

PSYCHOLOGY AND SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course takes the perspective that the ultimate challenge of Christian spiritual formation is the purification and re-ordering of desire in the Spirit. Students are engaged in an intensive dialogue between psychology and theology as they approach it at the practical level of how to re-form human desire through spiritual community and practices. On the basis of a fundamentally theological view of the human person, the course explores how psychospiritual desire is manifested and transformed within stories, intimate relationships, community-building, Eucharistic worship, contemplative prayer, and social compassion. An eclectic range of psychological and neurobiological theories are examined in search of what each may offer to enhance the effectiveness of Christian spiritual formation. Students learn to recognize and evaluate the assumptions and methods behind these various theories, while keeping their main focus on developing a coherent Christian spiritual formation program.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

After taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate a well-grounded theological perspective on the value of employing psychological and neurobiological perspectives in Christian spiritual formation.
2. Describe the trajectory and goals of Christian spiritual formation in both theological and psychological terms.
3. Compare the assumptions, methods, and theoretical stances of various psychological and theological perspectives on several key elements of spiritual formation.
4. Evaluate the impact on spiritual formation of choices made among a range of psychological theories and theological stances.
5. Employ a variety of effective methods of spiritual formation that are enhanced by psychological and neurobiological insight.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Each week before class, read **either** the articles **or** a complete book from the list provided for each topic. If reading the articles, for each one write a one paragraph summary of what it contributes to reflection on spiritual formation and a second paragraph comparing and evaluating the specific “brands” of psychology and of theology that are being referenced. If reading a book, include this information in a 2-3 page book report. These reading summaries will be turned in at mid-term and at the end

of the semester.

2. Each week there will also be a “Practicum Exercise” to be completed as preparation for the following week’s topic. Each student will post a short report on the practicum on the course web site, and all students will read these before attending class. This process of reflecting, writing, and reading will be an essential part of the preparation for class discussions.
3. The final paper will consist of a 10-15 page statement that includes the following:
 - Brief sketch of the character of a specific context which is the reference point for the student’s discussion of spiritual formation.
 - A well-grounded theological perspective on the value of employing psychological and neurobiological perspectives in Christian spiritual formation.
 - Description of the trajectory and goals of Christian spiritual formation in both theological and psychological terms, with sensitivity to the specific context.
 - Examples of some psychologically-informed spiritually formative practices or methods that the student would propose using in this context.
 - References and bibliography for each of these points.

COURSE OUTLINE:

1 Introduction: Christian Life in an Age of Psychology

Specific challenges facing programs of Christian formation today, for example, secularism, postmodernism, consumerism. How this plays out in different global regions and cultures. Psychology as *lingua franca*. Comparison between worldviews of Christianity and psychological science. The range of psychological theories and theological approaches that are in dialogue.

Gaillardetz, Richard R. *Transforming Our Days: Spirituality, Community, and Liturgy in a Technological Culture*. New York: Crossroad, 2000.

Ruffing, Janet K. “Psychology as a Resource for Christian Spirituality.” *Horizons* 17, no. 1 (March 1, 1990): 47–59.

McDargh, John. “Theological Uses of Psychology: Retrospective and Prospective.” *Horizons* 12, no. 2 (September 1, 1985): 247–264.

Entwistle, David N. “A Holistic Psychology of Persons: Implications for Theory and Practice.” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 28, no. 2 (June 1, 2009): 141–148.

Vitz, Paul C. “Christian and Catholic Advantages for Connecting Psychology with the Faith.” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 30, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 294–306.

Gillespie, C Kevin. “Psychology and American Catholicism After Vatican II: Currents, Cross-currents and Confluences.” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 25, no. 4 (Fall 2007): 117–131.

Wright, Ronald W., and Brad D. Strawn. "Grief, Hope, and Prophetic Imagination: Psychoanalysis and Christian Tradition in Dialogue." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 29, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 149–157.

PART I: THE PERSON IN FORMATION

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 2: Identify three images (metaphors) for what a "good Christian" (the fruit of excellent spiritual formation) would be like.

