Seattle University Winter Quarter, 2008

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT AND DECISION MAKING STMA 593-02

Professor: Patrick Kelly, S.J., Ph.D.
Office: Casey 217/296-2816
Office Hours: Th 3-5PM or by appt.
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Class Time: Th 9:00AM – 11:50AM
Class location: Hunt 110
Credits: 3

In this course, students will be introduced to Christian spiritual discernment and decision making as it has been practiced and understood by Ignatius of Loyola and those who have been influenced by his approach, in dialogue with the approaches of other Christians and other religious and spiritual traditions. After consideration of Ignatius' own life experiences as the basis for his insights into spiritual discernment, we will consider his rules or guidelines for discernment and their application to diverse life experiences. We will then consider the way in which these guidelines provide insight into contemporary issues of justice in society and can help to empower and enliven those committed to working for the poor. We will also attend to the unique contributions and insights of women to the traditions of discernment and decision making. As mentioned, the material from the Ignatian tradition will then be considered in dialogue with the approaches and insights from other Christian and religious and spiritual traditions. The goal of the course is that by reading the materials from the various traditions and perspectives, students would gain insight into their own lived experience of faith and thereby be able to be present in a more discerning way in the work place or to those to whom they are called to minister.

Course Objectives:

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

a) articulate the basic principles of discernment of spirits and God's will as they are understood and practiced in the Ignatian tradition
b) identify how these are relevant in diverse life situations
c) explain the relevance of spiritual discernment for reflection on and engagement with issues of social justice
d) articulate the insights into spiritual discernment and decision making which are derived from the diverse experiences of women
e) articulate the principles and process of spiritual discernment in the Quaker tradition
f) explain the similarities and differences between Buddhist mindfulness and Ignatian discernment
g) articulate how our contemporary understanding of addictions helps us to understand the process of spiritual discernment
h) recognize and explain the characteristics of Native American approaches to decision making from a spiritual perspective
i) explain how the insights into spiritual discernment and decision making from the traditions we have studied help them to understand their own lived experience

j) explain how these insights can be helpful to them in their place of work or in accompanying others as they move into the future

Required Books

A Pilgrim's Testament: The Memoirs of St. Ignatius of Loyola, transcribed by Luis Goncalves de Camara, tran. Parmananda R. Divarkar (Saint Louis, MO: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995).

Spirit of Light or Darkness? A Casebook for Studying Discernment of Spirits, by Jules Toner, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995).

What is Your Will, O God? A Casebook for Studying Discernment of God's Will, by Jules Toner, S.J. (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995).

The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: *New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola*, by Dean Brackley, S.J. (NY: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2004).

Spiritual Discernment: The Context and Goal of Clearness Committees, by Patricia Loring (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1992).

"Christian Mindfulness: A Path to Finding God in All Things," in *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, William Rehg, S.J. (St. Louis: Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality) 34/3 May 2002. (to be handed out in class)

I will also hand out and send articles to you electronically during the Quarter.

Papers et al

3 Reflection Papers – 2 pages Due Jan. 17, Feb. 7 and Feb. 21 (25%)

Final Paper – 12 pages Due Mon. March 17 at 12 noon (65%)

Participation – (10 %)

Tentative Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week One Jan. 10 Overview and Introduction

Readings: "Discernment of Spirits," Michael J. Buckley, S.J. *New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (to be sent electronically)

A Pilgrim's Testament (begin reading, if possible)

Week Two Jan. 17 Life and Experience of Ignatius of Loyola

A Pilgrim's Testament (have finished)

"What is Discernment?," Ch. 3 *in Listening to the Music of the Spirit: The Art of Discernment*, David Lonsdale (to be sent electronically)

Patrick O'Leary, S.J. – One man St. Ignatius drama

Reflection Paper due

Week Three Jan. 24 Discernment of Spirits
"Consolation and Desolation," Ch. 4 *in Listening to the Music of the Spirit,* David Lonsdale (to be sent electronically)
Spirit of Light or Darkness?, Toner, Chs. 1-4 and selected cases

Week Four Jan. 31 Discernment of God's Will
"Heart Searching and Life Choice," Ch. 3 of *By Way of the Heart: Toward a Holistic Christian Spirituality,* Wilkie Au (to be sent electronically)
What is Your Will, O God?, Toner, Chs. 1-3 and selected cases

Week Five Feb. 7 Discernment and Social Justice
The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times, Brackley Chs.TBD
Romero Film

Reflection Paper due

Week Six Feb. 14 Discernment and Social Justice
The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times, Brackley Chs.TBD

Week Seven Feb. 21 Women and Discernment
"Developing a Single Eye: Rules for Discernment of Spirits," and "Dancing Toward the Light: Election," Chs. 10 and 11 of *The Spiritual Exercises Reclaimed: Uncovering Liberating Possibilities for Women, by Katherine Dyckman, Mary Garvin and Elizabeth Liebert* (to be sent electronically)

Special Guest: Katherine Dyckman
Reflection paper due

Week Eight Feb. 28 Discernment in the Quaker tradition
Spiritual Discernment: The Context and Goal of Clearness Committees, Loring (whole text)

Week Nine March 6 Dialogue with Buddhism and spirituality related to addictions
"Christian Mindfulness," Rehg, S.J.
"Homecoming: Discernment and the Consecrated Life," Ch. 8 of *Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions,* Gerald May *(to be sent electronically)*

Week Ten March 13 Native American Traditions of Discernment and Decision Making
Reading TBD
Patrick Twohy, S.J. and Guests

Mon. March 17 12 noon
Final Paper due

COURSE GRADING SCALE

A	100-95	Superior performance (not just effort)
A-	94-90	
B+	89-87	
B	86-83	Good performance
B-	82-80	
C+	79-77	
C	76-73	Adequate performance
C-	72-70	
D+	69-67	
D	66-63	Poor performance
D-	62-60	
F	59-0	Failing performance

Additional Help

For additional help in understanding the material for this course, in writing papers, or in developing more fruitful study strategies, consider using the following resources:

Learning Center
Loyola 100, www.seattleu.edu/SAS/LA
peer tutoring, individual learning consultations, or study strategy workshops

Writing Center
Engineering 307, www.seattleu.edu/writingcenter/
peer assistance with any phase of a writing project

Disabilities Services

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an 'invisible disability' such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100, 206 296-5740, www.seattleu.edu/SAS/DS/. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process.