

S 5101: FOUNDATIONS AND METHODS FOR THE STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY  
Fall 2010

Tuesdays 8:30–11:15 am  
Catholic Theological Union  
Room 333

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This seminar is designed specifically for students who are concentrating in Spirituality at the M.A. or D.Min level. (Other students with related interests may take the course with permission, if space remains.) The course presumes that students are already well established in the personal practice of spirituality, and that they also have a substantial background of general reading and/or study on topics related to spirituality.

This course focuses specifically on issues involved in moving to a new level of academic study of spirituality. Many students find that significant questions arise when they shift their attention from the practical, "heart" level that is called upon in personal spiritual life and in such spiritual leadership activities as spiritual direction, retreats, etc., in order to move into a more distanced reflection on spiritual issues within an academic framework. This course aims to provide a forum for reflection on these questions, as well as to introduce students to basic literature and perspectives that will assist them in future academic work in the field of spirituality.

Topics that will be covered include: the dialectic between praxis and reflection in spirituality; the character of spiritual experience and its communication; recent literature on questions of definition and method in the study of spirituality; hermeneutics and spiritual texts; critical perspectives on spirituality from both within and beyond the dominant culture.

The major project for this course will require each student to select a topic and to develop a method through which the material can be responsibly appropriated for a specific setting. This process will be assisted by presentations by instructor and students, plus substantial class discussion.

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*EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THE COURSE:*

**STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY – see Student Handbook 4.2.23**

Academic integrity demands that a student acknowledge all sources employed in the preparation of written assignments, whether in the use of exact quotations, or in substantial reproduction of ideas. **Failure to do so (plagiarism) will result in a failing grade for the course and may also result in dismissal.**

**COPYRIGHT POLICY – see Student Handbook 4.9**

**BIAS-FREE LANGUAGE– see Student Handbook 4.2.6**

**NETIQUETTE AND NETHICS– See Student Handbook 4.2.22**

**S5101 Specific Learning Outcomes.** *Students successfully completing this course will:*

1. Understand basic characteristics of transformative spiritual experiences and how they relate to the production, interpretation, and reappropriation of “spiritual classics.” [MA 1.5; EDM 2.2]
2. Recognize elements of interpretation, such as horizon, genre, culture, tradition, etc., in their own and others’ accounts of spiritual experience. [MA 1.7; EDM 2.2, 2.3, 2.4]
3. In dialogue with peers and scholars, write and critique a personal definition of spirituality. [MA 1.3, 1.9; EDM 2.4, 2.5]
4. Become conversant with current academic literature on definitions, methods, and issues in Christian spirituality. [MA 1.4, 2.2, 2.3; EDM 2.1]
5. Gain skill in analyzing the specific character of each text or situation calling for interpretation, and how to consciously select a stance and method appropriate to it. [MA 1.7, 1.8, 2.2; EDM 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2]
6. Gain familiarity with skills and resources needed for research in spirituality in the field, in the library, and on the internet. [MA 1.4, 2.3; EDM 2.1, 2.3]
7. Develop criteria for the evaluation of resources in spirituality. [MA 1.7; EDM 2.3, 2.5]
8. Practice presenting the results of research in both academic writing and oral/visual media. [MA 1.6; EDM 2]

**Assessment:**

1. *Weekly Full Participation = 40% of grade.*
  - a. Participation in all class discussions, with evidence of thorough preparation of readings and assignments.
  - b. Postings of insights to Moodle Forums for peer learning.
  - c. Oral presentation of critical review of readings, as assigned.

2. *Major Research Paper = 35% of grade.*

This paper demonstrates ability to select, name, and employ a methodical approach in approaching a spiritual topic in relation to a specific contemporary audience. It also demonstrates ability to locate, evaluate, and use resources at a level appropriate to the student’s degree program.

3. *Major Oral/Visual Presentation = 25% of grade.*

The presentation will be based on the research for the paper, selected for presentation in an appropriate oral/visual genre.

Grades:       A = Excellent, Outstanding.  
                  B = Good, Competent.  
                  C = Needs Significant Improvement.  
                  D = Does Not Meet Requirements.

Readings code: R = on reserve M = on Moodle O = online link

**Recommended background reading, especially for Dmin students:**

- Maddox, Randy. "Spirituality and Practical Theology: Trajectories Toward Re-engagement," APT Occasional Papers 3 (Spring 1999). M
- Wolfeich, Claire. "Graceful Work: Practical Theological Study of Spirituality." Horizons 27/1 (2000): 7-21. O

**PART ONE: EXPLORING THE FIELD OF SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICE**

1. September 7 Introduction to Course – initial reflections on such topics as:
  - What are the "burning issues" that we bring to the academic study of spirituality?
  - Why study spirituality (instead of just living it)?
  - What are the key issues being discussed in the broader community of those who study spirituality?
  - What is spirituality, anyway?

Also, Initial Introduction to Term Project.

**Moodle Forum 1a** by September 10: Before you read any more of the assigned material, write a one or two paragraph initial definition of what you mean by "spirituality".

