



SP 650 Contemplative Spirituality  
Online Synchronous | Tuesdays & Thursdays  
January 10, 12, 17, 19, 24, 26

Instructor:

Dr. Rolf Nolasco ([rolf.nolasco@garrett.edu](mailto:rolf.nolasco@garrett.edu)) Pronouns: he | him | siya

---

## SYLLABUS

### Course Description

The course introduces students to the theories/theologies and practices of contemplative spirituality. Sustained attention will be placed on the role of contemplative spirituality in deepening self-understanding, practices of care (counseling, chaplaincy, pastoral), and the ongoing work of emancipation, justice making, and mutual flourishing.

### Course Outcomes

At the completion of the course, the students will be able to

- Promote awareness and experience with practices of contemplative spirituality.
- Practice a particular form of contemplative spirituality that suits their personal, professional, and ministerial contexts.
- Engage in some critical engagement with the theological underpinnings of contemplative spirituality and its practices, and its convergence with and divergence from the Buddhist practice of mindfulness.
- Articulate connections between contemplative spirituality and engagement with the needs of the planet, and
- Articulate the impact of gender, racial, sexual, and religious identity on the practice of the contemplative spirituality.

### Course Texts

Beauvois, Xavier, director. *Of Gods and Men*. Why Not Productions, 2011. 2 hr.,3 min.  
[Amazon](#) | [Prime Video](#).

Laird, Martin. *Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation*. London: Darton Longman and Todd, 2006. **ISBN-13:** 978-0232526400 Amazon \$14.13

Lewis, Jaqui. *Love Period Season 3* (PODCAST). <https://cac.org/podcast/love-period/>

Riley, Cole Arthur. *This Here Flesh: Spirituality, Liberation, and the Stories That Make Us*. New York: Convergent Books. ISBN-13: 978-0593239797 Amazon \$ 18.00 (other formats available)

Rohr, Richard. *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*. New York: Crossroad, 2003. **ISBN-13:** 978-0824519957 Amazon \$16.19 (other formats available)

## Reading/Listening/Watching Guide

- Read Laird, Rohr, and Riley's books contemplatively—slowly, prayerfully, with openness and curiosity. As you prepare for our synchronous class, I'd like you to read a chapter or two from each text every week (and find common themes, identify emerging questions or a favorite quote, perhaps).
- Listen to a chosen episode of Dr. Lewis' podcast "Love Period" every week, as well.
- Reserve watching the movie "Of God's and Men" for the week of January 24

## Additional Resource (for personal enrichment)

<https://www.compassionatepresence.ca/> Dr. R Nolasco's work on Compassionate Presence

<https://davidtreleaven.com/webinar/> Dr. Treleaven's Mindfulness and Trauma

[Richard Rohr's Contemplative Prayer](#) Fr. Rohr's Lecture on Contemplative Prayer

[The Future of Christianity](#) Featuring: Brian McLaren, Barbara Holmes, James Finley, & Richard Rohr

## Course Methodology

Students are encouraged approach texts (visual, auditory, and written) devotionally and contemplatively (with intention and pauses for self-reflection) outside of class time. During synchronous meetings, the focus will be on the praxis of contemplation, conversations in small groups, dyads, and/or as a class on challenges and curiosities around contemplative spirituality.

## Learning Success and Accessibility

We are committed to student success in this course. Given our multifarious teaching and learning styles occasional accommodations are expected. Hence, if there are aspects of the course that prevent or impede your learning, please let us know as soon as possible. We will work collaboratively to design learning strategies that meet both a student's unique needs and the requirements of the course.

Additionally, student accommodations for documented conditions should be developed and requested before the beginning of the semester. See the *Accessibility, Special Needs, and Disabilities* policy and process set out in the Academic Handbook (19-20 Handbook, 12). Such accommodations are developed in consultation with the Registrar.

### **Expectations for course engagement:**

#### **1. Inclusive/Expansive Language**

As a part of our time together, we expect students to use respectful, inclusive and expansive language for God and humans. This does not mean that you may never use masculine pronouns for God, but it does mean that it is not the only way to describe God. Avoid using “man” for all human beings and “mankind” for humanity. In this course you are invited to stretch your metaphoric language.

