

## **CH 629: History of Christian Spiritualities**

**Fall, 2015**

W: 8:30- 11:30

G 142

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**Office Hours:**

Tues., 1:00-2:30 pm, or appt.

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Gault 232

### **Course overview and Objectives:**

This course will explore the historical development of important themes in Christian Spirituality over the past two millennia. In the past few years probably no subject has received more attention than the topic of “spirituality.” This has resulted in an avalanche of materials and resources related to spirituality, and in some instances, confusion and misconception about the nature of various spiritual traditions. The task of this class is to probe the specific perspectives of Christian Spirituality in order to gain a better understanding of uniquely Christian contributions and to aid our own practice of these various spiritual traditions. Therefore, we will both analyze and examine the subject as one would any discipline, but we will also seek to experience the benefits related to these spiritual practices. There are two primary texts for the class (Holder and Woods, listed below), and one additional text we will use at the end of the term (Parachin). You will want to be familiar with the three volumes on Christian Spirituality (part of the World Spirituality series published by Crossroads) that are identified as recommended texts.

### **Texts:**

Arthur Holder, ed., *Christian Spirituality: The Classics* (Routledge, 2009)

Richard Woods, *Christian Spirituality: God's Presence Through the Ages*, rev. ed. (Orbis, 2006)

Janet Parachin, *Engaged Spirituality: Ten Lives of Contemplation and Action* (Chalice Press, 1999)

### **Suggested focused readings (Biographical):**

Eric Gritsch, ed., *Martin Luther— Faith in Christ and the Gospel: Selected Spiritual Writings*.

Serge Hughes, ed., *Catherine of Genoa: Purgation and Purgatory*.

Dwight Judy, *Praying with Teresa of Avila*.

Therèse of Liseux, *Story of a Soul: Autobiography of Therèse*.

James Washington, *Conversations with God*.

Wendy Wright, *Frances de Sales: Introduction to a Devout Life*.

### **Recommended general studies on Christian Spirituality:**

Bernard McGinn and John Meyendorff, eds. *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Crossroad, **Christian Spirituality I**, 1985).

Jill Raitt, ed., *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation* (Crossroad, **Christian Spirituality II**, 1988).

Louie Dupre and Don Saliers, eds., *Christian Spirituality: Post Reformation and Modern* (Crossroads, **Christian Spirituality III**, 1989).

Bradley Holt, *Thirsty for God: a Brief History of Christian Spirituality* (2005).

Robin Maas and Gabriel O'Donnell, *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church* (Abingdon, 1990).

John Tyson, ed., *Invitation to Christian Spirituality: an Ecumenical Anthology* (Oxford, 1999).

### **Course Expectations and Assignments:**

This course depends heavily on your participation and work with the various materials. Attendance and preparation are important in order to maximize the time we have available. When we meet together, opportunities for your participation and leadership will be frequent, so be ready to join in the conversation. I have provided a schedule of readings that is coordinated with the topics for each class session. A portion of your grade will be determined from your attendance and participation. Each of you will also prepare a brief (10 minute) presentation for the class based on either your biographical study (#2 below) or your research project (#3 below). (**Participation, 10% of final grade**)

The graded assignments are outlined below. I expect all of your work to be completed on time. If there is a problem and your work will be late, talk to me before rather than after the fact. In most instances a reasonable penalty will be assessed to late work.

### **Assignments:**

You have the option for deciding the order in which you would like to complete the first two assignments (#1 and #2). One will be due **Oct. 7**; the other on **Nov. 18**. For the sake of variety, I suggest that you chose one assignment reflecting “ancient” spirituality (note the class schedule) and one for the “modern” era.

1. **Book Review:** Select a book from the book review bibliography (below; or you may consult with me for additional suggested titles) and prepare a six- page doubled-spaced review of the book. Identify the main argument of the author and state briefly the central contribution of the book. Connect the book to the themes we have been developing in class—and note relationships to your reading in the Holder and Woods texts. Indicate

how these insights help you to understand the nature of Christian Spirituality and may aid the church in its quest to appropriate a healthy spirituality. Finally, offer some personal evaluation of your selected book and indicate how one might use this book, both personally and in one's ministry. **Due October 7 or November 18 (25% of final grade).**

**Book review selections:**

William Andrews, *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century*.

Carolyn Bynum, *Holy Feast, Holy Fast: the Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*.

Mae Elise Cannon, *Just Spirituality: How Faith Practices Fuel Social Action*.

Gregory Clapper, *As if the Heart Mattered: a Wesleyan Spirituality*.

William Dalrymple, *From the Holy Mountain: A Journey Among the Christians of the Middle East*.

Ursula King, *Christian Mystics: Their Lives and Legacies Throughout the Ages*.

Michael McGiffert, ed., *God's Plot: Puritan Spirituality in Thomas Shepard's Cambridge*.

Howard Rice, *Reformed Spirituality: An Introduction for Believers*.

Don Saliers, *Worship and Spirituality*.

Dorothy Soelle, *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*.

Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth Century New England*.

Richard Woods, *The Spirituality of Celtic Saints*.

