X-515 Spirituality, Autobiography and Ministry
Christian Theological Seminary

Fall 2008, Tuesdays, 2:15-5 p.m.

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Office hours by appointment

Course TAs

The key to a Christian conception of studies is the realization that prayer consists of attention.
It is the orientation of all the attention of which the soul is capable toward God.

Simone Weil – Waiting for God

Purpose of This Course:

As a seminary student you are training to be a spiritual leader, whether you are called to serve in congregational settings or in some other form of ministry. To lead others it is useful to know ourselves, both appreciating our gifts and identifying our weaknesses. Each of us has been formed by a multiplicity of influences including our families of origin, religious and secular communities, and the prevailing Zeitgeist. Reflecting on one’s spiritual autobiography is essential preparation for ministry.

None of us are strong enough to face the demands of ministry without the support and guidance of God as known to us through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Prayer, faith communities and spiritual disciplines that will sustain us for a life of service are essential for effective ministry.

Therefore, in this course you will be asked to:
1. Explore the nature of your own spiritual disciplines and commitments;
2. Consider the ways in which you are and have been nurtured spiritually;
3. Consider diverse practices and disciplines of the Christian life which may be unfamiliar;
4. Learn about the spiritual experiences of others past and present;
5. Foster personal experiences of God that are intentional as well as spontaneous;
6. Articulate a personal “rule” or pattern of spiritual practice;
7. Create communities of support with which to accompany one another in our spiritual journeys;
8. Reflect on the relationship between spiritual formation and one’s ability to provide spiritual leadership in and with a faith community.

The core components of each class session—plenary discussion, small group conversation, and communal prayer—as well as the weekly assigned work of reading, practica, and writing are designed with these goals in mind.
In addition, the small groups are oriented toward the following goals:
1. Creating a safe/hospitable atmosphere for listening to God and one another.
2. Providing a context in which students can candidly discuss and get feedback about the new ideas, practices, and experiences they encounter each week.
3. Creating a community of fellow travelers to accompany each other on our spiritual journeys.

Required Texts: (Available in the bookstore and on reserve)

Recommended Texts:
Maxie Dunnam. *The workbook of living prayer* (Upper Room)
Ulanov, Ann & Barry 1982. *Primary speech: A psychology of prayer*

You are also expected to obtain and read one additional text in preparation for your spiritual autobiography paper (see suggested bibliography below).

Course Requirements:

1. **Attend and participate in all class plenary and small group sessions.** Your active, punctual and reliable participation is essential in this class. More than 3 absences will result in a failing grade. If you know you must be absent for any reason please inform your group TA and the instructor in advance.

2. **Complete assigned readings.** The readings listed for each week are in preparation for that session. They provide necessary background for each class session and small group leaders assess preparation weekly.

3. **Practice.** Each week you are expected to spend at least **20 minutes daily** experimenting with practices described in the reading (Maas and O’Donnell) or using another devotional source such as the *Workbook of Living Prayer*. You are expected to bring your discoveries from that practice into the conversations in both plenary and small group sessions. Please make an effort to experiment with practices that may be new to you. These practices may also inform your autobiography and spiritual rule papers (see below).

4. **Complete all writing assignments:**
   - **9/30 - 3 page reflection paper on religious/primordial experience due.**
   - **10/28 - 3 page reflection paper on God images due with a copy of the God questionnaire (to be distributed in class) attached.**
11/11 - 3 page reflection paper on the religious tradition you were raised in OR the religious tradition you are currently related to (if different) OR cultural influences on your spirituality to date if you are not a member of a specific religious group.

12/2 - 7 page spiritual autobiography drawing upon a reading of your choice (see #5 below) due.

12/16 – 5-7 page personal rule or queries for spiritual discipline due 12/16 (see # 6 below)

Please provide two copies of each written assignment, one for the instructor, one for your small group TA. Both will make comments on the papers and return them, with the professor providing the grade.

5. Read a spiritual autobiography or “classic” in preparation for writing your own spiritual autobiography. A bibliography is included at the end of the syllabus. Please note that the introductions to the books are often helpful in locating the works in their historical, theological, and ecclesial contexts. This paper should include the following components: 1) Identify and locate the spiritual biography you have chosen to be in dialogue with. Why did you choose this person? 2) An outline of your own spiritual development from your earliest memories of God, religion, the Holy spirit, etc. to your present day experience. Include both the positive and negative aspects of your spiritual journey. 3) How is your spiritual journey similar and different from the spiritual biographer you chose to read? Please include consideration of temporal and historical factors.

