Amazon paperback

Lerita Coleman Brown. *What Makes You Come Alive: A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman.* (Minneapolis, MN: Broadleaf Books, 2023.) ISBN:978-1506474656 https://a.co/d/0htMwDpI $16.29 at Amazon hardcover. Garrett has online access

Colón DeLay, Lisa. *The Wild Land within: Cultivating Wholeness through Spiritual Practice*. Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2021. ISBN: 9781506465081; $16.99 at Amazon https://a.co/d/0S1479x. Garrett has online access

Joan Chittister. *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today.* (San Francisco: Haper & Row, 1990) ISBN: 978-0060613990; 9.69 at Amazon paperback; https://a.co/d/04gz7rCk Garrett will have online access

Barabara A. Holmes. *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church.* (Fortress Press, Second edition, 2017) ISBN: 978-1506421612; $23.40 at Amazon paperback https://a.co/d/09K9c3oZ Garrett will have online access

(See next page for recommended, but not required book.)

Recommended
Christine Valters Paintner, *Breath Prayer: An Ancient Practice for the Everyday Sacred.* (Broadleaf Books, 2021). ISBN: 978-1506470672; $17.46 Amazon paperback
https://a.co/d/03mJozN5 Garrett will have online access

Other required reading will be found on Canvas

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- **Active class participation and reading of assigned literature. (20% of grade**)

  This class is a learning community that requires your full attention. All of us will teach all of us. Each of us depends on all the rest of us.

  All students should read all the assigned texts.

  The purpose of class participation is to demonstrate comprehension and integration of assigned material. Participation includes preparation for class, constructive verbal contributions to class discussions, attentive listening, and facilitating the participation of others. The purpose of the reading assignments is to provide a range of theoretical grounding for the students' work. Class members are expected to have completed all readings by the class session for which they are assigned.

  Participation in class discussion is based on having read the assigned texts for the next session.

- **Journal of the Practices (20 % of grade)**:
  - After a spiritual practice is introduced in class, students will enact that practice at least four (4) days the following week.
  - After each day's practice, students will journal at least one sentence about their experience.
  - Each week in their journal, students will write a short reflection of at least 250 words about what they have learned or experienced in enacting that practice.
  - In the "Journal of the Practices" forum, students will post all or a part of their reflection by Sunday 11:59pm.
  - In the "Journal of the Practices" forum, students will respond to two other reflections by Monday 11:59pm.
  - Your weekly journal will not be graded, but it will be used in writing your final paper.
  - Your grade will be determined by your completion of the weekly forum entries.

- **Rule of Life (10% of grade): Due Oct. 13**
    - Based on a series of reflective questions, students will develop a Rule of Life, a set of disciplines and an overarching "plumb line" or guiding idea, that can sustain and encourage their spiritual practice and nurture into the future.

- **Teaching/Lesson Plan (20% of grade) Due Nov.10**
    - Students will research a spiritual practice that we have not used in class, and will develop a lesson plan and teach the session in class. (Depending on the number of students in the class, this may be an online asynchronous presentation.

- **Final Paper (30% total of grade): Due last day of class – Dec. 8**
    - Using all experiences in the class, including one's journal, students will write about what they learned about spiritual practices, about themselves, and about intergenerational learning, and how that was incorporated into their lesson plan.

Details and rubrics will be found on Moodle during the semester.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Sept 8 **Session 1: Welcome & context**

Readings for Session 1*:*
What Makes You Come Alive: A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman
Chapters 1-5
Read with these questions in mind:
What was new to you?
What did you connect with in the book?
What surprised you?
What challenged you?
Come prepared to engage these questions in class.

Introduction to each other
Introduction to the course and syllabus
Introduce weekly practice's rhythm
Breath Prayer -- introduction

Sept 15 Session 2: Vocation

Practice from Session 1:
Breath Prayer
Articles on practice as posted to Moodle.

Readings for Session 2*:*
What Makes You Come Alive: A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman
Chapters 6-10
Read with these questions in mind:
What was new to you?
What did you connect with in the book?
What surprised you?
What challenged you?
Come prepared to engage these questions in class.

Paths to Prayer, "An Invitation to Prayer," pp. 1-37

Sept 22 Session 3: Labyrinth & child-centered approach

Practice from Session 2:
Walking meditation, photo
Articles on practice as posted to Moodle.

Readings for Session 3:
The Wild Land Within (chapters 1-5)
Read with these questions in mind:
What was new to you?
What did you connect with in the book?
What surprised you?
What challenged you?
Come prepared to engage these questions in class.

Paths to Prayer, "Innovative Prayer" p. 231; "Prayer Labyrinth" pp. 248-255

Sept 29 Session 4: Lectio divina (visio divina)

Practice from Session 3:
Labyrinth walking
Articles and links to videos on practice as posted to Moodle.

***Readings for Session 4**:*
The Wild Land Within (chapters 6-9)
Read with these questions in mind:
What was new to you?
What did you connect with in the book?
What surprised you?
What challenged you?
Come prepared to engage these questions in class.
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Paths to Prayer, "Searching Prayer" p. 39, "Praying the Scriptures" pp.52-56, "Lectio Divina" pp. 57-62

Oct 6 **Session 5: Daily Office**

Practice from Session 4:
Lectio divina
Articles on practice as posted to Moodle.

Readings for Session 5:
Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today (Ch. 1-5)
Read with these questions in mind:
What was new to you?
What did you connect with in the book?
What surprised you?
What challenged you?
Come prepared to engage these questions in class.