**2. Biographical Study:** Select a person we have considered in this class—you might begin with the persons discussed in the Holder text; or perhaps you have someone in mind of particular interest to you. Read a "classic" text written by this person (an entire text—not the small sample from Holder). Develop a teaching or preaching event related to this person and their writing—i.e., a sermon, lesson plan, a retreat, youth event—I am open to your creativity. What might this person have to say about their understanding of Christian Spirituality to your congregation, community or ministry setting? Your completed sermon or lesson plan, plus a one-page detailed outline of the person's life are due **October 7 or November 18 (25% of final grade).**

**3. Final Research Project.** This is your opportunity to focus your studies and develop expertise in one of the themes we will consider. Use a person or group to generate a thesis that helps us to understand their historical context and the critique or contribution they might offer to Christians living in our era. Present a historical introduction to your person or group, and indicate how he/ she/ they might contribute to our contemporary understandings of theology, ministry, and spirituality. Present your analysis and conclusions in a 12-14 pp. paper. I will ask for a brief bibliography and outline on your paper before we break for Thanksgiving. For the final class session I will have you post a one page summary of your paper and 3-5 annotated sources that you used. **Final Project Due: Dec. 10 (40% of grade).**

*A word on writing relevant to all assignments:* Learning to write clear and effective prose is a skill worthy of any ministry. You have a choice of formats relative to matters of style

and scholarly citation--that of the social sciences (APA) or Turabian/ Chicago--so you must select one of these and be consistent. Also, if you use Internet sources, make certain to use the appropriate form of citation. If I encounter too many grammar or spelling mistakes, I will return the paper to you.

**Please note the following academic policies, which apply to all MTSO courses. You will find details about all of these policies in the *MTSO Student Handbook*.**

**Class attendance:** Regular attendance is expected in all classes. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will not be allowed credit for a course if he or she is absent for 25% of the class sessions.

**Pass/Fail:** The decision to exercise this option must be made before the end of the second week of the course by completing the appropriate form available through the Registrar. To receive a grade of "pass" the student must do at least the equivalent of C minus work in the course.

**Incompletes:** To receive a course grade of Incomplete, students must submit the petition form from the Registrar with all signatures to the Dean's Office before the last day of regularly scheduled classes. See Student Handbook for intensive term deadlines. Any petition submitted without a due date for outstanding work will be denied. If work is not complete by the due date the Registrar will record the grade of F for the course.

**ADA:** MTSO seeks to remove barriers to inclusion in its learning communities. Students who feel they may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss their specific needs at the beginning of the semester. Please contact the Director of Student Services to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any accommodation must be agreed upon prior to the due date of the affected course requirement.

**Electronic Devices:** Turn mobile devices off or "vibrate only" during class. Browsing the Internet or engaging in email or social network conversations during class is discouraged. Instructors have the right to impose grading penalties for disruptions due to electronic devices.

**Inclusive Language:** In accordance with MTSO's policy on inclusive language, all students are expected to use gender inclusive or gender neutral language in their writing and in the classroom discussions when referring to human beings.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is a serious matter of academic, professional, and personal integrity. All students at the master's level are expected to understand the requirement to provide attribution when the work of others is used. Students are also expected to be familiar with and understand the school's policy on Academic Misconduct found in the Student Handbook. If a student has questions about attribution, citation, and how to

avoid plagiarism they should consult the course instructor, the school's writing instructor, or library staff. When in doubt it is better to provide attribution even if one is uncertain about the proper citation form. Plagiarism is a form of academic misconduct that results in disciplinary actions per the Student Handbook that may range from failing an assignment or course to expulsion.

**Human Subjects Research:** Research by MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel that collects non-public information from and/or about living individuals or contemporary organizations/groups for purposes of publication or public presentation (including class assignments) must be approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee. MTSO faculty, students, or affiliated personnel should err on the side of caution and apply for committee approval of any activity that may fit this description.

## **Class schedule:**

### **Ancient Spiritual Traditions:**

Aug. 26: Class Introductions; the Nature of Christian Spirituality: Biblical Themes

**Reading:** Holder, xiv-xvi; Woods, xiii-xix, 1-9

Sept. 2: Spirituality of the Early Church, the Alien Community

**Reading:** Holder, 1-24; Woods, 10-42

Post response: A brief definition of Christian Spirituality

Sept. 9: Patristic Spiritual Reflections: Sin, Grace, and Self-Denial

**Reading:** Holder, 25-48; Woods, 43-82

Sept. 16: The Beginnings of Monastic Spirituality

**Reading:** Holder, 62-85; Woods, 83-93

Sept. 23: The Spiritual Traditions of the Eastern Churches: Liturgy and Icons

**Reading:** Holder, 49-61, 136-47; Woods, 94-115; see too, Henri Nouwen, *Praying with Icons*

Sept. 30: Spirituality, Service, and Monastic Reform Movements

**Reading:** Holder, 86-135; Woods, 116-150

Oct. 7: Penitential and Mystical Traditions of the Middle Ages

**Reading:** Holder, 148-72; Woods, 151-173

**Due Date #1: Book Review or Biography**

## **Midterm Reading Week Break, October 12-16**

### **Modern Spiritual Traditions**

Oct. 21: Protestant Reformers and their Spiritual Traditions

**Reading:** Holder, 184-96; Woods, 174-95

Oct. 28: Catholic Reform Movements: Jesuits, Carmelites, Salesians

**Reading:** Holder, 197-244; Woods, 196-211

Nov. 4: Puritan, Pietist and Wesleyan Spiritualities

**Reading:** Holder, 245-80; Woods, 212-229

Nov. 11: The Spirituality of Justice and Social Critique

**Reading:** Tyson, 281-92, 329-41; Woods, 243-62; Parachin, 22-33, 145-62

Nov. 18: Spirituality and Care for the World

**Reading:** Holder, 293-316; Parachin, 79-128

**Biography Project or Book Review Due Date**

## **Thanksgiving Week Break, November 23-27**

Dec. 2: Christian Spirituality in Global Religious Perspective

**Reading:** Holder, 353-64; Woods, 263-76; Parachin, 9-21, 63-78

Dec. 9: Discussion, final class and final projects

Dec. 10: **FINAL DUE DATE FOR FINAL PROJECTS, PAPERS**