

SF 791/SF 710 MONASTIC SPIRITUALITY/SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

Ashland Theological Seminary, Cleveland Center, Spring Term, 2008

Wednesdays, April 2 – June 4, 2008; 6:30-9:30 p.m.; Room TBA

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(Written correspondence to instructor is done through Charlotte Cole, Ashland Theological Seminary, 910 Center St., Ashland, Ohio 44805)

I. Course Description

This course addresses the spiritual, historical and practical riches of monastic spirituality; and the major movements, orders and personalities which characterize this unique expression of faith and life within the Christian tradition. Through the survey of spiritual practices which include prayer, silence, work, study, service and living in community, students will examine their own spiritual practices and what can be appropriated from the monastic experience to assist them in their own spiritual formation as Christian disciples.

II. Relationship to Curriculum Model

From the earliest apostolic expressions of Christian community, the faithful have sought both personal and communal spiritual disciplines to form them into the likeness of Christ. Since its inception, the monastic movement at its best has striven to inculcate practices which undergird this formation.

Core Identity rooted in Christ, as the source from which all life and ministry flow.

The yearning for Christlikeness is central to all facets of the learning and practices sought in this class.

Character that reflects maturity in Christ.

The spiritual practices derived from the monastic experience are formative for Christian character.

Calling that is foundational for servant leadership in the church, community and world.

Every Christian's call begins at baptism. Anchored in scripture, nurtured in the historical images of vocation, especially monasticism, spiritual disciplines not only deepen the Spirit, but demand a servant approach to the needs of the world.

Competency in the disciplines and skills relevant to Christian ministry.

Disciplines are examined and practiced for their value in shaping not only the class members, but for those in the ministry settings entrusted to them now and in the future.

III. Student Learning Outcomes

As a result of this class, the student will be able to do the following:

Core Identity rooted in Christ, as the source from which all life and ministry flow.

- Examine his/her own spirituality in the light of historical monastic disciplines and practices
- Understand the necessity for personal spiritual formation

Character that reflects maturity in Christ.

- Allow him/herself to be shaped by the practices demonstrated in the class,
- Practice various disciplines for spiritual growth, e.g., silence, meditation, prayer, lectio divina, journaling

Calling that is foundational for servant leadership in the church, community and world.

- Commit to ongoing spiritual disciplines which will undergird this calling
- Model these practices for the church, community and world as formational for effective witness as a servant leader

Competency in the discipline and skills relevant to Christian ministry

- A. Articulate, integrate, and apply Scripture, theology, church history, and religious history to life and ministry.
 - Identify one's own spiritual heritage within the larger Christian story
 - Understand the historical roots and expressions of the monastic experience
 - Analyze the scriptural and historical precedents for particular spiritual practices.

- B. Apply cultural exegesis to one's life and ministry.
 - Understand one's current context in relation to spiritual disciplines and their application
 - Compare the disciplines and practices inherited from various monastic traditions
 - Adopt disciplines which model transformation in the midst of, and possibly over against, the culture

- C. Practice a broad range of appropriate ministry skills.
 - Choose and evaluate reading/literature in the area of monasticism and its meaning
 - Choose and evaluate reading/literature in the area of spiritual disciplines
 - Commit to ongoing personal spiritual formation
 - Value opportunities for continuing spiritual growth
 - Demonstrate a commitment to sharing skills, ideas and practices for communal spiritual growth

IV. Teaching Strategies for Student Learning

This class will include lecture; class discussion; small group discussion; silence; reflection; writing; evaluating relevant literature; individual student class presentations; the use of music, visual art and film; an offsite learning experience; and celebrating a closing eucharist.

V. Course Requirements

A. Textbooks (Required – sources for book reviews and reflection paper)

Gruen, Anselm. *Heaven Begins with You: Wisdom from the Desert Fathers*. New York: Crossroad, c.1994, 1999 (pbk) ISBN #0824518187 [National Book Network]

Merton, Thomas. *The Seven-Storey Mountain: An Autobiography of Faith*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1998 (50th anniversary ed.; paperback) ISBN #: 0-15-601086-0 (pbk)

Norris, Kathleen. *The Cloister Walk*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1997 ISBN 1-57322-584-3 (pbk)

Vest, Norvene, Oblate OSB. *Preferring Christ: A Devotional Workbook and Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict*. Harrisburg, Pa.: Morehouse Publishing, 2004 ISBN #: 0-8192-1991-6 (pbk) [A Continuum Imprint]

Highly Recommended:

Chittister, Joan, O.S.B. *The Rule of Benedict: Insights for the Ages*. New York: Crossroad, 1992. (pbk)

Seewald, Peter, ed., et.al. *Wisdom from the Monastery: A Program of Spiritual Healing*. Old Saybrook, CT.: Konecky & Konecky, 2004. (excellent resource now out of print, but available online-TAS)

A further bibliography will be provided.

