

New Syllabus Updated: 1/7/08

STMM 561 Contemporary Christian Spirituality and Prayer

Winter Quarter 2008: January 12-13, February 8-10 **Room:** Hunthausen 100

Instructor: Christine Valters Paintner, PhD **Office Hours:** By appointment

Email: Christine@AbbeyoftheArts.com **Phone:** (206) 329-3110

Course Description:

This course is an introduction 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 own personal spirituality. They will also be invited to explore the theological and pastoral implications of these different approaches to prayer and spirituality.

Class sessions will include lecture, discussion (small and large group), experiential exercises, prayer experiences, and reflection time.

Course Objectives:

- To become familiar with the key themes of contemporary Christian spirituality and how these themes find expression in your personal spirituality.
- To experience and become familiar with a variety of prayer forms and practice those which express and enrich your personal spirituality.
- To deepen your process of self-reflection and reflection on your images of God and be able to articulate these.
- To reflect on and evaluate the social dimensions and pastoral implications of the different approaches to prayer and spirituality.

PRE-COURSE REQUIREMENTS (to be completed before January 12)

- **Read *Radical Amazement, Contemplation in Action, The Active Life* and the chapter on “Sabbath” from *Practicing Our Faith*** before the first weekend session. Please read the books with your “head and heart.” Take notes (not to be handed in) and keep track of questions, resistances, “ahas” and concerns that emerge for you.
- **Establish or re-affirm a 15 minute daily prayer practice** at least a month before the course begins.
- **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. Write up the interview in a 4 - 5 page paper (typed, double spaced). **Due: Saturday, January 12 (First day of class)**

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 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 they influence your living 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.
- **Pre-Course Questionnaire** returned by e-mail to Christine@AbbeyoftheArts.com (if you already sent this on to Alexandra Kovats she is forwarding them to me, so you do not need to resend—I will contact students individually who are missing their forms)

Course Evaluation and Additional Requirements:

- **Attendance and Active Class Participation** (30% of grade) indicating timely reading and critical theological assessment of assigned materials. This course is highly experiential and process-oriented. In order to acquire the skills that are needed, preparation and practice are required. Students are strongly encouraged to attend all classes, absences will affect one's grade. Students are required to demonstrate effective group skills by actively contributing to large and small group discussions and using constructive peer feedback that includes honesty, challenge, and mutual respect. There will be a self-evaluation process at the end of both the first and second weekends (turning in these evaluations is a part of the total grade for this portion of the course).
- **Denominational Interview and Write Up** (see description under pre-course requirements) (20% of Grade)
Due: Saturday, January 12 (First day of class)
- **Two Outside Prayer Experiences and 4-5 page Reflection Paper** (20% of Grade)
One of the objectives of this class is to expose you to a variety of ways of praying and spiritual practices. To facilitate this objective, in addition to the prayer experiences in class, you are required to participate in two (2) out-of-class Prayer Experiences (see below for suggestions—select experiences you have not had before) and write a 4-5 page double-spaced paper reflecting on them, integrating your experience with the readings, discussions in class, and your own ongoing spiritual journey. Please also tend to the communal dimensions of these experiences in your reflections. Consider your experience from both an insider and outsider perspective. The insider perspective takes into account your own personal experience and connections with your wider spiritual life and practice. The outsider perspective looks at the experience from a more theological and sociological perspective. What is the kind of spirituality being expressed? What images of God are operating?
Due: Friday, February 8 (Start of the second weekend)
- **Final Integrative Paper: Creating a Personal Rule of Life**** (30% of Grade)
For your final project (10-12 pages double-spaced) you are going to create a personal rule of life. The goal of this project is to integrate your learning from the quarter with a concrete reflection on what a balanced set of practices for your own soul care would look like. Keep in mind the social dimensions of practices as well as the pastoral implications for your own life in ministry. Please be specific in your references to reading, class lectures, discussions, and experiential exercises. *It should be clear to me how your Rule has been shaped and impacted by this class since the primary purpose of this paper is to demonstrate to me your integration of the material.*

I invite you to consider these questions: Where do you need more balance in your life? Which practices will you engage in to help restore this balance? Does your Rule touch on the various areas we discussed in class? Are there topics that were raised in class that you feel resistant to examine in your own life? If so, how might you incorporate this avenue for growth into your Rule?

A Rule helps provide a structure for your life, somewhat like a trellis in that it provides both direction *and* room for growth, and it is deeply rooted in Christian tradition. If you don't like the word "Rule," consider an alternative such as "Compass" or "Guide." Spirituality is about a movement toward freedom, wholeness, and transformation so that we can grow in our ability to love the world. Does your Rule help to facilitate this end? Is your Rule so filled with practices that you are setting yourself up to fail?

If possible, consider taking a day of retreat to reflect on how you are being invited to live into a particular way of life for this next season. Consider your community when creating your Rule as well – family, small faith groups, congregation, etc. Share your Rule with a spiritual director or close friend and get their input as well. This will not be the final Rule for the rest of your life. We are all on a journey, so I encourage you to re-visit your Rule regularly and make changes where necessary as you discover what works and what doesn't.

FINAL PROJECT DUE: Monday, February 25th by 4:00 p.m. in Christine Paintner's faculty box at STM. Hard copies of papers only please, no emailed attachments.

Recommended Books on Creating a Rule of Life: *Living Faith Day by Day: How the Sacred Rules of Monastic Traditions Can Help You Live Spiritually in the Modern World* by Debra Farrington or *At Home in the World: A Rule of Life for the Rest of Us* by Margaret Guenther.