2 Strong, Loving, and Wise: The Formed and Transformed Christian

Psychological, cultural, and theological perspectives on "wisdom," "virtue," and "maturity." Meanings of "formation" and "transformation." What kind of person do we hope will emerge from our spiritual formation programs? Dealing with differing cultural norms and ideals.

Ellsberg, Robert. *The Saints' Guide to Happiness: Everyday Wisdom from the Lives of the Saints*. New York: North Point Pr, 2003.

Roberts, Robert C. "Wisdom and Psychotherapy." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 25, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 127–136.

Entwistle, David N., and Stephen K. Moroney. "Integrative Perspectives on Human Flourishing: The Imago Dei and Positive Psychology." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 39, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 295–303.

Pembroke, Neil F. "Merton's True Self and the Psychology of the Dialogical Self." *Religious Studies and Theology* 25, no. 2 (January 1, 2006): 191–210.

Moncher, Frank J., and Craig Steven Titus. "Foundations for a Psychotherapy of Virtue: An Integrated Catholic Perspective." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 28, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 22–35.

Majerus, Brian D. "Differentiation of Self and Christian Spiritual Maturity: Social Science and Theological Integration." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 2010): 41–51.

DeHoff, Susan L. "In Search of a Paradigm for Psychological and Spiritual Growth: Implications for Psychotherapy and Spiritual Direction." *Pastoral Psychology* 46, no. 5 (May 1, 1998): 333–346.

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 3: Tell a story (that you feel comfortable sharing) about a time when you have been challenged by your own desires.

3 The Story-telling Self and the Knot of Desire

Experience of human identity as a drama drawn forward by desire. The essential formative challenge: purifying and re-ordering desire in the Spirit. Formative role of *eros* in human life. Compare/ contrast perspectives on distorted desire: theology of sin, psychology of pathology, sociology of oppression.

Whitehead, James D., and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead. *Holy Eros: Pathways to a Passionate God*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009.

Giles, James E. "The Story of the Self: The Self of the Story." *Religion and Intellectual Life* 4, no. 1

(September 1, 1986): 105–112.

Doehring, Carrie. "Life-Giving Sexual and Spiritual Desire." *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 4 (June 1, 1994): 49–69.

Black, Peter. "The Broken Wings of Eros: Christian Ethics and the Denial of Desire." *Theological Studies* 64, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 106–126.

Edwards, John P. "The Self Prior to Mimetic Desire: Rahner and Alison on Original Sin and Conversion." *Horizons* 35, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 7–31.

Carson, David K., Herdley Paolini, Dale Ziglear, and W John Fox. "The Unconverted Subconscious in Psychotherapy: Biblical Foundations, Psychological Explorations and Clinical Applications." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 37, no. 4 (December 1, 2009): 276–293.

Bom, Klaas. "Directed by Desire: An Exploration Based on the Structures of Desire for God." *Scottish Journal of Theology* 62, no. 2 (January 1, 2009): 135–148.

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 4: Practice "Lectio Divina" with a Psalm (instructions will be provided). Write a paragraph on how (or whether) this is an experience of intimacy with the Spirit.

4 The Self and the Spirit: How Does Sanctification Work?

Psychology of the "self" in view of theological anthropology. Theology of sanctification viewed through lense of psychology. Significance of intimacy with other persons and with God. The contributions of contemplative psychology and of mystical writers.

De Wit, Han F. *The Spiritual Path: An Introduction to the Psychology of the Spiritual Traditions*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University, 1999.

McDargh, John. "The Life of the Self in Christian Spirituality and Contemporary Psychoanalysis." *Horizons* 11, no. 2 (September 1, 1984): 344–360.

Puffer, Keith A. "Essential Biblical Assumptions About Human Nature: a Modest Proposal." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 26, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 45–56.

Hackney, Charles H. "Sanctification as a Source of Theological Guidance in the Construction of a Christian Positive Psychology." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 29, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 195–207.

Sandage, Steven J., Mary L. Jensen, and Daniel Jass. "Relational Spirituality and Transformation: Risking Intimacy and Alterity." *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 1, no. 2 (September 1, 2008): 182–206.