6. Develop a personal rule of spiritual discipline or queries to live by (guidelines will be distributed in class before the draft is due) and prepare a 5-7 page final reflection paper that considers the following questions:

- How have the course readings shaped my understanding and practice of spirituality?
- How have I learned to pay attention to my existing practices and how they shape and are shaped by me?
- In what ways has meeting a set of external demands related to spiritual discipline affected my internal ability to focus and/or commit myself to spiritual formation?
- How would my knowledge of these spiritual practices be different if I had not experienced/practiced them as well as read/heard about them?
- What has it meant to study/practice/reflect on these spiritual practices communally as well as individually?
- How will I continue to explore spiritual practices that might challenge as well as nurture me throughout my life and ministry?

This paper is due at the 12/16 class session and will be discussed with small group members as part of the small group closure process.

All papers are to be double spaced, 12 point font, with page numbers on each page and your name on the first page. The autobiography paper should include references. The spiritual rule may include references. For the two longer papers please include a title page and organize your paper using subheadings.
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Grading:
You will be graded on all written work, your preparation for and participation in plenary and small group sessions, your engagement with your chosen spiritual disciplines each week and your participation in leading group worship. Grades on written work will be determined by 1) the completeness of your response to the assigned questions, 2) evidence of engagement with the assigned readings and material presented in plenary session, 3) creative and subjective reflection, 4) clarity of written expression. Grades on non-written requirements will be determined in consultation with your group TA.

Final grades for the course will be determined as follows:
Reflection papers (10 pts. each) 30 %
Spiritual autobiography paper 20 %
Spiritual rule paper 20 %
Preparation, participation, practica (especially small group participation) 15 %
Participation in worship leadership 15 %

General Session Outline:
2:15-2:30 Opening prayer and announcements
2:30-3:15 Plenary
3:15-3:30 Break
3:30-4:30 Small Group work
4:40-5pm Assignment review and closing devotions
(5pm TAs meet following each class session)
Weekly Session Outlines and Assignments:

1. September 2
   **Introduction to the course and each other.** Scheduling for worship and class presentations. Questionnaire for group formation.

2. September 9
   **Plenary: “Spirituality” and “Practices”**
   Readings: Ford, Introduction through chapter 3,
   Holmes, Introduction through chapter 3.
   Small group discussion questions: How have the personal and cultural “overwhelmings” in your life shaped your spiritual practices and discipline?
   What practices do you now engage in? Why? What are some obstacles to your systematic practice of a disciplined spiritual life?
   Handout: Short MBTI self test or go to:
   http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes2.asp
to take the test on line before next week.

   **No class Tuesday 9/16.** Please use this week to plan ahead for the upcoming assignments, particularly your spiritual autobiography paper. AND please be sure to attend at least one of the **Salzburg Distinguished Lectures** with Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri - Professor of African Theology, University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, and Moderator of the Commission on Theological Education and Formation, World Council of Churches: **Monday September 15, 6pm; 9/17, 6pm; 9/18, 1pm.** (See details, p. 9).

3. September 23
   **Plenary: Autobiography, Prayer and Personality/Temperament**
   **(Be sure to take the MBTI self test before class.)**
   Small group discussion question: As you think about the practices introduced in the readings and practicum, how are these ways of choosing between life and death (see Deut. 30:15-20)?
   Practicum focus: # 4 Prayer and Posture (Maas and O'Donnell)
   Readings: Ford, chapters 4-7, Holmes, chapters 4-7

4. September 30
   **Plenary: Catholic spirituality and mystical traditions**
   Small group discussion questions: Reflect on the movement between silence and noise in your life as means of listening for God (see Maas and O'Donnell, p. 81).
   How does the organization of your communal life (seminary, local community, workplace, congregation/ministry) encourage this balance? What gets in the way?
   What about your personal life (inner psyche, family, friends)?
   Practicum focus: #2 Silence (Maas and O'Donnell)
   Readings: Maas and O'Donnell, Introduction, chapters 1-3
   **Religious experience reflection papers due**
5. October 7
Plenary: Guided Meditation/Imaging Prayer
Small group: What discoveries have you made to this point? How has the process of historical and cultural study, repetition of practices and sustained reflection shaped these discoveries? Is scripture reading a devotional practice for you? Why or why not?
Practicum focus: # 1 Lectio (Maas and O'Donnell)
Readings: Maas and O'Donnell, chapters 4, 8 and 9