Paths to Prayer, "Relational Prayer" p. 159, "The Daily Office" pp. 189-203

Oct 13 **Session 6: Centering prayer**

Practice from Session 5:
Daily Office
Articles on practice as posted to Moodle, including the Rule of St. Benedict & other Rules.

Readings for Session 6:
Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today (Ch. 6-10)

Read with these questions in mind:
- What was new to you?
- What did you connect with in the book?
- What surprised you?
- What challenged you?

Come prepared to engage these questions in class.

Paths to Prayer, "Experiential Prayer" p. 99, "Centering Prayer" pp. 138-143

Assignment due: Rule of Life

Oct 20 Session 7: Icons and saints

Practice from Session 6:
Centering Prayer
Articles on practice as posted to Moodle, including a pamphlet from the Institute for Centering Prayer.

Readings for Session 7:
Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today (Ch. 11-15)

Read with these questions in mind:
- What was new to you?
- What did you connect with in the book?
- What surprised you?
- What challenged you?

Come prepared to engage these questions in class.

Paths to Prayer, "Praying with Icons" pp. 73-84

Oct. 27 Session 8: Ignatian (imaginative) prayer

Practice from Session 7:
Prayer with icons and saints
Articles on practice as posted to Moodle.

Readings for Session 8:

Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church (Introduction through Ch. 5)

Paths to Prayer, "Ignatian Prayer: Guided Imagination" pp.261-265

Nov 3 **Session 9: Examen**

Practice from Session 9:
Quaker silence
Articles on practice as posted to Moodle.

Readings for Session 10:
Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church (Ch. 6-Afterword)

Paths to Prayer, "Prayer of Examen" pp. 181-188

Nov 10 **Session 10: Praying in Color**

Practice from Session 10:
Examen
Articles on practice as posted to Moodle.

Readings for Session 11: selections from *Praying in Color*, Sybill McBride (found on Moodle)

Assignment Due: Lesson/Teaching Plans

Nov. 17 **Session 11: Teaching Sessions**

Nov 24 **THANKSGIVING WEEK (no class)**

Dec.1 **Session 12: Teaching Sessions**

Dec 8 **Session 13: Wrap up and moving into the world**

Assignment Due: Final paper due

Academic Policies

All students are required to abide by the academic policies detailed in the Academic Handbook for the current academic year. The following policies are of particular importance to the successful completion of one's coursework:

Writing

- **Academic integrity and plagiarism:** (See 24-25 Handbook, 13, 69-75) All professors are required to respond to all suspected incidents of academic dishonesty, especially plagiarism. Repeated incidents of plagiarism or academic dishonesty may result in dismissal from the school.
- **Writing and citations:** The Turabian Manual for Writers and the Chicago Manual of Style footnote/bibliography format provide the standard formats for all introductory courses. Basic information on these formats is available online here. In advanced courses an instructor may require another style guide appropriate to the discipline (such as APA). (2425 Handbook, 71)
- **Writing Support:** The Writing Center at Garrett-Evangelical offers programs to support all students' theological research and writing. See https://www.garrett.edu/student-life/student-services "Writing Center" for more detailed information.

Attendance and Class Participation

- **Inclusivity/Diversity:** The basic commitments of the seminary to mutual love and searching for the truth in Christ lead to a principle that in the classroom and in course assignments, persons are always to be respected and ideas are to be freely discussed....All participants in the teaching-learning process have an obligation to honor and respect varying perspectives on relevant issues. (See 2425 Handbook, 10-11)

- **Attendance and lateness policies:** Attendance is required. Students who miss more than 20% of the class sessions (e.g., more than 2 classes in the weekly schedule, a proportionate amount for other class formats) should not expect to pass the class. (2425 Handbook, 20-21)

- Some faculty may limit on the usage of electronic devices such as cell phones during class. At the least, all devices should be silenced during the whole of a class session.

Academic Accommodations

- Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary is committed to providing the most accessible learning environment as possible for students with disabilities. Should you anticipate or experience disability-related barriers in the academic setting, please contact the Director of Academic Support and Student Thriving (melanie.baffes@garrett.edu or 847-866-3869) to get started with the established accommodation process. If you are a continuing student who has already established accommodations with Student Access, you should receive a copy of your access letter at the start of the semester when it is emailed to the faculty member of each course you are enrolled in. Please contact your instructors prior to the first class session so the instructor can work with you to implement your disability accommodations. Disability information, including academic accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential under FERPA regulations, so no one other than the access coordinator, Academic Affairs staff, and your professors will see your accommodation letter (2425 Handbook, 13).
- **Extensions:** For Masters students, extensions, if granted, are normally for four weeks following the last day of class in spring and fall semesters or the final due date for coursework for January and summer terms. Extensions may not exceed three months following the end of the term. (2425 Handbook, 21)

AI Policy

This course uses AI in the following ways:

Not Allowed	Allowed with appropriate acknowledgment	Allowed and no acknowledgement needed
Generative AI help with writing (paraphrasing, summarizing, generating language for assignments)	Language translation Language assistance for non-native English speakers Editing, polishing, or revising paper drafts Proofreading Generative AI help with papers (generating topics, ideas, outlines, arguments)	Presentation design Citation generation Research Note-taking Generative AI help with reading (summarizing or outlining reading assignments)
You must consult the professor(s) for uses not mentioned above.		
To properly cite the use of AI in Chicago/Turabian style, access this link: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Documentation/faq0422.html.		

Grade Scales (100 pts)	
	100
A	94-100
A-	90-93 (91.5)
B+	87-89 (88)
B	84-86 (85)
B-	80-83 (81.5)
C+	77-79 (78)
C	74-76 (75)
C-	70-73 (71.5)
D	60-69 (65)

Rubrics for all assignments will be available on Canvas.