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IPS/SP500 Spiritual Formation in Communities
Fall 2016

PURPOSE: This course explores spiritual formation within three different faith communities or wisdom traditions with a focus on the specific forms of spirituality brought by instructors from each of the communities or traditions. Study of specific spiritual practices will develop the student's skills in understanding the sources and practices of spirituality in general. Research shows this is the outcome in the study of cultural diversity: the skills of understanding transfer to a variety of settings although the cultural specifics change. Students will read or otherwise become acquainted with a variety of resources from the three traditions, cultivate experiential learning by interaction with contemporary practitioners, and document their learning in modalities not restricted to academic-paper formats.

PREREQUISITES: None.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

1. Define the spirituality of each community/wisdom tradition with accuracy and respect.
2. Document the environmental, cultural, and historical influences on each of the spiritualities under study.
3. Relate the spiritual principles to other aspects of the community/wisdom tradition being studied, including land-theology, law, worship, national continuity.
4. Compare and contrast spiritualities from the locations and traditions of the student's own faith commitments.
5. Demonstrate respectful communication and capacities for inter-religious dialogue in interactions of learning in the classroom.

FORMAT AND CONTENT:

This course is a series of three 1-credit weekend intensives, each meeting Thursday evening and Friday during the day. Each session includes lecture, discussion, and class activities. Students may sign up for one, two, or three weekends.

Weekend I: Christian Spirituality with Bishop Melissa Skelton, September 29, 6:00-9:00 pm and September 30, 9:30 am – 5:00 pm

Weekend II: Jewish Spirituality with Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan, October 20, 6:00-9:00 pm and October 21, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Weekend III: Islamic Spirituality with Imam Balal Khokhar, November 17, 6:00-9:00 pm and November 18, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

TEXTS and RESERVES: See course outlines for each weekend (below).

COURSE POLICIES

1. **Attendance:** For a weekly course, VST requires at least 80% attendance. For an intensive course, VST requires 100% attendance.
2. **Reading and assignments:** Students are expected to read all required assignments before class and to complete all assignments as outlined in the syllabus within the specified dates of the course and term.
3. **Academic honesty:** Students are expected to adhere to VST's requirements for academic honesty as published in the Student Handbook.
4. **Inclusive language:** In speaking and writing, inclusive language is expected when making reference to humans and a variety of metaphors are anticipated when making reference to God.
5. **Assignment and Course Evaluation:**
 - Course evaluations at VST combine a letter grade system (A+ to B-; course failure is "Not Approved") including narrative comments based on the competencies of the course. No number grades or weights of assignments are calculated, nor are final grades given numerical equivalents.
 - Individual assignments within a course are given narrative evaluations, that is, APP (Approved) or INC (Incomplete) with narrative comments, based on the competencies and expectations set for that assignment. One re-write is allowed on any assignment that is INC. The re-written assignment is due two weeks after the work is returned. The final evaluation for an assignment can be APP or NAPP after a re-write.
6. **Late assignments:** Submission of assignments on time is a part of academic, professional and pastoral competence and a part of every course at VST. All assignments in courses are due on the dates specified in the syllabus. Failure to submit an assignment on time will be noted in the narrative evaluation of an assignment. Repeated failure to submit assignments on time may affect the final grade for the course.

7. **Limitation on use of social media:** Ordinarily, the use of electronic devices in the contexts of classrooms or meetings will be to support the learning, formation, or agenda at hand.
8. **Learning needs:** VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, mental health concern, or physical requirement which you anticipate may impact your participation in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs with the instructor and the Dean within the first week of classes.

EXPECTATIONS, ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

1. Class participation: All students are expected to participate in class discussions, and do adequate preparation of in-class discussion exercises. Evaluative criteria: comments and questions show adequate preparation, an understanding of the assigned readings and exercises, and a readiness to apply readings to interpretive questions and insights.
2. Short paper: Each weekend course will include a 1500-word paper. Students are expected to follow the guidelines set by that weekend's instructor. Students at the basic and certificate levels are required to complete the written paper.
3. Audit students are required to do all the reading and participate in the class discussions and exercises.
4. Evaluative criteria for each paper will be set by the instructor for that weekend.

Continue reading for individual weekend course outlines.

Weekend 1: Christian Spirituality, September 29-30, 2016

Instructor: Bishop Melissa Skelton

Email: bishop@vancouver.anglican.ca

Description: We will explore the particular approach to Christian spirituality that Benedict of Nursia set forth in his Rule, a guide to living the Christian life that became influential due to its focus on simplicity, flexibility, and balance, all with a humanity that other approaches lacked. More specifically, we will be exploring the Benedictine promises of stability, obedience and conversion of life as well as the practices of hospitality and rhythm & balance. While Benedict developed his rule for those living in monastic communities, we will explore the ways the Rule provides a framework for Christian living today – both for the individual and for Christian churches wishing to give shape to the formation of Christians in a communal context.

