

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

Campus/Delivery Mode: Distance Learning

Semester 1, 2015
NQF Level: 7, 15 credits

CONTENT OVERVIEW

This course explores six 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 content is delivered through a combination of required readings (provided) and input from the Learning Guide and other course materials. 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 six traditions covered through course work are:

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

Aside from the first one, each tradition will be covered over a two week period. The pattern will be:

- Week A:
- * Required readings, covering the historical and theological aspects of the tradition.
 - * Completion and submission of worksheets relating to the readings. **Note:** The worksheets for Weeks 9 and 11 are not to be submitted for grading.
 - * Input by means of PowerPoint presentations and/or other resources.
- Week B:
- * Required readings, exploring the potential contribution of the tradition to spirituality in our contemporary contexts.
 - * Following a spiritual practice ('habitus') related to the tradition.
 - * Posting online reflections in relation to the tradition and the habitus experience.
 - * Input by means of PowerPoint presentations and/or other resources.

Schedule

- Week 1
- * Introductions made online. The tutor facilitates discussion in relation to the topic: 'Introduction to the history of Christian spirituality'.
 - * Begin reading and habitus for Topic 1: 'Desert Spirituality'.
- Week 2
- * Watch PowerPoint presentation on Topic 1.
 - * Post online reflection on Topic 1 and habitus.
- Weeks 3-12
- Topics 2 – 6 covered as in the Week A/Week B format outlined above.

ASSESSMENT TASKS AND DUE DATES

The requirements of the course are as follows:

1. Completion of required Week A readings and worksheets

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	1, 2
<i>Due Dates</i>	11.59pm Sunday, end of weeks 3, 5, 7.
<i>Percentage Weighting</i>	10%
<i>Length</i>	400 words (approx)

2. Completion of required Week B readings, habitus and online reflections

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	2, 5, 6
<i>Due Dates</i>	11.59pm Sunday, end of weeks 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12.
<i>Percentage Weighting</i>	15%
<i>Length</i>	350 words plus a 50 word response

3. Investigation, report and reflection

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	3, 4.
<i>Due Date</i>	11.59pm Sunday, end of week 7
<i>Percentage Weighting</i>	25%
<i>Length</i>	2000 words

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

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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 your tutor.

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 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. Essay

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	3, 4.
<i>Due Date</i>	11.59pm 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.

Guidelines

- 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 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.
- b. Check your essay question with your tutor before getting underway. They may be able 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 (say 2700 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. Completion of required Week A readings and worksheets

- Consistent and timely completion of required readings and worksheets
- Diligent and critical engagement with the worksheet content and questions
- Critical reflection on the worksheet questions, and so on the tradition

2. Completion of required Week B readings, habitus and online reflections

Before beginning your first online discussion, please see the grading grid (rubric) on the “online discussion grading guide and indicative mid-semester feedback” for further details on how these criteria will be applied.

- Engagement with material
- Constructive engagement with others
- Structure and presentation
- 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

Week A readings and worksheets	15 hours
Week B readings, habitus and online reflections	20 hours
Investigation, report and reflection exercise	25 hours
Essay	50 hours
Self-directed learning, including use of course resources	<u>40 hours</u>
	150 hours

TEXTBOOK

There is no set textbook for this course.

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Monasticism: Benedictine

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