



## **IN 5202 Theology and Practice of Christian Spirituality & Formation**

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**May 10-14, 2010**

Calgary Extension

**“God can well hear the sighs of everyone, even the foolish; yet, in reality,  
only those can pray who listen to God”**  
*Christoph Blumhardt*

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

The course is an in-depth exploration of the biblical-theological foundations and practice of Christian Spirituality and its pivotal role in deepening our awareness of and enlivening our love for God, others, and self. The course will help the student begin to integrate religion, spirituality and meaning into his/her clinical work. The theoretical and experiential approach to the course will include formal instruction, critical reflection on some classics of Christian spirituality, and participation in spiritual habits of the soul such as prayer, lectio divina or reading of scripture, silence and solitude, retreat, spiritual direction, community, corporate worship and service.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

#### ***Spiritual Formation Objectives***

1. The student will be able to integrate knowledge of religion, spirituality, and meaning into his/her counselling practice.
2. The student will be familiar with individual and group “habits of the soul” for the purpose of deepening awareness of God-self relation and facilitating counselling effectiveness
3. The student will be familiar with the methodology and practice of spiritual direction.

#### ***Personal Formation Objectives***

4. The student will be able to recognize instances where the counsellor’s life experiences may compromise therapeutic effectiveness
5. The student will be able to recognize instances where the counsellor’s life experiences may enhance therapeutic effectiveness
6. The student will be able to identify his/her strengths and weaknesses as a counselor
7. The student will be able to identify early signs of vocational burnout in oneself and those to whom they minister

***Professional Formation Objectives***

- 8. The student will be able to identify effective way of facilitating therapeutic change among clients with religious sensibilities.
- 9. The student will have knowledge of, and competence in intervention strategies to respond effectively to vulnerability to vocational burnout.
- 10. The student will begin to see the vocation of counselling as spiritual in itself, recognizing the presence of God in the client, the counsellor, and the process.

**REQUIRED READING**

Barry, William A. & Connoly, William J. (1986). **The practice of spiritual direction.** New York, NY: Harper. (OR the Rev. Upd. edition, 2009)

McGrath, Alister. (1999). **Christian spirituality.** Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Casey, Michael. (1996). **Toward God: The ancient wisdom of Western prayer.** Liguori, MO: Liguori/Triumph Publications (OR revised 2002)

Barton, Ruth Hayley. (2006). **Sacred rhythms: Arranging our lives for spiritual transformation.** Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

- 1. Attend all sessions, participate actively in class activities, and do the necessary preparation as required.
- 2. Intentional and regular practice of a “new” spiritual habit of the soul: Lectio Divina, Centering Prayer, The Jesus Prayer, Examen, Journaling, Spiritual/Contemplative Reading, Praying in Nature etc.
- 3. **Reading Requirements:**

Barry & Connoly, **The practice of spiritual direction** – please read before class.

Reading Schedule: (chapters should be read by the day posted)

	McGrath, <b>Christian spirituality</b>	Barton, <b>Sacred rhythms</b>	Casey, <b>Toward God</b>
Monday	1,2	1,2	1-3
Tuesday	3	3	4-6
Wednesday	4,5	4	7-9
Thursday	6	5,6	10-12
Friday	7	7	13-14

4. Participate in a series of “**spiritual encounters**” and write a **critical and reflective essay on the “experience.”** This is a three-part project.

**Step One:** Having read Barry & Connolly’s **The practice of spiritual direction**, participate in a spiritual direction with another student in class for a six-one-hour-session. Each student will have the opportunity to be the “director”(3x) and “directee”(3x). Instructions will be given in class.

**Step Two:** Participate in a **one-day spiritual retreat**. This will be held at Kingsfold, (cost \$32) on *Friday, May 14*. Be prepared to engage in personal reflection, practice spiritual disciplines, and participate in corporate worship.

**Step Three:** Write a 10-15 critical and reflective essay on “Spiritual Direction.” Issues to explore in this essay: (*Date Due: June 4, 2010*)

- a. Critical reflection on my experience in spiritual direction and retreat.
- b. Analysis about theory-theology, methodology, and practice of spiritual direction.
- c. Critical competencies a counselor must have to practice spiritual direction.
- d. Ethical issues and other challenges a counselor will face in the practice of spiritual direction.
- e. Convergence and Divergence between Spiritual Direction and Psychotherapy.

5. Write an **8-10 page spiritual autobiography**. A spiritual autobiography is more than just a narrative of one’s life journey. It focuses *less* on key people, events, and experiences of one’s life and *more* on what these people, events, and experiences mean for him/her. The autobiography should focus on two aspects:
  - a. The spiritual autobiography should be about discovery of oneself and God, particularly the perception of God’s presence or absence throughout the evaluation of the events and relationships. Think of significant turning points and decisions in your life, successes and failures, struggles and conflicts and relationships both nourishing and heartbreaking that you perceive to be pivotal in your personal formation.
  - b. Be sure to think through your experiences of prayer, gathered worship, solitude, and times of communication with God. Be aware of and compare your prayer life to this point with Casey’s **Toward God**, wrestling with what he is suggesting for a life of prayer. (*Date Due: June 18, 2010*)

6. **Christian Spirituality and Popular Culture**. This is a group project that students will have the opportunity to present in class. The task is to glean from a popular culture medium, such as a TV series, movie, music, etc., the components of spirituality inherent in the medium and draw them out. Discuss the types of spirituality being conveyed or experienced. The goal is to be able to point out the presence of God in almost anything or anyone, to break down the dichotomy between the sacred and the secular. This would exclude explicitly Christian formats such as worship music or Billy Graham videos.

Groups will be assigned in the months leading up to class, students are expected to contact each other and start working on their project ahead of class time as much as possible.

*(Group Presentation starts on Wednesday, May 12, 2010)*

## GRADING

Class Participation	15 marks
Spiritual Autobiography	25 marks
Spiritual Direction Encounters and Essay	30 marks
Christian Spirituality and Popular Culture Presentation	30 marks

## PLEASE NOTE:

- ❑ Students who miss more than two classes will risk failing the course
- ❑ All counseling students must use the APA format for citing resources.  
(<http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citapa.htm>).
- ❑ **Papers are due on the DATE they are DUE.** Any paper submitted after the due date will incur a *1 pt deduction* for every single day it is turned in late.
- ❑ All papers must be **e-mailed** as an attachment to [rob.mac@sasktel.net](mailto:rob.mac@sasktel.net)