Immediate luminousness, in short, philosophical reasonableness and moral helpfulness are the only available criteria. Saint Teresa might have had the nervous system of the placidest cow, and it would not now save her theology, if the trial of the theology by these other tests should show it to be contemptible. And conversely if her theology can stand these other tests, it will make no difference how hysterical or nervously off balance Saint Teresa may have been when she was with us here below.


Purpose of course:
This course examines the phenomena of and the important roles played by religious experience in Christian ministry from multiple disciplines, focusing on theological, psychological and philosophical approaches. Students are asked to articulate a clear and developed pastoral understanding of ministry by integrating insights from various fields of learning throughout seminary study with special attention to experience in the parish and cross cultural experience.

Required Texts:
1. William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*
2. Robert Fuller, *Spiritual in the Flesh*
4. Timothy Nelson, *Every Time I Feel the Spirit: Religious Experience and Ritual in an African American Church*
5. Kevin Hart, ed., *The Experience of God*
6. A book from the Classical Christian Expressions of Religious Experience. One of the following:
   a. St. Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*
   b. Hildegard von Bingen, *Mystical Visions*
   c. St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul*
   d. Augustine, *Confessions*

There will also be several readings scanned and film/video clips throughout the course.

Other readings will be scanned and available through Inside.CTS:
* K. Brynolf Lyon, “Hatred of Learning from Experience”
* Paul Tillich, *Shaking the Foundations* sermon on “Experience of Holy,” pp. 87-92
* Wesley on religious experience as theological source and faith inspiration, pp. 28-33
* Andrew NewBerg, *Why God Won’t Go Away*, pp. 77-127 (Ritual and Mysticism)

Howard Thurman, “Mysticism and Social Change”

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Completion of assigned reading:** Insightful and instructive conversation requires an ample number of us to have completed and reflected on the assigned reading. Ideally of course, everyone will stay caught up with the reading. On days when you can't get all the reading done, you should at least try to look it over enough to allow you to sound informed when we start conversing. Consider yourself honor-bound to have completed all assigned readings by the end of the course.

2. **Informed and regular participation in classroom discussions:** Regular participation obviously requires regular attendance. Unavoidable absences will be treated on a case-by-case basis. Besides showing up, you are expected to speak up and to pay respectful attention when others do the same. You should be ready and willing to explain why you're inclined to say whatever you do and should hold others (including your professors) to the same standard. This will count 20% of your course grade.

3. **Discussion starters posted on the web prior to class.** These are typed, single-spaced, 1-2 page papers responding to the reading assigned for each of the three (3) sessions you are assigned. This paper should include 1) a summation of the major ideas discussed in the reading along with 2) your critical response to those ideas. 3) Each discussion starter will be posted on the web by Monday at noon before our Wednesday afternoon class. The other students are required to read these and post a brief response (less than one page) due by Wednesday morning at 8 am before the class for which the reading is scheduled. The appropriate sessions are designated with a DS notation. Each discussion starter will count for 10% of your course grade. Students with questions about how to post and respond to posted items should contact Dean Reynolds in IT.

3B. Please note that students are required to post responses to these Discussion Starters. These responses are due by 8 am Wednesday and are worth cumulatively 10% of your final grade.

4. **A final paper/project:** The final project: Develop a final project that could be used in your congregation/community of nurture and transformation that integrates the significant issues of the course with your ministry. This project should demonstrate the student's critical understanding of the issues and readings studied in class as well as the student's ability to use the material constructively and practically in an integrating way. How do and can you help folks talk and think about their own religious experience(s)? A 1-page proposal is due 6 April. Summaries of the project will be presented to the class at the Last class period of the semester. Final project is due 2 May and the paper and presentation will count for 40% of the final grade. Interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged.

Grades will be based on the student’s accurate and insightful grasp of the material and on their critical engagement with that material. Students are asked for analysis as well as understanding.

**Grade Components:**

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion starters and responses</td>
<td>40 %</td>
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<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20 %</td>
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Inclusive Language:
Students are expected to use inclusive, nonsexist language in both written and oral communication in this course. In other words, if you mean to refer to humanity in general, use "humankind," "she/he," or similar expressions. Use "he," "him," "man," only when you are referring to male persons. If you have questions concerning how to express yourself in nonsexist ways, please consult your instructors.

Cell Phone Policy and Practice: Cell Phones are to be in movie theater mode: the “off” position—for no sound and no light. Please do not disrespect your instructors and sister students by using your cell phone during class. You can check your messages at break.

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1:
W 19 Jan Introduction to the course and to each other. What is religious experience?

Week 2
W 26 Jan Definitions, questions DS
  Read: James, lectures I-VIII

Week 3
W 2 Feb Fruits of Religious Experience: saintliness, social justice, ethics, luminousness. DS
  Read: James, Lectures XI-XVII; XX and Postscript.

Week 4
W 9 Feb Classical Christian Expressions DS
  Read: Wesley, pp. 28-33 (on reserve).

Week 5
W 16 Feb Classical Christian Expressions
  Read: one of the following classical expressions:
  St. Teresa of Avilam, Interior Castle
  Hildegard von Bingen, Mystical Visions
  St. John of the Cross, Dark Night of the Soul
  Augustine, Confessions.
  Come prepared to share the material from your reading with the rest of the class.

Week 6
W 23 Feb Psychological interpretations of Religious Experience DS
  Read: Fuller, pp. 3-73.

Week 7
W 2 March Psychological interpretations of Religious Experience DS
  Read: Fuller, pp. 75-166.
  Read: NewBerg, Why God Won’t Go Away selections pp. 77-127.
Week 9: Feminist and Womanist Experience and Learning from Experience as Theological source **DS**

W 16 March **Read**: in Hart: Culp, McKenzie, Lucky

**Read**: Lyon, “The Hatred of Learning from Experience” (on reserve).

**Read**: Hughes, “Intimate Mysteries Music and Religious feelings

Week 10 Theological Interpretations and liturgy **DS**

W 23 March **Read**: Hart, essays by Lacoste, Caputo, Hart, Purcell

**Read**: Brown, Varieties of Aesthetic Religious Experience pp. 112-135.

**View Video of Gospel music.**

Week 11 How to study religious Experience **DS**

W 30 March **Read**: Every Time I Feel the Spirit: Religious Experience and Ritual in an African American Church By Timothy Nelson, pp. 1-63;


**Read**: Orsi, “The Many Names of the Mother of God.”

Week 12 Cultural and sociological approach to a particular religious community **DS**

W 6 April **Read**: Nelson, Every Time I Feel the Spirit: Religious Experience and Ritual in an African American Church pp. 64-92; 172-207

**Read one** of the chapters in the following section and **Skim** the others: pp. 93-171.

**Due**: 1 page proposal for final project.

Week 13 Primary Material: African American Women’s Religious

W 13 April **Read**: Andrews, Sisters of the Spirit 27-48; 163-234. **DS**

**Skim**: 1-24; 51-160.

Week 14 Easter Break: Use this opportunity to observe your own religious experience

Week 15 Wrap up.

W 27 April **Read** Project and Paper Presentations.

**Due**: 15 minute presentation to share with others in the class a general summary of your final project.

Final Paper is due **2 May @ noon in the faculty secretary’s office.**