

St. Peter's Seminary / King's University College
at The University of Western Ontario

Introduction to Spiritual Theology 5162 b
Course Outline – Jan. to Apr. 2012



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A. Course Description:

This course entails a historical survey of Christian spirituality from the post-apostolic age to the period preceding the Reformation. Parallels are demonstrated between the spiritual movements that emerged during this historical period and contemporary figures and movements that continue to demonstrate today the charism of these earlier individuals and schools of spirituality.

B. Goals:

1. To investigate the main trends, issues and developments in Christian Spirituality from post-apostolic age to the end of the 15th century.
2. To explore the question: "How have Christians throughout history understood what it is to seek and know God?"
3. To seek a deeper understanding and appreciation of the heritage of Christian Spirituality in order to shed light on, and give assistance to, our present spiritual journey, both communal and personal.
4. To provide a framework within which to appreciate various spiritual schools, movements, and writings both in themselves and in their relationship with one another.
5. To make contact with the history and writings of the great saints and mystics of the Christian tradition as well as those of the principal schools of spirituality.
6. To provide knowledge and encouragement so that students can develop their own personal spirituality.
7. To begin to develop in the students the skills that will assist them to serve as spiritual guides to other people in their future ministries.

Knowledge

1. To know the historical and cultural contexts within which the great spiritual guides developed their spiritual writings.
2. To understand and acquaint oneself with the primary texts of great spiritual authors, communities and movements in the tradition of spiritual theology.
3. To grasp the connection between classical spiritual teachings and their contemporary expressions, understanding both the continuity and the differences.
4. To understand and appreciate the variety of spiritual paths witnessed to by the many schools and movements within the one Christian Catholic Tradition.
5. To understand and appreciate the teachings of other spiritual traditions within both the Christian and other faith traditions.
6. To have a knowledge of the aberrations and errors within the Christian Spiritual Tradition as well as their remedies, in order to be able to detect and address similar aberrations and errors today.
7. To understand the nature of spiritual theology, its methodology and the various theological distinctions in order to develop tools for a critical analysis of texts, communities, structures and movements.

Skills

1. To enable the student to interpret and analyze a primary text of a great spiritual writer in the social, cultural and ecclesial context of its time.
2. To enable the student to detect and understand those unchanging values of the Christian Spiritual Tradition that are still found in our time, while being able to know and set in context those dimensions of the Tradition which are historically and culturally conditioned.
3. To enable the student to articulate, in both oral and written forms, the principal elements of the Christian Catholic Tradition of spiritual theology.
4. To enable students to express their own personal spirituality as related to the authentic spiritual tradition of the Church, and at the same time to be able to appreciate those authentic spiritualities to which they are not drawn, but to which they may be called to minister.
5. To enable the student to appreciate the spiritualities of the Christian East and West, , as well as those found in our secular society.
6. To enable the student to detect those movements of the spirits that are divisive and destructive of the path toward union with God, so that he/she may be able to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the healing and reconciliation needed to recover authenticity and life.

Values and Attitudes

1. To acquire a love for the working of the Spirit of Jesus Christ throughout our whole Christian tradition.
2. To have a critical openness to, and capacity to learn from, both the good and bad in our Christian Catholic Tradition of spirituality.
3. To appreciate the great variety of ways the Holy Spirit is present: in the human heart, in our communal life together, in societal structures, in social movements throughout our human history, and in the beauty of creation.
4. To value one's personal spiritual life as a response to the invitation to life in union with our Triune God, and to nourish this grace-filled life by prayer and an ever more faithful living of the Gospel.

C. Course Texts:

Required:

- ❖ Dupre, Louis and Wiseman, James, O.S.B. Eds. Light from Light. An Anthology of Christian Mysticism. (Revised Edition). New York: Paulist Press, 2000.

Recommended:

- ❖ Healey, Charles J., S.J. Christian Spirituality: An Introduction to the Heritage. New York: Alba House, 1999.

D. Course Requirements:

There will be three main components in the determination of course grades. Students' reading of assigned materials and participation in weekly class discussions will be the best means to benefit as much as possible from the course, as well as achieve a good grade in this course.