#### **2. Confidentiality**

The course material may invite students to discuss personal and sensitive content at their discretion. It is essential for all of us to ensure that what we share remains confidential.

### **Minimum Technological Requirements:**

- Internet Connection - Students must have regular, reliable access to a high-speed internet connection that is sufficient to run streaming video with no difficulty. Usually, cable or DSL would work.
- Web Browser - Students must have the latest version of a standard web browser (Firefox, Internet Explorer, Safari, Chrome, etc.)
- Operating System – Students must have access to a reasonably up-to-date computer and operating system (Windows, Mac OS, etc.). Computers must play sound. The Styberg Library has a limited number of laptop computers available for check-out. The Northwestern University Library has a computer center as well.
- Moodle Learning Management System – Students should have access to the Moodle LMS and know how to navigate it, that is, submitting writing assignments and other requirements on it.
- File Format – Students must be able to work with files normal to the Microsoft Office environment, especially .doc/.docx. Many students with Apple computers can manage such files with the iWork suite of applications. Students without MS Office or Apple iWork might try the freely available OpenOffice applications: <http://www.openoffice.org>. Also available to students is the Google Drive suite to create documents and presentations (<http://drive.google.com>)

## Course Requirements

### 1. **Class Attendance & Conversations**

Each student must attend all synchronous class sessions and actively participate in class activities/conversations.

### 2. **Contemplative Practice or Habit: In Two Parts.**

**PART A.** Students will be asked to engage in ONE and NEW expression or form of contemplation (see last page for the Tree of Contemplative Practices) throughout the duration of the course beginning the week of January 10 until the end of the month. Every Friday of that same week (Jan 13, 20 27), students will record a video-diary of their experience (benefits, challenges, and changes that are beginning to emerge, both personal and relationally, cognitive appraisal of the experience, affective effect, and other salient aspects) engaging in their chosen contemplative practice. The length of the video-diary should be between 10-15 minutes.

During synchronous class session, students will be encouraged to share or report a summary of their experience. If willing, they can show a portion of their video-diary for conversation and reflection.

**PART B.** Students will be asked to submit a two-page description and reflection of the practice for feedback. If willing, they can also send the professor a copy of their recordings. The two-page description and reflection should include the following components.

- A. Description of the chosen contemplative practice, including the reason for the choice.
- B. Emerging benefits of engaging in the practice
- C. Challenges faced during the practice
- D. Curiosities—questions you may have, plans to continue or discontinue, and other curiosities about the practice.

### 3. **S.O.S Podcast (Spirituality On the Street Podcast) In TWO PARTS**

**Part A:** Working in dyads, students will record a 30-45 min podcast interviewing each other about their evolving understanding of contemplative spirituality lifted from course materials, spiritual practice and class conversations. Sustained attention should be placed on how contemplative spirituality intersects more specifically and concretely with their devotional life (relationship with God), relational (self and others), vocational (as a clinician-chaplain-pastor in training) and social-environmental (as a resource to for social activism and planetary care).

