

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

Henderson Campus
Lecturer: Stephen Garner

Semester 1, 2015
NQF Level 6, 15 credits

CONTENT OVERVIEW

This course explores important traditions from the history of Christian spirituality and invites students to consider how these might contribute to life and faith in our contemporary contexts. The content is delivered through a combination of required readings, lectures, class participation, and assessments. Each student will investigate 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 course topics covered through course work are:

1. Defining spirituality?
2. Scripture and spirituality
3. Contemporary experiences
4. Desert spirituality
5. Monasticism and the Rule of Life
6. Mendicant spirituality
7. Ignatian spirituality
8. Christian mysticism
9. Holy women
10. Reformed Protestant piety
11. Anglican and Wesleyan spirituality
12. Christian spiritualities for our times?

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND DUE DATES

1. Course participation

This course is based around classroom interaction with core themes, required and recommended reading, and other resources to support the interpretation, evaluation, and integration of those materials. Students are required to prepare for class and to enter into critical and constructive class participation.

Learning Outcomes: 1, 2, 5, 6
Percentage weighting: 10%

2. Short Essay – What is Christian spirituality?

Given the very broad interest in spirituality today, outline what you think to be distinctive of a Christian spirituality and what the Christian perspective has to offer to the conversations regarding spirituality in our wider community.

Your assignment should contain at least **four** items in its bibliography. At least **three** of the items should be academic print items (including eBooks and journal articles from library databases), as opposed to websites, and should not include reference to Wikipedia, answers.com, or similar websites, which are not usually considered to be academically accurate.

Length: 1000 words
Learning outcomes: 1, 2
Percentage weighting: 20%
Due date: 11.59pm, Friday 27th March

3. Investigation, report and reflection assignment.

An opportunity to experience, research and reflect on a tradition of spirituality other than your own.

Length: 2000 words
Learning outcomes: 3, 4
Percentage weighting: 30%
Due date: 11.59pm, Friday 1 May

Guidelines

The aim: This is an opportunity 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!)

Instructions:

- a. 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**. See below for possible ideas. Choose just one tradition, rather than trying to experience more than one. You can choose one of the traditions covered in this course, but it may be hard to find local examples of these. It should be broadly Christian, rather than a spiritual tradition from another religion.
- 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.
- c. Before you go to experience/observe, do some background research on this tradition. 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!)

This assignment is estimated to 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

- 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 the lecturer.

The written assignment:

The assignment you hand in should include the following elements (the word counts are only a rough guide):

- A brief description of the tradition you chose to explore, and why you chose it. [100 words]
- A brief outline of what you discovered in your preliminary research, including any questions you hoped to explore through observation, experience or interview (bullet points are OK for this part). [300 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? [500 words]
- Based on all of this and subsequent research you have done (using a minimum of 3 sources in all), summarise as clearly (and fairly) as you can [900 words]:
 - The history and background of this tradition;
 - The way it is now expressed/practiced in 21st C Aotearoa New Zealand;
 - The particular contribution it seeks to make to God's work in the world;
 - What you perceive to be the strengths, challenges, weaknesses of the tradition.
- How this experience has enriched or challenged your own spiritual life/practice. [200 words]
- Use footnotes and supply a bibliography of sources you use for your research.

4. **A research essay** dealing with a tradition of Christian spirituality not covered in class.

Length: 2500 words
 Learning outcomes: 3, 4
 Percentage weighting: 40%
 Due date: 11.59pm, Friday 5 June

You are required to write a research essay that includes a 300 word reflection on the significance of your chosen topic for your contemporary spiritual life and practice. There are two options when it comes to choosing the topic for your essay:

Option A: Choose one of the set topics provided in class, or

Option B: Formulate your own question on a topic not covered elsewhere in the course (see guidelines below).

Guidelines for option A (set topics)

Topics and starting bibliographies will be provided in class. The suggested reading is supplied as a starting point only for your research. You should make some effort to check for further resources that may be particularly relevant to the topic, including journal articles which may be accessed electronically through your library account.

Guidelines for Option B (choose your own topic)

- a. The first step is to sharpen up the *question* which your essay will address. Beware of writing an essay with a general focus, which reads 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:

- stay within the broad focus of this course (i.e. *spirituality* rather than purely history or theology);
 - ensure that it has an appropriate level 6 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 8 sources). You may need to go beyond what is available through the Laidlaw library and you should certainly make use of the online databases of journal articles which you can access through the library.
- b. Check your essay question with the lecturer before getting underway. This is to help you sharpen the focus, once you have come up with the basic idea.
- c. Your essay should deal primarily with the tradition in its historical context (2200 words). In the remaining 300 words you should apply what you have learned about this tradition, and your particular question, to spiritual life in today’s context.

CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT

1. Course participation

- Evidence of critical engagement with course topics
- Regular, active participation in class activities and discussions.
- Engages in dialogue, responding to other student’s comments.
- Discussion protocols observed

2. Short essay

- Essay addresses the topic adequately
- Sophistication of critical discussion
- Evidence and quality of research for essay, including access and use of appropriate books, journal articles and other sources.
- Quality of written expression

3. Investigation, report and reflection assignment

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

4. Research essay

- Thorough research, utilising at least 8 academic sources
- Assimilation of scholarly discussion
- Critical appreciation of historical context
- Creative synthesis of ideas
- Presentation, style and construction of the essay
- Appropriate application to contemporary Christian spirituality

LEARNING HOURS

Class time	30 hours
Self-directed learning	20 hours
Pre-reading for classes	30 hours
Short essay	10 hours
Investigation, report and reflection exercise	20 hours
Essay	<u>40 hours</u>
	150 learning hours (15 credits)

TEXTBOOK

Maas, Robin, and Gabriel O'Donnell. *Spiritual Traditions for the Contemporary Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990.

Additional required and recommended readings supplied in Moodle.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

General works relevant to the history of Christian spirituality

- Bouyer, Louis, ed. *Orthodox Spirituality and Protestant and Anglican Spirituality*. London: Burns & Oates, 1968.
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[Available as e-book]

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- Senn, Frank. C., ed. *Protestant Spiritual Traditions*. New York: Paulist, 1986.
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- Wakefield, Gordon S. *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. London: SCM Press, 1983.
- Wakefield, Gordon S. *Groundwork of Christian Spirituality*. London: Epworth, 2001.

Further bibliographic material supplied in Moodle.