

STMA 571
Critical Issues in Spirituality
Winter Quarter, 2008
Valerie Lesniak
Office: 206-296-6936
Hunthausen 218
vlesniak@seattleu.edu

Course description:

This course will explore typical human and cultural dynamics (issues) and patterns that emerge as supports and blockages in the development of one's relationship to God, self, others and the rest of creation. Student presentations will be an important part of the process of learning. Some of the topics we will consider are: distinction between spiritual direction and pastoral counseling; cosmological assumptions and beliefs; multicultural awarenesses; grief and trauma, sexuality, sexual abuse, depression, dark night, desolation, addiction and co-dependency; mid-life and aging, healing and other topics raised by student's concerns.

GOALS:

1. To provide knowledge and skills to engage with a variety of human and cultural factors that support and/or hinder psycho-spiritual growth.
2. To clarify the primary focus of the spiritual direction relationship in distinction to therapy/pastoral counseling.
3. To deepen awareness of the blocks and supports in one's own psycho-spiritual growth.
4. To provide spiritual directors with competencies that enable them to determine the need for professional referrals.

Basic Texts:

Gerald May, *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions*, Harper Collins, 1988, 0-06-112243-2

Robert Grant, *The Way of the Wound: A Spirituality of Trauma and Transformation*, Self-published, 1996.

Norvene Vest, ed., *Still Listening: New Horizons in Spiritual Direction*, Morehouse: 2000. 0-8192-1814-6

Karen Kissel Wegela, *How to be a Help Instead of a Nuisance: Practical Approaches to Giving Support, Service, and Encouragement to Others*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 1997, 1-57062-150-0

Peter Campbell and Edwin McMahon, *Bio-Spirituality: Focusing As a Way To Grow*, Loyola Press, 1997, 0-8294-0937-8

Pertinent articles will be distributed during the course.

Course Expectations:

- 1. Faithful attendance and participation in all class discussions, processes and activities.**
- 2. Read all the assigned readings and reflectively engage with the authors' ideas and your own experiences and understandings.**
- 3. Keep a reflective notebook on the readings done for class.**

Some helpful questions:

 - A. What concrete implications for the practice of spiritual direction/pastoral practice do I find in the text? What implications do I agree with? Disagree with? Why?**
 - B. How does the reading help me to work towards a personal definition of spiritual direction/pastoral practice? What is it? What qualities would describe the relationship and my style of doing ministry?**
 - C. What are my personal stumbling blocks in regard to living out my desired truth/qualities/style of spiritual direction/ministry?**
- 4. Two papers are required.**
 - A. A Reflection paper (3-6 pages) DUE ON JANUARY 30, 2008 .**

What is it in me that really prevents me from trusting/believing/experiencing that God loves me? What is MY NO point or critical issue? You might find it helpful to reflect on your own spiritual direction experience/retreat experiences/love relationships where you might have encountered your shadow/resistance to your deeper wholeness. You may find it helpful to write this after reading Gerald May's book. AND/OR What has encouraged and opened me to believe/trust/experience God's love for me? You might find it helpful to recall one particular time in your life when this awareness was poignant for you.
 - B. Participants will select a critical issue or dynamic that they have a particular interest in exploring further. such as:**

sexuality, grief, trauma, addiction, aging, prayer development and obstacles, multicultural awareneses, healing, shame, body, etc.

Please create an annotated bibliography of FIVE important sources on your topic/critical issue. Make enough copies for each member of the class. You will hand these out on the when you make a short presentation on the issue you selected. Further details will be given during our class time together.

**Grading: 40 % Paper and Annotated Bibliography
60% Class Participation and Presentation**

A detailed schedule will be distributed later in class. It would be helpful for students to begin reading Gerald May's book on Addiction and Grace.