Reading week - October 14 – no class (Monday classes meet)

6. October 21
Plenary: Sacramental Spirituality in Protestant traditions
Small group: What is considered a sacrament in your tradition? What does discipleship mean in your tradition? What does it mean for you personally? Does the concept of a “personal relationship with Jesus Christ” have meaning for you? Why or why not?
Practicum focus: # 10 Discipleship (Maas and O'Donnell)
Readings: Maas and O'Donnell, chapters 5, 7, 10
Handout: God images questionnaire (due with reflection paper on 10/28)

7. October 28
Plenary: Our images of God
Small group question: What were your images of God as a child? How have your images of God changed, if they have? How would you determine whether someone’s God images are healing or punitive, salvific or unduly condemning. At mid-semester, what does this small group life mean for you? What do you wish would happen here?
Practicum focus: # 8 Practicing the presence of God (review chapter 8)
Readings: Armistead (minimum, Introduction, chapters 1-3)
God image reflection papers due

8. November 4
Plenary: Active and Contemplative Spirituality
Small group: How does your spirituality influence your response to social issues such as poverty, discrimination, war and ecological crisis?
Practicum focus: # 3 Possessions (Maas and O'Donnell – review chapter 3)
Readings: Wicks chapters 12, 23, 27 and 29

9. November 11
Plenary: Theological Education as Spiritual Discipline
Small group: Reflect on your understanding of the Christian life. How does this relate to your understanding of and the shape of your ministry?
Practicum focus: # 7 Confession (Maas and O'Donnell- review chapter 7)
Readings: Wicks chapters 1, 6, 16 and 18
Religious tradition(s) reflection papers due
10. November 18  
Plenary: Spiritual direction and discernment  
Small group: (Spiritual classic assignment due – see course requirement 5) Briefly report on your “classic” reading. What has this person taught you about spirituality and ministry? How does this person, in his/her writing and life, bear witness (testify) to the life of faith? What does that life look like? How does the practice of forgiveness relate to the practices of examen and accountability (see Mass and O'Donnell)?  
Where do you feel the most need for greater accountability in your life?  
Practicum focus: # 6 Examen (Maas and O’Donnell – review chapter 6)  
Readings: May chapters 1-5 (minimum)  

Thanksgiving break – no class November 25

11. December 2  
Plenary: Spiritual Language and Cultural Contexts  
Small group and plenary reflection: How do your gender, race, ethnicity, and class affect your practices of spirituality? How does your ministry setting encourage or resist spiritual and socio-cultural diversity? How about your practice of ministry?  
Practicum focus: #11 African American worship OR # 12 Praying with Mary  
Readings: Maas and O'Donnell chapter 11, Wicks chapters 32 & 33  
OR Maas and O'Donnell chapter 12, Wicks chapters 6,7,8  
Spiritual autobiographies due

12. December 9  
Plenary: Developing a Rule  
Small group: What does it now mean to you to shape a rule/pattern of spiritual practice? How do you think this will shape your work in seminary? In your ministry setting?  
Practicum focus: # 5 Luther and catechism OR # 13 Eucharist (review ch. 5 or 13)  
Readings: Wicks chapters 13, 17, 33 and 34

13. December 16  
Plenary: Life Together – serving communities of faith  
Small group: (Written assignment) Presentation of spiritual rule paper.  
Practicum focus: # 9 Praying the office OR # 14 Wisdom (review ch. 9 or 14)  
Plenary Closing: Rite of Election  
Personal rule of spiritual discipline or queries due

Happy Advent!
A Select Bibliography of Spiritual Autobiographies and Classics
Before choosing a book, take some time to explore them in the library or bookstore. Students may suggest additional possible entries to the list.

