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SF 500 Introduction to Spiritual Formation

Steve Harper

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SF 500 Introduction to Spiritual Formation
Fall 2000

Dr. Steve Harper

--- office: 407-482-7551

---fax: 407-482-7575

home: 407-977-5383

email. steve_harper@asburyseminary.edu

Introduction

This course surveys the subject of Christian spirituality, with an emphasis upon the theological and practical dimensions of the spiritual life. Preparatory readings and inclass presentations by Dr. Harper set forth the basic content of the course, accompanied by personal and group reflections, in-ministry experiences, and additional reading and research projects you will develop to maximize your learning goals.

Textbooks & Collateral Reading

L. Cunningham & K. Egan, *Christian Spirituality* (Paulist Press)

Mel Lawrenz, *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation* (Baker)

M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey* (Inter-Varsity)

Henri Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts* (Orbis)

*Additional pages of collateral reading, drawn from these sources:
bibliographies, Christian Classics, The SF 500 Notebook in the
library, articles from related journals and periodicals, and
material accessed from the Internet.*

--- 600 pages in an "A" covenant

--- 500 pages in a "B" covenant

--- 400 pages in a "C" covenant

Course Objectives

1. You will acquire knowledge about the...
 - ... means by which we open ourselves to God
 - ... journey of spiritual growth
 - ... community in which spiritual formation takes place
 - ... varied approaches in which the spiritual life flourishes
- 2, You will develop skills in...
 - ... identifying growth points in the spiritual life
 - ... discovering your own "inner story"
 - ... engaging in formative reading (lectio divina)
 - ... keeping a spiritual journal
3. You are encouraged to deepen your life in Christ by...
 - ... using the means of grace
 - ... pursuing additional study and practice of spiritual formation
 - ... participating in the "Direction in Common" model
 - ... continuing to refine a theology of spiritual formation

Class Structure

SF 500 will be structured as a "covenant group", to acknowledge that spiritual formation occurs in the context of Christian community. The weekly formation cycle will develop in relation to the "Direction In Common" model developed by Father Adrian Van Kaam and Dr. Susan Muto. This model will be described during the first meeting of the class.

Grading System

Grading will be on the basis of a "covenant" developed by you in consultation with Dr. Harper... taking into account such things as your interest level in the course, the connection of the course to your vocational goals, the actual life circumstances you are facing during the semester, etc. You may expect to receive the contracted grade, assuming that the work is done with graduate-level quality. Within the contracted grade level, Dr. Harper reserves the right to assign a "plus" or "minus" in keeping with his evaluation of your submitted material. (Note: because our grading system does not have an A+, Dr. Harper reserves a grade of "A" for the finest work, and usually ascribes an A to other work within the A-level covenant)

For a "C-Level" grade (70-80)

1. read textbooks & collateral with a reflection on each (10 pts)
2. write a spiritual autobiography (20 pts)
3. attend all class sessions (15 pts) (5 pts deducted for ea. absence)
4. keep a spiritual journal w/ a minimum of 3 entries per wk. (20 pts)
5. participate in the final integrative experience (15 pts)

For a "B-Level" grade (81 to 90 points earned)

1. everything required for "C-Level" above
2. write a "formative paper" on selected subject (10 pts)

For an "A-Level" grade (91 -100 points)

1. everything for "B-Level" above
2. development of a "creative project" (10 pts)

Course Components

The basic components of the course will be explained by Dr. Harper in more detail. The following summarizes the nature and purpose of each component:

Formative Reading. The textbooks and collateral readings will be explored through a modified use of lectio divina. Written reports of such reading will be in relation to guidance given by Dr. Harper at the first class meeting.

Spiritual Autobiography This 5-10 page (double-spaced) paper will relate stories from your life which enable readers to see the formative experiences which have brought you to this point in your life, as well as humbly-considered growth trajectories for the future. Guidelines will be given for this assignment.

Class Attendance. This component includes not only your presence, but also your participation in both the small-group and the plenary aspects of the class.

Keeping a Spiritual Journal. Following guidelines give you by Dr. Harper, you will make a minimum of three entries per week during the semester. The journal will be submitted the next-to-the-last class session and returned at the final session. A process of submission to insure confidentiality will be described. Dr. Harper will not read what you have written, so you may write openly and freely during the entire experience.

Integrative Final Experience. This closure activity is determined by Dr. Harper as the semester unfolds. There is no predetermined content or process, but rather one which he deems appropriate for ending the learning experience you will have had.

Formative Paper. This writing project consists of a 10-12 page (double spaced) paper which includes these major sections: (1) research related to the chosen topic integrated with personal reflections on the subject, (2) development of an in-ministry component, and (3) a prescription for ongoing learning related to the selected topic.

Creative Project, This aspect of your work may be in a variety of modes (painting, sculpture, creative writing, photography, music, internet design, sermon, teaching plan, newsletter articles, article for publication, overhead transparencies, Power Point presentation, retreat model and related retreat talks, etc.) as a means of expressing some aspect of your spiritual journey in relation to the course. Because this level serves to satisfy the "A-Level" of a grading contract, it is considered both a substantive and an original piece of work, occupying a minimum of ten hours of work on your part.

Weekly Course Schedule

(Note: readings for each date are the readings to be completed prior to the class session)

September 5 Orientation and Introduction
Mulholland: 1,2,3,4

September 12.... "Spirituality and Creation-I" Cunningham: 1,3
Lawrenz: 1

September 19.... "Spirituality and Creation-II"
Mulholland: 5,6,7

September 26.... "Spirituality and Redemption-I"
Lawrenz: 3

October 3.... "Spirituality and Redemption-II"
Lawrenz: 2

October 10... "Spirituality and Sustenance"

Cunningham: 2,4,5

Lawrenz: 4,5

Mulholland: 8,9,10,11

October 17... "Cultivating the Spiritual Life-I"

Cunningham: 10

Nouwen: Intro, "Road...", I

October 24... "Cultivating the Spiritual Life-II"

Cunningham: 7

Nouwen: 2,3

October 31... "Cultivating the Spiritual Life-III"

Cunningham: 8,9

Lawrenz: 6,7,8,9

Nouwen: 4,5, Concl.

November 7... "The Place of the Self"

Cunningham: 6

November 14... **No Class**

November 21... "The Inevitability of Dryness"

November 28... **Fall Break**

December 5... "The Life of a Disciple"

Lawrenz: 10

Mulholland: 12,13

Finals Week Synthesis Experience (TBA)

For Further Reading and Research

We are fortunate that the textbooks contain extensive bibliographies and chapter notes which are more than adequate for this course. Dr. Harper will also refer to and recommend additional books, journals, and articles each week.