

406.715 Historical and Contemporary Models of Spirituality Course Assessment and Delivery Outline

Campus: Christchurch
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Semester 1, 2015
NQF Level 7, Credits15

CONTENT OVERVIEW

This course explores important traditions from the history of Christian spirituality and invites you to consider how they might contribute to life and faith in our contemporary contexts. The classes will examine six key traditions however each student will have the chance to investigate up to two additional historical or contemporary traditions in more depth: one by first-hand investigation and reflection, and the other by means of a research essay.

The six traditions covered through class work are:

1. Desert spirituality
2. Monasticism: with particular reference to the Benedictine tradition
3. Mendicant spirituality: with particular reference to the Franciscan tradition
4. The Christian mystical tradition
5. Ignatian spirituality
6. Eastern Orthodox spirituality

Each tradition will be covered over a two week period using the following pattern:

Week 1: An overview that places the tradition within its historical and socio-cultural context along with an introduction to a significant spiritual practice (habitus) from the tradition

Week 2: A review of student experiences with the spiritual practice introduced in week 1 and consideration of how the tradition and its practices might contribute to spirituality today.

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND DUE DATES

The requirements of the course are as follows:

1. Fortnightly forum questions on pre-readings for each tradition

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	1, 2
<i>Due Dates</i>	Midnight Sunday, end of weeks 3, 5, 7, 9, 11.
<i>Percentage Weighting</i>	15% (Combined with Assessment 2 below)
<i>Length</i>	250 words

2. Fortnightly reflective class reports on the habitus experience

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	2, 5, 6
<i>Due Dates</i>	Fortnightly in class of weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12.
<i>Percentage Weighting</i>	15% (Combined with Assessment 1 above)
<i>Length</i>	250 words

3. Investigation, report and reflection in two parts:

Part A: Tradition Research

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	3, 4.
<i>Due Date</i>	Midnight Sunday, end of week 6
<i>Percentage Weighting</i>	10%
<i>Length</i>	800 words

Part B: Tradition Experience

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	3, 4.
<i>Due Date</i>	Midnight Sunday, end of week 9
<i>Percentage Weighting</i>	10%
<i>Length</i>	1200 words

An opportunity to experience, research and reflect on a tradition of spirituality other than your own, refer below for further guidelines.

4. Essay

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	3, 4.
<i>Due Date</i>	Midnight Sunday, end of Study Week 1
<i>Percentage Weighting</i>	50%
<i>Length</i>	3000 words

You are required to write a research essay on a tradition of Christian spirituality (whether historical or contemporary) which has not been covered elsewhere in the course (i.e. in the course materials or in your investigation assignment). This includes a 500 word reflection on the significance of your chosen topic for your contemporary spiritual life and practice. Refer below for further guidelines

ASSESSMENT TASK GUIDELINES

Assessment 3: Investigation Guidelines

The aim: To understand more about and experience a spiritual tradition and practice other than your own. (The greater the difference between this tradition and your own spirituality, the more you will learn!)

Decide how, where and when you will place yourself in a situation where you can experience a tradition of Christian spirituality which is quite different to your own – some ideas are given below if you are uncertain. Choose just one tradition. It should be broadly Christian, rather than a spiritual tradition from another religion, and accessible for you.

Instructions for Part A:

Select a tradition you would like to experience and then do some background research on it. Find out about its historical origins, what is distinctive about it in terms of beliefs, practices and approaches to spirituality. If you can, arrange an opportunity to talk to someone who is part of this tradition, or knowledgeable about it, and ask them questions to help you understand it better. (If you do this, please be respectful, and do not try to find fault or argue while talking to this person who is generously giving you their time!)

Your submission should include the following components:

- A brief description of the tradition you chose to explore, and why you chose it. [150 words]
- Summarise as clearly (and fairly) as you can, (using a minimum of 3 sources in all), [500 words]:
 - The history and background of this tradition;

- The particular contribution it seeks to make to God's work in the world.
- A brief outline of any questions you hope to explore through observation, experience or interview (bullet points are okay for this part). *[150 words]*

Instructions for Part B:

You should aim to spend at least 2-3 hours in the context you decide on - that does not include travel time, pre-reading, writing up your assignment, etc. You should be actually present in the context for this time, whether all at one time, or over more than one visit.