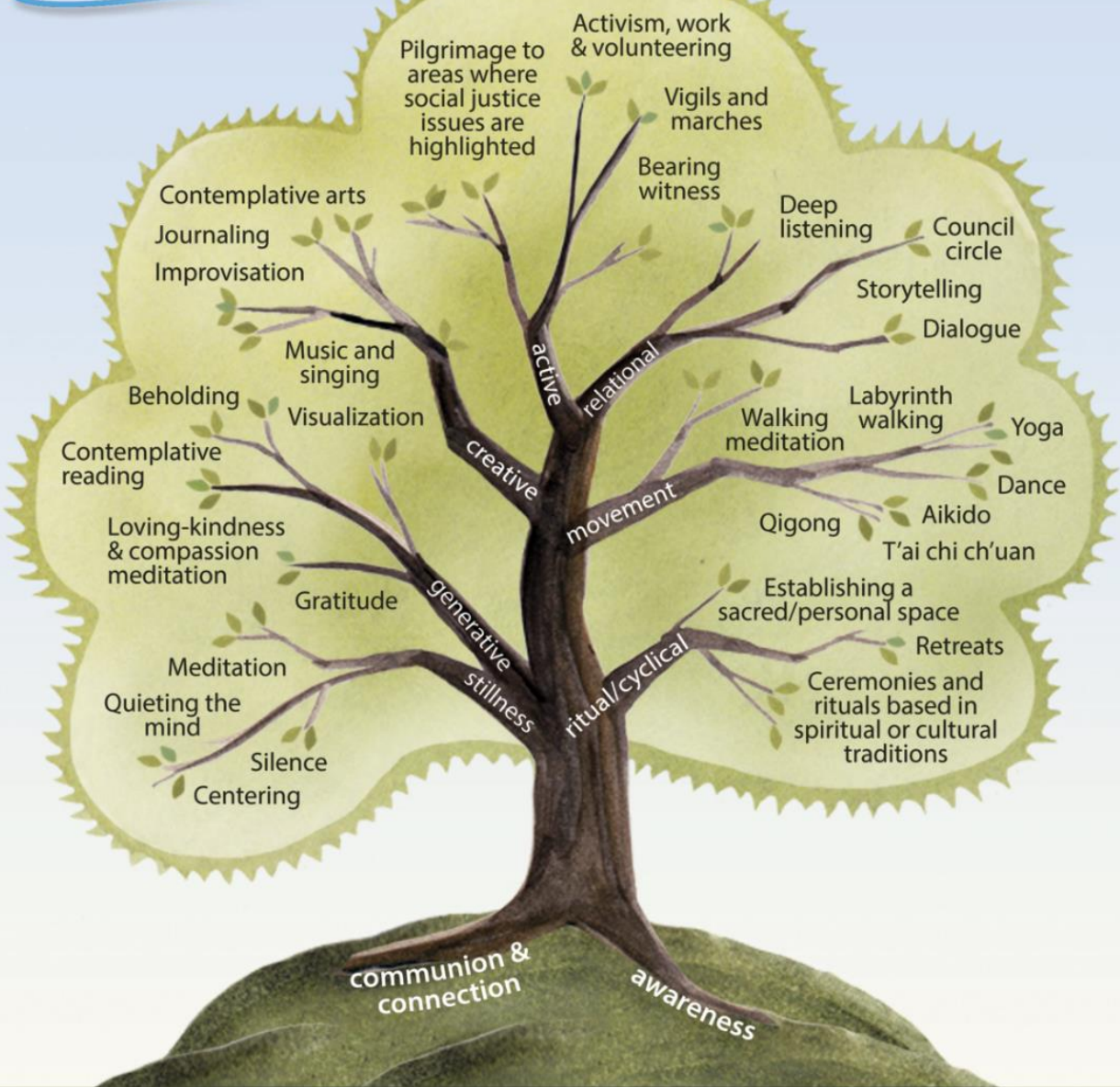
**Part B:** Drawing from the podcast, each student will then write a 750- word (1-page, single-spaced) blog post about key insights, themes, and curiosities about contemplative spirituality, as you 'personally' have understood it, thus far. As you write this piece, consider your readers to be those who show deep interest in this form of spirituality and want to know more about it—biblically or theologically and practically as a relational stance towards oneself, others, and

God. What salient points might you offer them? What beginning contemplative practice might you recommend?

## Criteria for Evaluation

Your grade will be determined by the following criteria:

Class Attendance & Class Participation	20%	<b>A</b>	94-100	<b>C+</b>	77-79
Contemplative Practice	20%	<b>A-</b>	90-93	<b>C</b>	74-76
Contemplative Practice Reflection	20%	<b>B+</b>	87-89	<b>C-</b>	70-73
SOS Podcast	20%	<b>B</b>	84-86	<b>D</b>	60-69
SOS Blogpost	20%	<b>B-</b>	80-83		
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>100%</b>				



**The Tree of Contemplative Practices**  
CONTEMPLATIVEMIND.ORG