

Jim Forest
jhforest@gmail.com

Kanisstraat 5
1811 GJ Alkmaar
The Netherlands

**SYLLABUS
COURSE DESCRIPTION**

SP525 Thomas Merton's Advice for Peacemakers

Thursday July 12 to Saturday July 14, 2018

Thursday afternoon 2 pm – 4 pm; Merton lecture 7 – 9 pm;

Friday 9 am – noon and 1 – 3:30 pm, Saturday 9 am – noon and 1 – 3:30.

PURPOSE:

Thomas Merton has been a source of inspiration, wisdom and sound advice for countless people, ranging from Pope Francis and the Dalai Lama to all sorts of people seeking to connect spiritual life with response to social crises. Peacemaking was a major concern for Merton from his student days until his death in Asia in 1968. Jim Forest draws on his visits and intense correspondence with Merton during the last seven years of the monk's life. The letters — to Forest, Dorothy Day, Daniel Berrigan and others — remain helpful and timely, all the more so given the nerve-racking period in which we now are living.

EXPECTATIONS AND COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

The student will identify major concerns of Merton, participate in discussions, share personal experiences that connect with peacemaking, and compare Merton's approach to other prominent persons concerned with spiritual life and social engagement.

REQUIRED READINGS:

Students are required to do all the reading before the course starts.

Required books: "Living with Wisdom" (a biography of Thomas Merton) and "The Root of War is Fear: Thomas Merton's Advice to Peacemakers". Both books are by Jim Forest and published by Orbis; both can be ordered from Amazon.

Online reading:

Thomas Merton's Letter to a Young Activist

<http://jimandnancyforest.com/2014/10/mertons-letter-to-a-young-activist/>

'Lord, That I Might See' — Merton's retreat on the spiritual roots of protest

<http://jimandnancyforest.com/2014/11/lord-that-i-might-see/>

An Army that Sheds No Blood: Thomas Merton's Response to War

<http://jimandnancyforest.com/2009/02/sheds-no-blood/>

Thomas Merton and the Christ of the Byzantine Icons
<http://jimandnancyforest.com/2005/01/merton-and-byzantine-icons/>

Recommended but not required: "At Play in the Lions' Den: a biography and memoir of Daniel Berrigan" (Jim Forest, Orbis) in which Dan Berrigan is torn between guidance from Merton, on the one hand, and his brother Phil Berrigan, on the other.

CALENDAR:

July 12, 2-4 PM:

Who is Thomas Merton? Why does he matter he matter to would-be peacemakers?

July 12, 7-9 PM

public lecture: "Thomas Merton: One Foot in the Wilderness, One Foot in the World"

July 13, 9 AM-noon and 1-3:30 PM

The way of compassion: Connecting spiritual life to social engagement.

July 14, 9 AM-noon and 1-3:30 PM

The reality of personal relationship saves everything.

August 31

End of Term — last day for submission of all written work for term.

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. Reading and class participation: All Students including auditors are expected to do all the required readings and participate in class discussions.
2. Certificate students: in addition, Certificate students are required to hand in by August 31 a 5-6 page reflection paper that demonstrates the ability to thoughtfully engage the course and gives a personal reflection on the reading and material covered..
3. Basic degree students: are required to hand in by August 31 a research and reflection paper of 1500-1875 words (6-8 pages) on a topic related to the course, as approved by the instructor.
4. **Please note: There will be a one-hour meeting outside of class hours with students taking their course for degree credit, to help focus paper topics and expectations.**

COURSE POLICIES:

1. **Attendance:** 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, VST requests use of inclusive language 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.
- For a passing grade in the course, all assignments must be Approved.

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. VST is committed to creating safe space and an inclusive learning environment. If you have a diagnosed or suspected learning disability, chronic condition, a mental health concern, or a 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.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

All the following titles are by Thomas Merton:

Raids on the Unspeakable (New Directions)
 Faith and Violence (University of Notre Dame Press)
 Peace in the Post-Christian Era (Orbis)
 Cold War Letters (Orbis)
 Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander (Doubleday)
 The Intimate Merton: His Life from his Journals (Harper)
 Thomas Merton: A Life in Letters (Harper)

* * *