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**HSSP 2460 Lay Spiritual Practices**  
**Mondays, 7:10-9:40 p.m. FST Classroom**

This class will explore through experience and study a broad range of spiritual activities used by lay Christians and will look at the historical origins and early developments of them. Pilgrimage, prayer, contemplation, storytelling, fasting, feasting, sexuality and celibacy, festivals and processions are among the practices we will explore together. The historical and cultural background of these practices brings out new aspects of even the most common of these practices. For example, the act of reading psalms and prayers will be discussed in its medieval mode as a form of body prayer. Through discussion of some primary texts and a range of secondary texts, participants will explore ways to adopt and adapt spiritual practices for the 21st century.

Student evaluation will be based on individual written projects (25%), thoughtful participation in oral discussions (25%), oral presentations (25%), and reflection papers (together = 25%).

All participants will be asked to actively participate in a wide range of spiritual practices in and out of class. While this class explores the historical background to spiritual practices, it also introduces participants to a range of devotional and religious practices that must be experienced in order to be appreciated and fully understood.

In addition to regular attendance and active participation in class discussions and spiritual practices, students will prepare a written project and an oral presentation of this project. The project should explore or develop in greater depth a spiritual practice of special interest. This project may be historical research; theological or sociological analysis of a present practice; or creative exploration. All projects must be approved by the instructor.

The evaluation standard for each student depends on his/her degree program. Students in research oriented degree programs (Ph.D., M.A. ) will be evaluated on ability and performance of critical analysis and logical presentation of arguments. Students in professional/pastoral degree programs will be expected to complete the readings, follow analytical discussions and actively look for pastoral applications of material. All students are expected to participate in the full range of spiritual practices, but this does not lend itself to evaluation per se.

**Required Reading:**

Swanson, R. N. Religion and Devotion in Europe, c.1215-c. 1515  
Thompson, Marjorie, Soul Feast. An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life

Unknown, The Cloud of Unknowing

**Recommended:** (All Recommended Books are on Reserve at GTU Library)

Redmont, Jane. When in Doubt Sing. Prayer in Daily Life

Vaucher, Andre. The Laity in the Middle Ages (On Reserve)

Wiley, Eleanor and Maggie Oman Shannon, A String and a Prayer. How to Make and Use Prayer Beads (On Reserve)

There is a Reader of Required Readings available for purchase at Copy Central on Hearst.

### **Schedule of Classes**

Sept. 8: (Because there was no class last week due to Labor Day, we will treat two topics today)

Introduction to Lay Spirituality

Benedictine Monasticism meets U.S. pop spirituality: Thomas Merton, Kathleen Norris, and Joan Chittister

Lecture: The Historical Novelty of Benedictine Monasticism

Discussion: Relevance of Monasticism as a Model for Lay Spirituality Today

Optional Experiential Component: Writing Your Own Rule of Life

Required Reading: Reader Section One; Thompson, Chapter 9 "Rule of Life"

Recommended Reading: Redmont, ch. 24; also see Kathleen Norris, The Cloister Walk; Joan Chittister, Rule of Saint Benedict. Insight for the Ages; Thomas Merton, Seven Story Mountain; Merton, The Monastic Journey; Merton, Contemplation in a World of Action.

Next week DUE: two-page reflection paper (see below)

Sept. 15: Variations on Monasticism as a Model of Lay Spirituality

Lecture: Beguines, Third Order, Humiliati

Discussion: Rule of Life for Lay People

Optional Experiential Component: Write a Rule for a Community of Lay Christians

Required Reading: Section Two in Reader; Swanson, pp.102-122 (also see index n Swanson under "Beguines," "Humiliati," and "tertiaries.")

Due Today: two-page reflection paper: Do you think Benedictine Monasticism is an appropriate or adequate devotional system for laity in the 21st century? [make sure you specify which populations of the laity you are focussing on.]

Sept. 22: Family Life and Holy Life: Sexuality and Religious Devotion

Lecture: Chastity and Celibacy as Models of Lay Piety

Discussion: Sexuality and Lay Spirituality

Required Reading: Read Section Three in Reader; Swanson, 122-135.

Sept. 29: Lay Cooperation/Tension with Clerical Leadership

Lecture: Rise of the Institutionalized Church

Discussion:

Required Reading: Swanson, chapters 2, 3, 7, also, pp. 92-102.

Oct. 6: Holy People and Saints

Lecture: The Creation of Christian Saints

Discussion: The Ever Changing Standards of Sanctity through History

Experiential Component: Research the life of a canonized saint. Pick out the attributes that made them be considered “saintly” when they were canonized and make a list of those attributes. Are they the same attributes that are considered saintly today?

Required Reading: Swanson, Chapter 6; Section Four in Reader

Oct. 13: Religious Devotions as Body Prayer: Pilgrimage and Stations of the Cross

Lecture: History of Christian Pilgrimage and the Development of Stations of the Cross

Discussion: Does the contemporary Labyrinth Movement do justice to the original intention of pilgrimage?

Optional Experiential Component: On your own, take a pilgrimage to Grace Cathedral in San Francisco and walk the Labyrinth as a kind of pilgrimage

Required Reading: Swanson, chapter 6

Oct. 20: No Class--Reading Week

Oct. 27: Religious Devotions as Body Prayer: Praying with Beads

Lecture: History of Christian Prayer with Beads

Discussion: How do Christians use all our senses in prayer? What are the denominational differences?

Experiential Component: Create your own set of prayer beads. Today's Class includes a field trip to Baubles and Beads on Shattuck. Students receive a 10% discount on beads purchased today.

Recommended Reading: Redmont, chapter 3, 20; Anne Winston-Allen, *Stories of the Rose. The Making of the Rosary in the Middle Ages* (1997)

Due Today: Two-page Reflection paper: Discuss ways in which all the body's senses may be incorporated more in your daily prayer practices. If you are uncomfortable discussing your own prayer practices, write about an abstract person or someone else you know.

Nov. 3: Religious Devotions as Body Prayer: Lay Preaching

Lecture: The range of licit lay preaching in Medieval Europe with special attention given to the case of Rose of Viterbo and the role of story-telling in her canonization.

Discussion will be on Cardinal's Gospel in Solentiname (Read 3-5 chapters of your choice)

Optional Experiential Component: Be prepared to offer a short, 3 minute sermon/reflection

Required Reading on Reserve: Ernesto Cardenal, The Gospel in Solentiname

Nov. 10: Religious Devotions as Body Prayer: The Lay Contemplative and Mystic  
Lecture: The Contemplative Tradition and the Mystical Tradition among Lay Christians  
Discussion:  
Experiential Component:

Required Reading: The Cloud of Unknowing

Recommended Reading: Redmont, ch. 5

Nov. 17: Religious Devotions as Body Prayer: Story Telling as a Spiritual Act  
Lecture: Story Telling in Preaching, The Exemplum  
Discussion: What do our stories tell us about Lay Spirituality?  
Experiential Component: Be Prepared to tell a story that has spiritual significance for you. The story should be no longer than 10 minutes.

Nov. 24: Religious Devotions as Body Prayer: Reading  
Lecture: Book of Hours: Praying with Images, Words, and Texture  
Discussion: What are all the different ways you read?  
Experiential Component: Reading aloud to one another

Required Reading: Thompson, Ch. 2

Dec. 1: Student Presentations

Dec. 8: Student Presentations and Conclusions

Dec. 15 (If necessary to conclude presentations): Student Presentations and Conclusions