

STMA 570 Spiritual Discernment
Winter Quarter 2006
Dr. Marianne LaBarre
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School of Theology and Ministry
901 12th Ave.
Monday 9:00 am – 11:50 am
Classroom: PIGT 109

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Discernment is presented as a growing awareness of the presence and action of God in one's life. It is a centering process at the core of one's daily life and ministry. Tools of discernment are vital in the process of listening to the truth of one's inner self in God as distinct from the myriad voices from within and without. Ignatian rules for the discernment of spirits are utilized, as well as ancient and contemporary means of self awareness and self-knowledge. The course draws on spirituality, psychology, and the participants' experience.

SPECIFIC GOALS

- Greater self-knowledge and self-awareness
- Deeper appreciation of what it means to be psycho spiritually mature.
- Greater understanding of the ability to recognize the action of God in one's life.
- A growing facility in recognizing voices and movements that are from one's true self-in-God.
- Increased confidence in guiding others in both on-going discernment and decision-making.

REQUIRED TEXT

Cornell, Ann W. The Power of Focusing: A Practical Guide to Emotional Self-Healing. New Harbinger: Oakland, CA. 1996.

Loring, Patricia. Spiritual Discernment: The context and the Goal of Clearness Committees. Pendle Hill: Wallingford, PA. 2001.

Palmer, Parker, J. A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward An Undivided Life. Jossey-Bass. 2004.

Sheldrake, P. Befriending Our Desires. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2001.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Jan. 9 Discernment as a Way of Life

- Syllabus review
- Focusing as a spiritual practice

Assigned Readings for next class:
Befriending our Desires— pp. 11-76
The Power of Focusing pp. 1-44

Also assigned: 2-3 focusings

Jan. 16 **MLK Holiday**

Jan. 23 **Desiring as an Avenue to Mystery**

- Deep listening to the desires of the soul
- Examen as a spiritual practice

Assigned Readings for next class:

Befriending our Desires— pp. 77-147

The Power of Focusing pp.45-88

(For those on the spiritual direction track—also pp.89-111)

Also assigned: 2 focusings
 2 or more examens

Jan. 30 **Knowing one's self; Growth in awareness**

- Self awareness of one's whole person
- A method of discerning as a spiritual practice

Assigned Readings for next class:

When Life Breaks Through— pp. 11-36

Also assigned: 1 focusing
 2 or more examens
 1 discerning process (including the question,
 topography, and each area: feelings, "I", body and
 being.)

Feb. 6 **Qualities for Discernment – Obstacles and challenges**

- Discerning the voices-true and false
- Living from one's being

Assigned Readings for next class:

Boroughs, P. "Using Ignatian Discernment," Review
for Religions(May/June 1992) 51:3.

A Hidden Wholeness pp. 1-30

Also assigned: 1-2 focusings;
 1 or more examens;
 1 discerning process
 (including the question, topography, and each area:
 feelings, "I", body and being.)

Feb. 13 **Becoming Familiar with inner experience—Consolation and Desolation**

- Identifying the movements of the spirits
- Rules of discernment as guides

Assigned Readings for next class:
A Hidden Wholeness pp. 31-70

Lonsdale, David. Listening to the Music of the Spirit, Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press. Chapter 4. "Consolation and Desolation"

Also assigned: 1-2 focusings /or discerning process (including the question, topography, and each area: feelings, "I", body and being.)

1 or more examens
Reflection paper (due Feb. 27)

Reflection Paper (due Feb. 27th) 2-3 pages

Describe a touchstone experience of consolation for you...how did you, in this situation, experience consolation?

Describe a touchstone experience of desolation for you...how did you, in this situation, experience desolation?

How do consolation/desolation feel, affect you?

Feb. 17 **Discerning in the ordinary moments of life**

- The practice of the presence of God
- Mindfulness as a spiritual practice

Assigned Readings for next class:
A Hidden Wholeness pp.71-112

Also assigned: 1-2 focusings/ or discerning process
1 or more examens
Reflection paper (due Feb. 27)

Feb. 27 **Living a Discerning life**

- Attuning to the spiritual practices of discernment that nourish my soul
- Fostering a pattern of discernment

Assigned Readings for next class:
A Hidden Wholeness pp. 113-150

Loring, Patricia. Spiritual Discernment: The Context and Goal of Clearness Committees. Pendle Hill Publications, 1992.

Also assigned: 1-2 focusings; 1 discerning process
2 or more examens

Reflection paper due

Mar 6 Group process of Discernment/Clearness Committee Guest facilitator: Rev. Suzanne Seaton

- The uses of the clearness committee
- The experience of the clearness committee

Assigned Readings for next class:

A Hidden Wholeness pp. 151-186

Also assigned: 2-3 focusings
2 or more examens
1 discerning process

Mar 13 Discernment and the cultures among us:

- Listening to the richness of our differences
- Awareness of the gift of "otherness"
- Closing self evaluation and class evaluation

Course Requirements:

Written Assignments 50% of grade

Class participation indicated assimilation of assigned materials 50% of grade.

This class is process oriented and experiential. In order to acquire the skills that are needed attendance is essential and significant practice is required. If you foresee that you will miss one or more class periods, please consider taking this course at another time.

One on one session

One required 20-30 minute session with Dr. Marianne LaBarre for feedback, support, and assistance with focusing, discernment, or any questions you may have about the class.

Please come prepared with your agenda for this time.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Campbell, P. and McMahon, E. Bio-Spirituality. Chicago: Loyola U Press, 1985.

Conroy, M. The Discerning Heart. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1993.

Dyckman, Garvin and Liebert. The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women. Mahwah: Paulist, 2001.

Farrington, Debra K. Hearing with the Heart: A Gentle Guide to Discerning God's Will for Your Life. Jossey-Bass. 2003.

Howell, Patrick J. Spirit Guide Through Times of Darkness. Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1996.

Levov, Gregg, Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life. New York: Harmony Books, 1997.

Lonsdale, David. Listening to the Music of the Spirit. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1992.

Morris, D. & Chas. Olsen. Discerning God's Will Together. Upper Room Books, Nashville, 1997.

Mueller, Joan. Faithful Listening: Discernment in Everyday Life. Sheed & Ward: Kansas City, 1996.

Smith, Gordon. Listening to God in Times of Choice. Intervarsity Press: Downers Grove, Ill. 1997.

Wolff, Pierre. Discernment: the Art of Choosing Well. Liquori/Triumph. 1993.