**Read for next class:** Etty Hillesum, An Interrupted Life. R

**Moodle Forum 1b** by noon, September 13: What "grabs your attention" (positively or negatively) in Hillesum's An Interrupted Life? Does her spirituality fit with your definition (in Forum 1a)?

2. September 14 The Case of a "Liminal Mystic"

**Assignment for next week:** – A 2-4 page reflection paper in which you give an account of two significant spiritual experiences of your own, one related to a text and one non-textual. (Ungraded — considered part of "participation.")

– At least one part (textual or non-textual) is to be posted to **Moodle Forum 2** by noon, September 20.

**Read for next class:**

- Minding the Spirit, Part Five, pp. 299-361. R
- Wright, Wendy M. "The Spiritual Classics as Spiritual Guides." Way Supplement 73 (Spring 1992): 36-48. M

*Recommended:* Tracy, David. "The Classic," from The Analogical Imagination (Crossroad, 1989), pp. 99-153. M

3. September 21 Spiritual Experience and Its Articulation

[Guidelines for your papers and presentations will be provided at this time.]

**Read for next class:**

- Loder, James E. The Transforming Moment, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Helmets & Howard, 1989), Introduction and Ch. 1-4. R
- Tinker, George E. "Spirituality and Native American Personhood: Sovereignty and Solidarity." In Abraham & Mbuy-Beya, eds., Spirituality of the Third World (Orbis, 1994). 119-132. R, M

**Assignment:** A 2-3 page draft statement of the topic that you intend to study for your term paper, and the audience you have in mind. You may post the whole draft statement to **Moodle Forum 3** (by noon, September 27) or summarize it.

4. September 28 Dynamics of Christian Spiritual Experience

**Read for next class:**

- Minding the Spirit, Part Four, pp. 225-298. R
- Jon Sobrino, "Spirituality of Liberation," from Spirituality of Liberation (Orbis 1988), 23-45. R,M

**Moodle Forum 4** by noon, October 4: A 2-4 paragraph critique of Loder. What is helpful in his paradigm? What are its limitations? Does Tinker offer anything to a critique?

Also, **respond** to the critique posted immediately before yours (and others if you wish).

5. October 5 Spirituality and Transforming the World

**Read for next class (Oct. 12):**

- Poem: "Cutting up an Ox," Thomas Merton, The Way of Chuang Tzu. M
- Minding the Spirit, Part Two, 61-151. R

*Recommended:* Vernon Gregson, "The Desire to Know: Intellectual Conversion," in Desires of the Human Heart, 16-35. M

**Moodle Forum 5** by noon, October 11:

- 1) Explore internet resources on spirituality and post the URLs for at least one "popular" site and one "academic" site.

2) Name some criteria that you would apply to make judgements about the credibility, usefulness, and value of materials (in the field of spirituality) that you encounter in magazines, journals, web sites, or elsewhere.

PART TWO: THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY

6. October 12 Lonergan and Method for the Study of Spirituality

**Read for next class:**

- Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." New German Critique 65 (Spring-Summer 1995): 125-134. O
- Charles H. Long, "Introduction." In Significations (Davies Group 1995), 1-10. M
- Jeanette Rodriguez and Ted Fortier, "The Power of Syncretism/ Inculturation." In Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith, and Identity (U. Of Texas 2007), 84-106. M
- Christophe Brabant, "The Truth Narrated: Ricoeur on Religious Experience." In L. Boeve & L. Hemming, eds, Divinising Experience (Peeters 2004), 246-269. M
- Paul Ricoeur, "Appropriation." In J. Thompson, ed, Paul Ricoeur: Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences (Cambridge 1981), 182-193. M

**Moodle Forum 6 (group one):** Critique of Lonergan. By Monday, October 25.  
Also, **respond** to the others in your group. Continue discussion if needed.

7. October 19 READING WEEK

8. October 26 Dynamic Memory, Signification, and the Re-Appropriation of Spiritual Traditions

**Read for next class:**

- Minding the Spirit, Part One, 1-60. R
- Downey, Michael. Understanding Christian Spirituality, ch. 6. R

*Recommended:* Ruffing, Janet K. "The World Transfigured: Kataphatic Religious Experience Explored through Qualitative Research Methodology." Studies in Spirituality 5 (1995): 232-259.

**Moodle Forum 7 (group two):** Critique of Ricoeur. By Monday, November 1.  
Also, **respond** to the others in your group. Continue discussion if needed.

9. November 2 Schneiders and the Society for the Study of Christian Spirituality

**Read for next class:** Janet Ruffing, Mysticism and Social Transformation. R  
– Frohlich essay (to be provided) M

**Moodle Forum 8 (group three):** Critique of Schneiders. By Monday November 8  
Also, **respond** to the others in your group. Continue discussion if needed.

**Begin “Definition Wiki.”** To prepare, review the course readings and re-read all the definitions offered by the class in Forum 1. The goal of the wiki is to arrive at a common definition **and/or** to sort out what the differences of perspective involve.