- Banks, Amy. "Developing the Capacity to Connect." *Zygon* 46, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 168–182.
- FitzGerald, Constance. "The Desire for God and the Transformative Power of Contemplation." In *Light Burdens, Heavy Blessings*, 201–222. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 2000.
- De Wit, Han F. "The Case for Contemplative Psychology." *Shambala Sun* (2001). http://www.shambhalasun.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2388&Itemid=0
- Raab, Kelley A. "Mysticism, Creativity, and Psychoanalysis: Learning from Marion Milner." *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 13, no. 2 (January 1, 2003): 79–96.

PART II: THE FORMATION COMMUNITY

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 5: Report on your experience of participating in a Eucharist with special attention to how the event affects you both psychologically and spiritually.

5 Maturing through Community, Ritual, and Eucharist

The human person as fundamentally social and Christian life as ecclesial. Psychological and theological views on the tensions and complementarity between community and individuality. Psychology of ritual. Risks and opportunities in the spirituality of Eucharist as participation in Jesus' kenotic self-gift.

- Johnson, Susanne. *Christian Spiritual Formation in the Church and Classroom*. Nashville: Abingdon Pr, 1989.
- Rahner, Karl. "On the Significance in Redemptive History of the Individual Member of the Church." In *Mission and Grace*, 1:114–170. London: Sheed and Ward, 1963.
- Frohlich, Mary. "The Responsorial Self." *Liturgy* 7, no. 2 (1987): 39–45.
- Teske, John A. "Externalism, Relational Selves, and Redemptive Relationships." *Zygon* 46, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 183–203.
- Hennessey, R A S. "Attachment Theory, the Eucharist, Priesthood and Self-awareness." *Contact* no. 140 (January 1, 2003): 9–16.
- Madden, Kathryn. "Ritual, Drama, and the Unconscious in the Eucharist: Contributions of Victor Turner to Depth Psychology and Religion." *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 53, no. 1–2 (January 1, 1999): 111–124.
- Dahill, Lisa E. "Reading from the Underside of Selfhood: Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Spiritual Formation." *Spiritus* 1, no. 2 (September 1, 2001): 186–203.

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 6: Tell a story about companioning someone who is experiencing a crisis or difficult time in life.

6 Accompaniment: Psychotherapy, Spiritual Direction, Soul Friendship

Distinctions among various forms of individual and group accompaniment. Situations in which accompaniment is essential, advisable, or beneficial to enhance human and spiritual growth. Contributions of psychology and spirituality to understanding best practices of accompaniment.

Louf, André. *Grace Can Do More*. Cistercian, 2002.

Shea, John J. "Adult Faith, Pastoral Counseling, and Spiritual Direction." *Journal of Pastoral Care* 51, no. 3 (September 1, 1997): 259–270.

De Smet, Andrew. "Counselling, Spiritual Accompanying & Pastoral Care." *Contact* no. 143 (January 1, 2004): 28–36.

Bamberger, John Eudes. "Spiritual Accompaniment: Observing Love and Its Transformations." *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (2002): 415–428.

Ruffing, Janet K. "Recent Literature and Emerging Issues in the Ministry of Spiritual Direction." *Spiritus* 2, no. 1 (March 1, 2002): 99–107.

Gubi, Peter Madsen. "A Qualitative Exploration of the Similarities and Differences Between Counselling and Spiritual Accompaniment." *Practical Theology* 4, no. 3 (December 1, 2011): 339–358.

Hoffman, Marie. "From Libido to Love: Relational Psychoanalysis and the Redemption of Sexuality." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 35, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 74–82.

PART III: PERSPECTIVES ON "INNER WORK"

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 7: Using paint or pencils, create a visual image of God and bring it to class.

7 God and God-Images in the Life Cycle

Strengths and weaknesses of psychological life stage theory as guide to spiritual growth. Psychological factors contributing to character of God-images in early life and adulthood. Differences among cultures and eras on these matters. Theology of divine ineffability, incarnation, sacramentality as balance to psychological perspective.

Armistead, M. Kathryn. *God-Images in the Healing Process*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995.

Kelcourse, Felicity. "Finding Faith: Life Cycle Stages in Body, Mind, and Soul." In *Human Development and Faith: Life-cycle Stages of Body, Mind, and Soul*, 59–90. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004.

