STMM 561 CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

Summer Quarter, 2008 July 7 – July 11

Instructor: Alexandra Kovats, csjp, Ph.D.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to **introduce** students to some of the important themes in contemporary Christian spirituality and to a variety of approaches to prayer. Students will apply these themes to reflect upon and articulate their personal spirituality. They will also be invited to explore the theological and pastoral implications of these different approaches to prayer and spirituality. Keeping a reflection journal is strongly recommended for this course as a means of gaining insight and growth into one's spiritual journey. Class sessions will include lecture, prayer experiences, reflective times, music and discussion.

OBJECTIVES

- To become familiar with the key elements of contemporary Christian spirituality and how these themes find expression in one's personal spirituality.
- 2. To experience and become familiar with a variety of prayer forms which will enable one to practice those forms which express and enhance one's personal spirituality.
- 3. To deepen one's process of self-reflection and to be able to articulate one's relationship to the God of one's understanding.
- 4. To deepen one's appreciation of the sacredness of all life.
- 5. To reflect on and evaluate the pastoral implications of the different approaches to prayer and Christian spirituality.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Bass, Dorothy C. ed. (1997) *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cannato, Judy. (2006) Radical Amazement. Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books.

Fiand, Barbara. (1999) Prayer and the Quest for Healing.

New York, NY: Crossroad.

Palmer, Parker. (1990) The Active Life. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.

Rohr, Richard and friends. ed. (2006) Contemplation in Action.

New York, NY: Crossroad.

Vennard, Jane E. (2003) *Embracing the World: Praying for Justice and Peace.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

A Reader (to be read for the course) will be available from SU Reprographic Services in the Spring of 2008..

RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Chittister, Joan D. (1998) Heart of Flesh: A Feminist Spirituality for Women and Men. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Hart, Thomas. (2004) What Does it Mean to be a Man? New York: Paulist.

Keating, Thomas. (1999) The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation. New York: Paulist.

Killen, Patricia O'Connell. (1997) Finding Our Voices: Women, Wisdom and Faith. New York: Crossroad.

Ulanov, Ann and Barry. (1982) Primary Speech: A Psychology of Prayer. Atlanta: John Knox Press.

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS					
1.	July 7 AM	Introduction to Course: Reflections on Spirituality			
2.	July 7 PM	Overview of Christian Spirituality			
3.	July 8 AM	Key Themes of Contemporary Christian Spirituality			
4.	July 8 PM	Spirituality: The Dance of the Mystic			
5.	July 9 AM	Spirituality: The Dance of the Prophet			
6.	July 9 PM	Spiritualities: Multi-cultural, Gender, Gay/Lesbian			
7.	July 10 AM	Prayer: An Overview of Christian Prayer			
8.	July 10 PM	Prayer: Images of God			
9.	July 11 AM	Prayer: Embodiment/ Stages and Approaches			
10	. July 11 PM	Prayer: Prayer Ways and Prayer Practices			

PRE-COURSE and COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 1. Attend all class sessions.
- 2. Read all the required texts before class.

Please read the books with your "head and heart." Take notes (for yourself) and keep track of questions, resistances, "ahas" and concerns that emerge for you.

- 3. Establish or re-affirm a 15 minute daily prayer practice at least a month before the course begins.
- 4. Choose one of the texts and write a 1000 word (four page, double spaced) typed, reflection paper about the book addressing the following: What do you consider to be the main points made by the author in the book? Include quotes and page numbers where relevant. Engage in dialogue with ideas from the text including some of your own reflections, experiences and questions.

Due: first day of class, July 7, 2008

5. Denominational Interview and Write Up

Seek out a spiritual and/or pastoral leader in your denomination and interview them about their understanding and experience of spirituality and their spiritual practices.

Suggested questions during the interview:

What is your understanding and experience of spirituality? What are some images or metaphors that support your understanding and/or your experience of spirituality?

Who are some of the people and authors from your denomination who have significantly shaped your understanding of spirituality?

Name and describe some significant insights and characteristics of your denomination's approach to spirituality. What do you consider its strengths and its weaknesses?

Name and describe a book written by someone in your denomination that would help someone gain insights about your denomination's approach to spirituality. What people and resources have been important influences on your spirituality and spiritual practices outside of your denomination?

Describe your spiritual practices. How do they influence your life and ministry? What suggestions would you offer for someone who is in the process of establishing a spiritual practice in their lives?

Ask them any other questions that seem important to you in order to better understand their spirituality.

Write up the interview in a 4-5 page paper (typed, double spaced).

Due: first day of class, July 7, 2008

6. Integration/reflection paper

This 3-4 page paper (typed, double spaced) provides you with the opportunity to reflect on how the experience of this course and the readings have clarified and expanded your understanding and experience of prayer and spirituality. You may also choose to comment on insights that challenged and/or surprised you, and articulate where you are in your search of Mystery.

Due: Last Day of Class

Grade Distribution

Interview	20%	
Book Reflection	15%	
Integration Paper	15%	
Class attendance and participation	30%	
Assigned reading materials		

At the end of the course, students will be asked to reflect on their participation in class and the quality of attention and presence they brought to the various assignments and grade themselves. The instructor will grade the Interview, the Book Reflection and the Integration Paper.

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Ministry/Work:				
				Denomination:
1.	Name the courses/workshops you have taken focus on spirituality and/or prayer.	in the last three years that		
2.	Name three goals you hope to achieve during to 1.	this course for yourself.		
	2.			
	3.			
3.	What fears/concerns do you have about this co	ourse?		
4.	Name a person (living or dead) who has had a spiritual life. Describe that influence.	a significant influence on your		
5.	What image and/or name of God is most signification life?	ficant to you at this time in you		
6.	What themes/topics/concerns emerge for you prayer in light of your ministry?	regarding spirituality and/or		

- 7. What situations/processes/activities help you to learn best?
- 8. Do you feel called to lead a prayer in class? (Focus at beginning of class or after the break, or a longer prayer experience.)

What form/type of prayer would you use? (e.g. Taize prayer, centering prayer, psalm reading, movement, guided imagery, a song, a poem, scripture, ritual, etc.)

Please describe it.

- 9 Do you feel called to create a sacred space for class that would be a visual reminder of the presence of Mystery and an expression of spirituality?
- 10. Do you feel called to be part of a panel that explores spirituality in relation to gender (male/female) ethnicity, culture and sexual orientation?
- 11. Further comments/suggestions/information that would help me to respond to your learning needs....

Due Date: June 30, 2008

Please return Questionnaire to: Alexandra Kovats, csjp, Ph.D.

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Thank You!