B. Attendance

According to the student handbook, attendance at all class sessions is expected unless the professor has been notified in advance. Any student missing the equivalent of six class hours will be required to do additional work, receive a lower grade or withdraw from the class; this is at the discretion of the professor.

C. Assignments/Assessment of Student Learning

Note: Students must place their student mailbox number on the cover page on all papers. Students without a mailbox – provide the professor with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

1. Participation in class discussion and activities is crucial for personal and communal learning and spiritual growth = 10%
2. A 3-page book review (guidelines to be provided) for the Gruen, Merton and Norris texts @ 10% each = 30%
3. A 3-page reflection paper on the Vest workbook = 10%
4. A class presentation focusing on a monastic movement, practice, or pivotal figure representing a type of monastic spirituality = 20%
5. A 10-12 page paper focusing on one aspect of monastic spirituality/spiritual disciplines, e.g., silence, study, prayer, celibacy, poverty; this practice will be analyzed historically and evaluated as a valid spiritual discipline for today; the student will then consider how such practice might be appropriated into his/her personal spiritual formation; **material used in assignment #4 may be used toward the preparation of this major paper** = 30% (Note: the 10-12 pages means pages of content, not title page, bibliography, etc.)

D. Calculation of Grades

Class participation	10%
Book Reviews	30%
Response Paper	10%
Class Presentation	20%
Major Paper	30%

VI. Course Schedule

Week #	Date	Topic	Assignment Due
1	April 2	Welcome and introductions; course overview, intro to monastic spirituality; Thomas Merton and the contemplative life	
2	April 9	Desert monastic spirituality	Gruen book review
3	April 16	St. Benedict and the monastic ideal	
4	April 23	Visit to St. Andrews Benedictine Monastery, Cleveland	Norris book review
5	April 30	Monastic spirituality in art, architecture and music	
6	May 7	Cistercian monasticism; monastic reform; the mendicant orders	Merton book review
7	May 14	Student reports; other types of monastic spirituality	
8	May 21	Student reports; choosing our own spiritual disciplines	
9	May 28	Student reports	Major paper
10	June 4	Monastic spirituality and social justice; closing Eucharist celebrated	Vest reflection paper

VII. Seminary Guidelines

A. Ashland Theological Seminary Academic Integrity Policy

Ashland Theological Seminary seeks to model servant leadership derived from biblical standards of honesty and integrity. We desire to encourage, develop, and sustain men and women of character who will exemplify these biblical qualities in their ministry to the church and the world. As members of the seminary community, students are expected to hold themselves to the highest standards of academic, personal, and social integrity. All students, therefore, are expected to abide by the Academic Integrity standards outlined in the Student Handbook.

B. Writing Assistance

If you need assistance with writing projects for your coursework, contact the ATS Writing Center. The center provides free sessions with a peer consultant who can help you with all your concerns about academic writing. Contact the Center if you have a question about how to complete your assignment, if you have documentation questions, or if you would like to have your paper evaluated for areas needing improvement. The ATS Writing Center can be reached at 419-289-5162 or by e-mail at atswc@ashland.edu.

C. Students with Disabilities

For students who have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let the professor know early in the quarter (preferably the first week) so that your learning needs can be appropriately met. In order to receive accommodations, documentation concerning your disability must be on file with Classroom Support Services, 105 Amstutz Hall, 419-289-5953. Please contact them with any questions you may have.

D. ATS Grading Scale

Grade	Percent	Description
A	97-100	Superior achievement of course objectives, diligence and originality, high degree of freedom from error, outstanding evidence of ability to utilize course knowledge, initiative expressed in preparing and completing assignments, positive contributions verbalized in class.
A-	92-96	
B+	89-91	
B	86-88	Good work submitted, commendable achievement of course objectives, some aspects of the course met with excellence, substantial evidence of ability to utilize course material, positive contributions verbalized in class, consistency and thoroughness of work completed.
B-	83-85	
C+	80-82	
C	77-79	Acceptable work completed, satisfactory achievement of course objectives, demonstrating at least some ability to utilize course knowledge, satisfactory class contribution.
C-	74-76	
D+	71-73	
D	68-70	Passing but minimal work, marginal achievement of course objectives, poor performance in comprehension of work submitted, inadequate class contributions.
D-	65-67	
F	Below 65	Unacceptable work resulting in failure to receive class credit, inadequacy of work submitted or of performance and attendance in class.