Additional Online Resources on Creating a Rule of Life:

http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/items/ecourse/item_2839.html

(this is a link to an e-course Debra Farrington wrote for Spirituality & Health magazine, which gives you a simplified—but still quite helpful—version of the material in her book)

<http://www.episcopal-dwtx.org/spiritlife/liferules.htm/>

**If there is another final project that would be more helpful to you in integrating the above elements, please feel free to consult with me about alternatives. I am also open to final projects that integrate creative expression with written reflection, again please feel free to talk with me about this.

Required Texts:

To be read prior to first weekend session (Jan 12-13):

Cannato, Judy. (2006) *Radical Amazement*. Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books.
Palmer, Parker. (1990) *The Active Life*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
Rohr, Richard and friends. ed. (2006) *Contemplation in Action*. New York, NY: Crossroad.
Chapter on "Sabbath" from *Practicing Our Faith*, edited by Dorothy Bass.

To be read prior to second weekend session (Feb 8-10):

Bass, Dorothy C. ed. (1997) *Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
Fiand, Barbara. (1999) *Prayer and the Quest for Healing*. New York, NY: Crossroad.
Vennard, Jane E. (2003) *Embracing the World: Praying for Justice and Peace*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
**Reader with additional articles available from *SU Reprographic Services*

OUTLINE OF CLASS SESSIONS: (Subject to changes at instructor's discretion and student needs)

FIRST WEEKEND

****Saturday, January 12****

Morning: Introduction to Course
Defining Spirituality
Themes & Qualities of Spirituality

Afternoon: Dialectics and Paradoxes
Metaphors for Transformation
Spiritual Practice and Prayer

****Sunday, January 13****

Morning: Contemplative Prayer and Living

Afternoon: Spirituality of Nature /The Body of the Earth
Spirituality of Place

SECOND WEEKEND

****Friday, February 8****

Evening: Images of God
Spirituality and the Arts

****Saturday, February 9****

Morning: Sexuality, Embodiment, and Spirituality
Afternoon: Liberation Spirituality

****Sunday, February 10****

Morning: Discernment
Afternoon: Community and Spirituality
Spirituality and Practices to Support Ministry and Soul Care
Closing Ritual

Classes will include lecture, discussion (small and large group), experiential exercises, prayer experiences, and reflection times.

Special Needs:

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 discuss your needs and arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff in the Learning Center, Loyola 100, 206-296-5740.

PRAYER EXPERIENCE Suggestions:

Please choose two prayer experiences with which you are *unfamiliar*. Attending a worship service in a denomination other than your own is also a good option.

You are free to select a prayer experience that is not on this list, please just consult me first if you are unsure.

Always check the website &/or call ahead to verify times, dates, and specific location

TAIZE:

St. James Cathedral, 804 9th Ave (First Hill), (206) 622-3559
Ecumenical Prayer with Music From Taize, Every Friday at 6:30 p.m.
<http://www.stjames-cathedral.org/>

LABYRINTH:

First Baptist Church, 1111 Harvard Avenue (First Hill), (206) 325-6051
Second Sundays 6:00-8:00 p.m. (Jan 13th)
<http://www.seattlefirstbaptist.org/>

Plymouth Congregational Church, 1217 Sixth Ave (Downtown), (206) 622-4865
First Friday and Saturday of the month, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.
<http://www.plymouthchurchseattle.org/> (February 2nd and 3rd)

COMPLINE CHOIR:

St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral, 1245 Tenth Ave E (Cap Hill), (206) 323-0300
Every Sunday at 9:30 p.m.
<http://www.saintmarks.org/Music/compline.html>

JAZZ VESPERS:

First Baptist Church, 1111 Harvard Avenue (First Hill), (206) 325-6051
First Sundays October - May, 6:00-8:00 p.m. (Feb 3rd)
<http://www.seattlefirstbaptist.org/>

EVENSONG:

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 4805 NE 45th St, (206) 522-7144
First Sunday of the Month, 5:00 p.m.
<http://www.ststephens-seattle.org/index.php>
(also a Contemplative Service the 3rd Sunday of each month at 5:00 p.m.)

SANCTORUM MASS:

Church of the Apostles (COTA), 4272 Fremont Ave N, (206) 851-8962
Sunday, January 20, 8:00 p.m.
<http://www.apostleschurch.org>

PRE-COURSE QUESTIONNAIRE

STMM 561

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY AND PRAYER

NAME: _____ **Phone #:** _____

Ministry/Work: _____ **E-mail:** _____

Denomination: _____

1. Name the courses/workshops you have taken in the last three years that focused on spirituality and/or prayer.
2. Name three goals you hope to achieve during this course for yourself.
3. What fears/concerns do you have about this course?
4. Name a person (living or dead) who has had a significant influence on your spiritual life. Describe that influence.
5. Describe your spiritual life and prayer practices.
6. Describe the God of your experience, the God you have come to know. What image and/or name of God is most significant to you at this time in your life?
7. What themes/topics/concerns emerge for you regarding spirituality and /or prayer in light of your ministry?
8. What situations/processes/activities help you to learn best?
9. Do you feel called to lead a 15-20 minute prayer experience in class? (*This time segment includes a 5-minute reflection and journaling on the experience as well.*)
What form/type of prayer would you use? (e.g. Taize, centering prayer, movement, guided imagery, ritual, etc.) Please describe it.
10. Do you feel called to create a sacred space in the class that would be a visual reminder of the presence of the divine and that would reinforce themes from readings and class discussion?
11. Further comments/suggestions/information that would help me to respond to your learning needs....

Due Date: January 4, 2008 or ASAP

Please email Questionnaire to: Christine@AbbeyoftheArts.com

Note: If you have already turned in your questionnaire to Alexandra either by email or postal service, they are being forwarded on to me so no need to re-submit it. If you have not turned it in, please email it to me directly.

Thank You!