10. November 9 An Emerging Prophetic-Practice Methodology

**Read for next class:**

– Eire, Carlos M. "Major Problems in the Definition of Spirituality as an Academic Discipline." In Hanson, ed., Modern Christian Spirituality (1990), 53-61. M

– Lane, Belden. "Writing in Spirituality as a Self-Implicating Act: Reflections on Authorial Disclosure and the Hiddenness of the Self." In Lescher and Liebert, eds., Exploring Christian Spirituality, 53-69. M

– Berling, Judith. "Christian Spirituality: Intrinsically Interdisciplinary." In Lescher and Liebert, eds., Exploring Christian Spirituality, 35-52. M

11. November 16 Revisiting the Question of Definition

NB: Students who want feedback on a draft of their term paper must turn in the draft **no later than November 19!** Only drafts turned in by November 19 will receive feedback before their presentation.

12. November 23 Student Presentations

13. November 30 Student Presentations

14. December 7 Student Presentations & Course Evaluation

Monday, December 13 **COMPLETED TERM PAPER DUE.**

– Be sure to include **all** the sections stated in the Guidelines.

– Adhere consistently to stylistic expectations as detailed in the CTU Writing Handbook. It can be found at:

<http://union.ctu.edu/mod/resource/view.php?inpopup=true&id=25261>

– Failure to heed these requirements will result in a reduced grade, regardless of the quality of the content.

\*\* All work for the course must be turned in by this date. Late papers will not be accepted.

NO INCOMPLETES WILL BE GIVEN IN THIS COURSE.

## S 5101: FOUNDATIONS AND METHODS FOR THE STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. ATTENDANCE. Students who miss more than 10% of class time are considered to have, in effect, dropped the course. For courses meeting only once a week, this means that you cannot miss more than one session. (There may be exceptions for genuine, severe emergencies such as death in the family, the sudden illness of a child, etc. For normal obligations such as job expectations, medical appointments, etc., you are expected to schedule with the priority of class times in mind.)
2. READING. Weekly reading and assignments listed in the syllabus are to be prepared before class meetings.
3. PARTICIPATION. Each class session will include discussion and/or student reports. All students are expected to be prepared and to offer their insights.
4. ON-LINE MOODLE FORUMS. Timely participation in weekly Forums is expected. In some cases a brief response (200-400 words) will be sufficient; in others, more will be needed. It is essential that you read other students' responses as well. Each week's response is worth two "participation" points if on time, but only one point if late. An additional ungraded reflection paper is also assigned near the beginning of the course.
5. MAJOR PAPER. Each student must submit a term paper of 20-30 pages. Each paper must include four parts:
  1. Statement of what you have chosen to study and why it is a topic in "spirituality" (in dialogue with published definitions and the class discussions).
  2. Statement of what method is being employed in this project. (Again, in dialogue with published discussions of method and those in class.)
  3. A well-developed analytic section. The exact character of this will depend upon one's chosen method.
  4. A reflective reappropriation for a specific contemporary context.

This paper is a project in the academic study of spirituality. As such, it must employ appropriate academic form, including footnotes or endnotes, and give evidence of research that includes using resources of a scholarly nature. (In other words: it is not sufficient to refer only to popular and pastoral works in spirituality.) Research MA students should employ resources in their modern research language.

6. CLASS PRESENTATION. Each student will present some aspects of their research to the class during one of the last three class sessions.

## S 5101: FOUNDATIONS AND METHODS FOR THE STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY

### REQUIRED BOOKS:

- Dreyer, Elizabeth A., and Mark S. Burrows, eds. Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality (JHU Press, 2005).
- Hillesum, Etty. An Interrupted Life.
- Loder, James. The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences, revised ed. (Harper & Row, 1989).
- Ruffing, Janet. Mysticism and Social Transformation (Syracuse University, 2001).

### RESERVE LIST FOR S5101, FOUNDATIONS AND METHODS FOR THE STUDY OF SPIRITUALITY

- Abraham & Mbuy-Beya, eds. Spirituality of the Third World (Orbis 1994).
- Downey, Michael. Understanding Christian Spirituality (NY: Paulist, 1997).
- Dreyer, Elizabeth A., and Mark S. Burrows, eds. Minding the Spirit: The Study of Christian Spirituality (JHU Press, 2005).
- Hillesum, Etty. An Interrupted Life.
- Lescher, Bruce and Elizabeth Liebert, eds. Exploring Christian Spirituality: Essays in honor of Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM (NY: Paulist, 2006).
- Loder, James. The Transforming Moment: Understanding Convictional Experiences (Helmets & Howard, 1989).
- Ruffing, Janet. Mysticism and Social Transformation (Syracuse University, 2001).
- Sheldrake, Philip. Spirituality and History: Questions of Interpretation and Method, Revised ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998).
- Sobrino, Jon, Spirituality of Liberation (Orbis 1988).
- Tracy, David. The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism (NY: Crossroad, 1981).

Waaijman, Kees. Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods (Peeters 2002).