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SF 501 Introduction to Spiritual Formation

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Introduction
This course surveys the subject of Christian spirituality, with an emphasis upon the theological and developmental dimensions of the spiritual life. Preparatory readings and in-class presentations by Dr. Harper set forth the basic content of the course, personal and group reflections particularize the course, and additional reading, research, and in-ministry projects help to maximize your learning goals.

Textbooks & Collateral Reading
Mel Lawrenz, The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation (Baker)
M. Robert Mulholland, Invitation to a Journey (Inter-Varsity)
Henri Nouwen, With Burning Hearts (Orbis)
Dallas Willard, Renovation of the Heart (NavPress)

Course Objectives
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
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
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 501 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 done on a traditional grading scale.

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 not required.]

Spiritual Autobiography. This 5 page maximum (double-spaced) paper will relate a few (3-5) formative experiences, which have brought you to this point in your life--and comment on each briefly. Use the final page to humbly consider growth trajectories for the future as you see your life and vocation moving forward. I will read the papers immediately, so that I can see how the course can be a positive influence in shaping your journey.

Class Attendance and Participation. 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 between July 8 and July 21. Turn in journal on July 22. 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.
**Combined Creative Project and Formative Paper.** This writing project consists of a 12-15 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.

**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. A general bibliography will also be handed out at the beginning of the course. And each week, Dr. Harper will recommend resources corresponding to the subject being covered. Gordon S. Wakefield’s book *Groundwork of Christian Spirituality* (Epworth Press) strongly recommended.

**Weekly Course Schedule**

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

**JULY 8**

**Due:** Spiritual Autobiography
- Read entire Mulholland’s book
- Read Lawrenz’ book: Preface, Chapter 1 and 2
- Read Willard: Introduction and Chapter 1
- Journaling: Commences when you begin reading texts

9:00 - 9:30 a.m. *Morning Prayer* in St. Augustine Chapel
9:30 - Noon *Spiritual Formation*—Universal aspects of spirituality
Noon -1:00 *Lunch*
1:00 - 5:00 p.m. *Christian Formation*—Way the Christian faith understands the practices of spiritual formation

**JULY 15**

Read Nouwen: Introduction, Road to Emmaus and Chapters 1 & 2
Read Lawrenz: Chapter 3
Read Willard: Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5
Continue Journaling
Select Topic for paper/project (Due July 29)

9:00 - 9:30 a.m. *Morning Prayer* in St. Augustine Chapel
9:30 - Noon *Formation as “Loss”*
Noon -1:00 *Lunch*
1:00 - 5:00 p.m. *Formation as “Presence”*

**JULY 22**

**Due:** Journal
Read Nouwen: Chapters 3 and 4
Read Lawrenz: Chapters 4 and 5
Read Willard: Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9
Continue Journaling
Continue working on paper/project (Due July 29)

9:00 - 9:30 a.m.    Morning Prayer in St. Augustine Chapel
9:30 - Noon       Formation as “Invitation”
Noon -1:00            Lunch
1:00 - 5:00 p.m.    Formation as “Communion”

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JULY 29
NEW LOCATION FOR CLASS--To Be Announced
Due: Paper/Project
Read Nouwen: Chapter 5 and Conclusion
Read Lawrenz: Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10
Read Willard: Chapters 10, 11, 12, 13 and Postlude

9:00 - 9:30 a.m.    Morning Prayer
9:30 - Noon       Formation as “Mission”
Noon -1:00            Lunch
1:00 - 5:00 p.m.    Spiritual Formation in the Local Church