**Modern Autobiographies (19th and 20th century)**
Bondi, Robert. *In Ordinary Time.*
Buechner, Frederick. *Sacred Journey.*
Christ, Carol. *Odyssey With the Goddess.*
Dillard, Annie. *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.*
Houston, Jean. *A Mythic Life.*
Jung, Carl G. *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections.*
King, Martin Luther, Jr. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*
Lamott, Anne. *Traveling Mercies.*
Lewis, C. S. *Surprised by Joy.*
Malcolm X. *Autobiography of Malcolm X.*
McCarthy, Mary. *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood.*
Merton, Thomas. *Seven Story Mountain.*
Nouwen, Henri J. M. *The Genesee Diary.*
Nouwen, Henri J. M. *The Road to Daybreak: A Spiritual Journey.*
Schuller, Robert. *Prayer: My Soul’s Adventure with God: a spiritual autobiography.*
Weil, Simone. *Waiting for God.*

**Spiritual Classics**
The most recent edition of many of these has been published by Paulist Press in their series Classics of Western Spirituality (marked with an * below).
Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions.*
Athanasius, *The Life of Antony and The Letter to Marcellinus,* trans. Robert Gregg *
Bernard of Clairvaux, *Selected Works,* trans. G. R. Evans *
Bunyan, John. *Grace Abounding.*
Howlett, D.R., editor and translator. *Confession of Saint Patrick.*
Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses,* trans. Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson
Ignatius of Loyola, *Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works* ed. George Ganss *
John of the Cross, *Selected Writings,* ed. Kieran Kavanagh
Julian of Norwich, *Showings,* trans. Edmund Colledge and James Walsh
William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,* ed. Paul Stanwood
Martin Luther, *Theologia Germanica,* trans. Bengt Hoffman
Phillip Newell. *Listening for the heartbeat of God: A Celtic spirituality*
Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*
Tolstoy, Leo. *Confession*.
Evelyn Underhill, *The House of the Soul* and *Concerning the Inner Life* (Minneapolis: Seabury Press, reprint)
Rufus Jones, *The Testimony of the Soul* (MacMillan, 1936)

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**Saltsburg Distinguished Lecture Series**
(September 15, 17, 18)

**Distinguished Lecturer:** Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri - Professor of African Theology, School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, and Moderator of the Commission on Theological Education and Formation, World Council of Churches

**Theme:** Facilitating Struggle, Strengthening Hope, Engendering Transformation – Theological Reflections from Southern Africa

**Lecture one** [Monday, September 15, 6:00 PM, Chapel]: **Major Challenges for African Women Theologians in Theological Education** [This Founders Day Convocation will be part of CTS 50th Anniversary Celebration]

**Lecturer’s comments:** As the Church continues to grapple with the understanding of God’s mission in today’s world, African women theologians are bringing to the attention of the church their struggles of gender injustice in theological education. As agents of transformation they work for the realization of a theological education that reflects the community of women and men.

**Lecture two,** [Wednesday, September 17, 6:00 PM, Room 166]: **HIV/AIDS, Gender Violence and Masculinities**

**Lecturer’s comments:** The threat to life of HIV and AIDS has awakened the Church to reappraise its understanding of the mission of God in Africa today. In the context of radical statements such as “without men there could be no HIV and AIDS in Africa”, recent studies and programs initiated by church based organizations and theological institutions have focused on transforming masculinities in order to make a major contribution in the struggle against gender violence and HIV and AIDS. This paper uses an empirical research in an African Initiated church in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa to give an example of dealing with HIV and AIDS, Gender Violence and Masculinities.

**Lecture three,** [Thursday, September 18, 1:00 PM, Common Room]: **Black Theology in Post-Apartheid South Africa**

**Lecturer’s comments:** The recent cases of xenophobia violence in South Africa have highlighted the unresolved social and economic injustices which are a legacy of apartheid. Through Black theology the Church in South Africa provided a prophetic voice in the struggle against apartheid. In post apartheid South Africa, Black theology
grapples with the challenge of focusing on social-economic justice for all when its own leaders are now walking in the corridors of power. This paper explores the reality of economic injustice as a threat to life in the twenty-first century Southern Africa and examines the response coming from Black theologians in Southern Africa as they reflect on the mission of the church in our context.

**X-515 – Fall 2008** (TAs will use this form to evaluate participation each week)

Small group participation – TA group ____________________________

Name: ____________________________________________________________

Date/ Week #: ______________________________________________________

Present ___________________________ Not present: __________________________

Late (or left early) for plenary _________________ For small group _______________

Evidence of having read assigned readings: ______________________________

Evidence of having read and tried practica: ____________________________

Participated in plenary discussion ______________________________________

Participated in small group discussion _________________________________

Papers in on time? Assignments 1 2 3 4 5

(appropriate boundaries: keeps confidences, shares appropriately, listens well, etc.)

Other comments:

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