- Parker, Stephen, and Yvonne Bissonnette Tate. "Using Erikson's Developmental Theory to Understand and Nurture Spiritual Development in Christians." *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 26, no. 3 (September 1, 2007): 218–226.
- Rizzuto, Ana-Maria. "The Psychological Foundations of Belief in God." In *Toward Moral and Religious Maturity*. Morristown, NJ: Silver Burdett, 1980.
- Slife, Brent D., Tiffani D. Stevenson, and Dennis C. Wendt. "Including God in Psychotherapy: Strong Vs. Weak Theism." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 38, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): 163–174.
- Kim, Simone Sunghae. "A Korean Feminist Perspective on God Representation." *Pastoral Psychology* 55, no. 1 (September 1, 2006): 35–45.
- Stevens, Bruce A. "'Love Supreme': On Spiritual Experience and Change in Personality Structure." *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 34, no. 4 (December 1, 2006): 318–326.

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 8: Practice "Healing of Memories" prayer with a text from the gospels (instructions will be provided). Write a paragraph on the experience.

8 Working with Imagination and Memory

Psychology of imagination and memory. The paschal mystery as foundation of Christian spiritual life. Forms of imaginative prayer as means of transforming desire. Healing of memories prayer. The rhythm of cataphatic and apophatic in contemplative forms of prayer.

- Merkur, Daniel. *Crucified with Christ: Meditation on the Passion, Mystical Death, and the Medieval Invention of Psychology*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Pr, 2007.
- Neuman, Matthias. "Self-Identity, Symbol and Imagination." In *Symbolisme Et Theologie*. Vol. 7. Sacramentum. Rome: Anselmia, 1974.
- Schweitzer, Carol L Schnabl. "When 'Living Stories' Encounter the Living Word." *Pastoral Psychology* 58, no. 5–6 (December 1, 2009): 629–640.
- Chordas, Thomas J., and Steven J. Cross. "Healing of Memories: Psychotherapeutic Ritual Among Catholic Pentecostals." *Journal of Pastoral Care* 30, no. 4 (December 1, 1976): 245–257.
- Anderson, Herbert. "How Rituals Heal." *Word & World* 30, no. 1 (December 1, 2010): 41–50.
- Schrock, Dan. "The Obscure Night of Prayer." *Vision (Winnipeg, Man.)* 7, no. 2 (September 1, 2006): 70–77.
- FitzGerald, Constance. "Impasse and Dark Night." In *Living with Apocalypse: Spiritual Resources for Social Comparison.*, 93–116. Harper and Row, 1984, 1984.

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 10: Practice “mindfulness meditation” (instructions will be provided). Report on its effects.

9 Neurobiology of Spiritual Practices: So What?

Findings of neurobiology and cognitive psychology on the impact of practices such as ritual, meditation, and mindfulness. What Christians can learn from Buddhists. Theological view of interfaith practice. Risks and opportunities for enhanced Christian practices.

Jeeves, Malcolm A., and Warren S. Brown. *Neuroscience, Psychology, and Religion: Illusions, Delusions, and Realities About Human Nature*. West Conshohocken, Pa: Templeton Fndtn Pr, 2009.

Hogue, David A. *Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past: Story, Ritual, and the Human Brain*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2003.

Hogue, David. “Brain Matters: Neuroscience, Empathy, and Pastoral Theology.” *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 20, no. 2 (December 1, 2010): 25–55.

Teske, John A. “The Spiritual Limits of Neuropsychological Life.” *Zygon* 31, no. 2 (June 1, 1996): 209–234.

Teske, John A. “The Haunting of the Human Spirit.” *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science* 34, no. 2 (June 1999): 307.

Fayard, Carlos, Melissa J. Perea, and Antonia Ciovica. “Love the Lord With All Your Mind’: Explorations on a Possible Neurobiology of the Experience of God and Some Implications for the Practice of Psychotherapy.” *Journal of Psychology & Christianity* 28, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 167–181.

D’ Aquili, Eugene G., and Andrew B. Newberg. “The Neuropsychology of Aesthetic, Spiritual, and Mystical States.” *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science* 35, no. 1 (March 2000): 39.