This course includes attendance at

- Introductory Lecture/Discussion with The Ven. Grant Rodgers, September 29, 6:00-7:00 pm
- Bishop Skelton's Somerville Lecture, "The Spirituality of Benedict of Nursia: An Ancient Approach for Authentic Christian Living Today," September 29, 7:00-9:00 pm
- Bishop Skelton's Somerville Retreat, "Exploring the Spirituality of Benedict of Nursia," September 30, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm
- Lunchtime table discussion 12:45-1:45 pm
- Bishop Skelton's afternoon class, September 30, 2:00-5:00 pm

Reading List

A translation of The Rule of St. Benedict. Leonard Doyle's translation (a classic) is available online at <http://www.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html>. Please bring with you to class.

Available on line at amazon.ca or chapters.ca:

Esther de Waal, *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict* 2nd edition (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press), 1995.

Jane Tomaine, *St. Benedict's Toolbox: The Nuts and Bolts of Everyday Benedictine Living* (New York: Morehouse Publishing), 2015.

Written Assignment: Due by mail to the instructor by October 15, 2016. Prepare a 1500-word paper exploring your response to a spiritual approach or practice you have learned about in the course, referencing the assigned readings as well as the class

experience. An excellent paper will demonstrate an understanding of the approach or practice and will offer personal experiences or insights related to the approach or practice.

Weekend II: Jewish Spirituality, October 20-21, 2016

Instructor: Rabbi Laura Duhan Kaplan

Email: ldkaplan@vst.edu

Description: We will explore, intellectually and experientially, three key practices in Jewish spiritual formation: Shabbat rituals, Torah (Bible) study, and prayerful blessing. These have been key in forming Jewish values, communal identity, and theology. For example, Shabbat rituals ground spiritual formation in the family; Torah study teaches critical thinking; prayerful blessing teaches theology through a daily practice of gratitude. In class, we will utilize lecture, large and small group discussion, personal writing, singing and experiential introduction to simple rituals. Active participation in ritual will be optional.

Reading list:

Please borrow or buy from amazon.ca or chapters.ca:

Ted Falcon & David Blatner, *Judaism for Dummies* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons), 2001. Read Part I "What Jews Generally Believe," Chapters 1-5; Part IV Chapter 17 "Shabbat"; Appendix B, "Sampler of Jewish Prayers."

Marcia Prager, *The Path of Blessing* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing), 2003. Read the first 100 pages.

Please find posted on moodle:

Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, "A Life in Time," from *Jewish With Feeling* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing), 2013.

BRING WITH YOU: A copy of the Bible that includes the Hebrew Bible, any translation.

Written Assignment, due by email to the instructor November 4, 2016. Please prepare a 1500-word paper exploring your response to a spiritual idea or practice introduced in the course, referencing the assigned readings as well as class experience. An excellent paper will accurately describe the practice or idea, document the relevant experiences that help the student understand it, offer a personal insight. Papers may also pose and/or explore deeper questions about the meaning of the practice.

Weekend III: Islamic Spirituality, November 17-18, 2016

Instructor: Balal Khokhar

Email: Balal.kh@gmail.com

Description: This course aims to introduce you to the theory and practice of Islamic Spirituality, based on the Holy Qur'an and the practice of the founder of Islam, Muhammad^{s.a.w.}. We will explore the history of revelation, subject matter and content, and its impact. A fundamental spiritual practice of canonical prayer (*Salat*) will be introduced. The impact of the Holy Qur'an and *Salat* will be introduced as experienced by practicing Muslims. We will also read Sufi poetry of Jalaluddin Rumi and visit a mosque on Friday (carpooling to be arranged). We will utilize lecture, class discussion, and use audio and visual aids. Lunch is part of the class, and will be served at the mosque.

Reading list:

Copies of the texts will be provided by the instructor, and will be available for pickup by registered students at the VST library (Somerville building) beginning September 12, 2016. Library hours are Mon-Thurs 8:30am-6:00pm, Fri 8:30am-5:00pm, Sat 12:00noon-5:00pm.

Maulawi Sher 'Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*. (Tilford, Surrey: Islam International Publications Limited).

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam* (Tilford, Surrey: Islam International Publications Limited). **Read the first 70 pages and the last Chapter.**

Additional Notes and selected poems of Rumi will be provided.

Written Assignment, due by email to the instructor no later than December 2. Please prepare a 1500-word paper exploring your response to a spiritual idea or practice introduced in the course, referencing the assigned readings as well as class experience. A brief mosque visit report should be submitted alongside with the paper (a form will be provided).