1. Mid-Term Test: A test will be held on **March 8th** during the first hour of the class. 30 %
2. "Presentation Paper" Each student will prepare a *Lenten Evening with a Saint* that would be appropriate to present in a parish setting -- 8 to 10 pages due **Mar. 29th**. 40 %
3. Final Oral Examination: A 15 minute Oral Conversation on the entire semester's work will be scheduled with each student during the April Examination Period. 30 %

E. Schedule and Themes of Classes:

- Jan. 12th** Introduction to Course, the Apostolic Church, Martyrdom in the Early Church.
- Jan. 19th** *Martyrdom in recent times: Maximilian Kolbe and Oscar Romero.*
The Alexandrian Schools (Clement and Origen).
- Jan. 26th** Eastern Monasticism and Monastic Writings (Anthony of Egypt, Pachomius).
- Feb. 2nd** *Modern day Monasticism: Charles de Foucauld and
the Little Brothers & Sisters of Jesus.*
Cappadocian Fathers: Basil, Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa.
- Feb. 9th** Early Eastern Mysticism (Evagrius Ponticus and Pseudo-Dionysius).
The Antiochan Traditions; Later Developments in the East (John Climacus);
Early Western Spirituality (Ambrose and Jerome).
- Feb. 16th** Early Western Spirituality cont'd (Augustine).
Conversion and Social Involvement: Dorothy Day.
- Feb. 23rd** **C o n f e r e n c e W e e k**
- Mar. 1st** **Mid-Term Test**
Western Monasticism (John Cassian and Benedict).
- Mar. 8th** The Middle Ages: Gregory the Great;
Benedictine Developments, New Orders and Religious Groups.
- Mar. 15th** Benedictine School (Hildegard of Bingen);
Cistercian School (Bernard of Clairveaux, Aelred of Rivaulx);
The Mendicant Orders (Francis & Clare).
- Mar. 22nd** *Spirituality of journeying with the poor today - Jean Vanier & L'Arche.*
Mendicants continued (Bonaventure and Dominic); Beguine movement of women.
- Mar. 29th** Late Middle Ages. Mystical Traditions of the 14th Century; Catherine of Siena.
Linking East and West: Catherine de Hueck Doherty.
“Lenten Presentation Papers” Due.
- Apr. 6th** English Mystics; Devotio Moderna (and The Imitation of Christ); Popular Piety.
Summary & Conclusions.

Policy on Late Assignments:

Assignments are to be handed in at the class on the due date (ie. reflection papers are due the class following the in-class presentation). For a serious reason, a student may be granted an extension. In such cases, the student is to submit in writing an explanation of the reason the extension is requested. This written submission is to be signed by the student and by the teacher, with the extended due date noted. A copy of the signed extension submission is given to the Dean. A penalty of 10 % of the value of the assignment will be deducted for each day it is overdue without permission.

Internet References in Submitted Assignments

If references are cited from the Internet, the exact designation of the site (with URL address), **together with** a hard copy of the page from which the quote is taken or to which the reference is made.

University Policy on Plagiarism

“Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt by quotation marks and / or in footnotes. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.”

“Presentation Paper” Outline

This paper will convey the outline and text of a Lenten Evening of Reflection you may offer in a parish on the spirituality of one saint / writer and how this may inspire or shed light upon the spiritual journey of parishioners today. The paper is to be a **minimum of eight and a maximum of ten pages, typewritten and double-spaced**. A **bibliography** should be included at the end of the paper (citing references used in preparing your *presentation*.)

The *presentation* you prepare for your parish group (outlined in this paper) **may include the following components:**

- Prayer (your own or something composed by the person you are presenting)
- Historical Overview of the person’s life (including some reference to the historical times in which he / she lived.)
- Key themes you have discerned in their spirituality or writings.
- Primary Sources: a presentation of key writings / quotes by the person that highlight these themes.
- Personal reflections as to what this person’s spirituality and writings has meant to you.
- Reflection Questions that may help the participants reflect and dialogue about how this person’s spirituality resonates with their own situation in life.
- Any audio/visual materials that might accentuate the presentation of your material.
- Any other elements you would like to add. (Be creative in making this spiritual guide come alive!)

Plan out this presentation (using above components) to make up a two hour evening session in your parish. Hopefully, you will be able to actually use this in your future parish work.

The paper is **due** to be handed in **during class** on **Thursday, March 29, 2012**.

Topics

“Presentation Paper” for a Lenten Evening of Reflection

Studying and writing about one of these people may help *expand your horizons* to appreciate the contribution towards Catholic Spirituality made by someone you haven’t learned very much about previously. Your own work in this area may do the same for people in your future parish(es) with whom you will share this evening.

Aelred of Rievaulx

Bernard of Clairveaux

Catherine of Siena

Gregory the Great

Hildegarde of Bingen

Julian of Norwich

Thomas à Kempis

Due to the nature of this *survey* course, spanning 1400 years of history, we will not be able to give an exhaustive treatment to each of these persons' spiritual writings and legacy. Therefore, your personal research and writing can enrich your understanding of the significance of your chosen person's spiritual experience and teaching.