Garden, Mary. “Can Meditation Be Bad for You?” *Humanist* 67, no. 5 (September 2007): 20–24. doi:Article.

Frohlich, Mary. “What I Know and Don’t Know: A Christian Reflects on Buddhist Practice.” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 21 (2001): 37–41.

PART IV: PERSPECTIVES ON HOLISTIC TRANSFORMATION

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 10: Summarize key events of your own “conversion story.”

10 Perspectives on Conversion

Reviewing research on theological, psychological, and sociological understandings of religious conversion. What Christians need to learn from the human sciences on this topic.

Markham, Paul N. *Rewired: Exploring Religious Conversion*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Pubns, 2007.

Smith, Gordon T. "Models of Conversion in the New Testament." In *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation*, 107–133. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Pr, 2001.

Loneragan, Bernard. "Dimensions of Conversion." In *Method in Theology*, 237–243. NY: Herder and Herder, 1972.

Pasquier, Jacques. "Experience and Conversion." *The Way* 17 (1977): 114–122.

Cooey, Paula M. "The Power of Transformation and the Transformation of Power." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 1985): 23–36.

Smith, Aaron C T., and Bob Stewart. "Becoming Believers: Studying the Conversion Process from Within." *Zygon* 46, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 806–834.

Davis, Patricia M., and Lewis R. Rambo. "Converting: Toward a Cognitive Theory of Religious Change." In *Soul, Psyche, Brain: New Directions in the Study of Religion and Brain-Mind Science*, by Kelly Bulkeley, 159–173, 159–173. NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 11: Tell a story about a discernment process that you have participated in or observed.

11 Discernment as a Way of Life

Christian traditions of how to discern the guidance of the Holy Spirit. What psychology can contribute to this. Case studies of discernment viewed both psychologically and spiritually.

Liebert, Elizabeth. *The Way of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision Making*. Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

Frohlich, Mary. "Discernment as a Way of Life." *New Theology Review* 18, no. 3 (2005): 41–51.

Rakoczy, Susan. "Transforming the Tradition of Discernment." *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* no. 139 (March 1, 2011): 91–109.

Barry, William. "Touchstone Experiences as Divining Rods in Discernment." *Review for Religious* 49 (1990): 610–614.

Moore, Mary Elizabeth. "Stories of Vocation: Education for Vocational Discernment." *Religious Education* 103, no. 2 (March 1, 2008): 218–239.

Shelton, Charles M. "Discernment in Everyday Life: Spiritual and Psychological Considerations." *Spirituality Today* 34 (1982): 326–334.

Asselin, David. "Discernment and Christian Maturity." *Review for Religious* 27 (1968).

Practicum Exercise to prepare for Topic 12: During the week, notice someone who engages in a compassionate practice. Reflect on what may have contributed to that persons' capacity for compassion.

12 Formation for Social Responsibility: Best Practices

Theology and psychology of vocation. What enables Christians to experience desire for a more just society and to act effectively to help create it? How can the topics we have studied this semester contribute to forming Christians for social responsibility?

Daloz, Laurent A. *Common Fire: Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*. Boston: Beacon Pr, 1996.

Bidwell, Duane R. "Tell Me What You Want, What You Really, Really Want': Desire, Vocation, and Gifts for Service." In *Passion for Christian Unity*, 111–124. St Louis: Chalice Pr, 2009.

Nolan, Albert. "Spiritual Growth and the Option for the Poor." *Church* (1985): 45–48.

Locklin, Reid Blackmer. "Weakness, Belonging, and the Intercordia Experience: The Logic and Limits of Dissonance as a Transformative Learning Tool." *Teaching Theology & Religion* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2010): 3–14.

Hollingsworth, Andrea. "Neuroscience and Spirituality: Implications of Interpersonal Neurobiology for a Spirituality of Compassion." *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 43, no. 4 (December 1, 2008): 837–860. doi:Journal Article.

Van Slyke, James A. "Cognitive and Evolutionary Factors in the Emergence of Human Altruism." *Zygon* 45, no. 4 (December 1, 2010): 841–859.