Write up your reflections on this experience loosely following these guidelines:

- Describe the setting and any expectations (positive and negative) you had prior to entering into it. *[150 words]*
- What you observed and experienced when you were present in the actual situation you visited. What did you notice? Was it what you expected? What did you discover? How did you find yourself responding? *[700 words]*
- Based on this experience and the previous research you undertook in Part A, describe what you perceive to be the strengths, challenges, weaknesses of the tradition (with particular reference to its relevance for the contemporary New Zealand context). *[200 words];*
- How has this experience and research enriched or challenged your own spiritual life/practice? *[150 words]*

Parts A and B combined should involve around 20 hours in total:

- Preliminary research: 5 hours
- Travel: 1-2 hours
- Experience: 2-3 hours (not counting travel)
- Further research, report and reflection write up: 10 hours

Possible investigation opportunities:

A different tradition of church and worship (attend at least 2 services, whether at the same location or two different churches of same denomination). Here are some ideas:

- Roman Catholic
- Romanian, Greek, Russian or Coptic Orthodox
- 'High church' Anglican (Anglo-Catholic)
- Pentecostal (as in one of the Pentecostal denominations)
- Salvation Army
- Reformed
- Lutheran
- 'Emergent' church (i.e. a faith community pursuing a model of church outside of the main denominational structures)
- A church reflecting a different ethnicity to your own (e.g. Korean, Pacific Island, etc)
- Quaker

You might also look at a religious community reflecting a particular tradition. Spend time there, experience services or speak to a member of the community.

For example:

- A monastery
- A ministry or retreat centre run by one of the Catholic orders
- And/or you could spend time with an individual or a family who belong to a different tradition, exploring what it means to them.

If you are not sure whether an idea you have is suitable, check with me.

Assessment 4: Major Essay Guidelines

The first step is to develop and then sharpen up the *question* which your essay will address. Beware of writing an essay with a general focus, which reads something like “everything I know about ...”! For example, if the tradition you chose as your particular focus was Desert Spirituality (which it wouldn't be since this is covered in the course!), your research question might be:

Evaluate the attitudes of the desert fathers and mothers toward sin and failure, as reflected in “The Sayings of the Desert Fathers”

rather than a general question like:

Describe the spirituality of the desert fathers and mothers.

Things to consider in choosing a topic include:

- Select a tradition from the list below;
- Stay within the broad focus of this course (i.e. spirituality rather than purely history or theology);
- Ensure that it has an appropriate level 7 academic focus (see the assessment criteria below);
- Check that you will be able to access adequate resources in doing your research (aiming for at least 10 sources). You may need to go beyond what is available through the Laidlaw library and online databases. It is assumed at this level that you have the bibliographical skills necessary to find relevant material.
- Check your essay question with me before getting underway to ensure it offers a sharp enough focus. If you are having trouble with this then discuss with me your basic idea and I will help you to sharpen it.
- Ask me for articles or readings in each area to help get you started as I have three or four good resources in each tradition.

Your essay should deal primarily with the tradition in its historical context (say 2200 words). In the remaining 800 words you should apply what you have learned about this tradition, and your particular question, to spiritual life in today's context.

Possible topics include the following (excluding any you may have covered already in the Investigation assignment):

- Holy Women: Their Spiritual Influence in the Middle Ages
- *Devotio Moderna*
- Lutheran Spirituality and the Shape of Reformed Piety
- The Tradition of Prayer in Teresa and John (Carmelite tradition)
- Puritan Spirituality
- Anabaptist Spirituality
- Anglican Spirituality
- Wesleyan Spirituality
- Celtic Spirituality
- Pentecostal Spirituality
- Feminism and Spirituality
- Post Modern Spirituality

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

1. Fortnightly forum on the week 1 pre-readings for each tradition

- Interaction with required reading
- Understanding of key points/issues
- Focus on the set question
- Evidence of completion of required reading
- Clarity

2. Fortnightly class reports on the habitus experience

- Evidence of engagement with the habitus
- Constructive engagement with others
- Timeliness

3. Investigation, report and reflection

- Skilful use of at least 3 sources
- Balanced critical appreciation of distinctive aspects of the tradition
- Insightful reflection on personal experience
- Appropriate and perceptive application to contemporary Christian spirituality and own life
- Clear and well-presented discussion

4. Essay

- Ability to locate a balanced range of appropriate sources (minimum 10)
- Critical assimilation and use of scholarly discussion
- Critical appreciation of historical context
- Incisive and balanced synthesis of ideas
- Presentation, style and construction of the essay
- Appropriate application to contemporary Christian spirituality

LEARNING HOURS

Fortnightly pre-readings forum	24 hours
Fortnightly class reports	20 hours
Investigation, report and reflection exercise	20 hours
Essay	50 hours
Lectures	<u>36 hours</u>
	150 hours

TEXTBOOK

There is no set textbook for this course. Please note that while the library here in Christchurch does not have all of these books, they are available through inter-loan from Auckland although you will need to allow time for delivery to Christchurch if using this option.

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