

## **HSSP 2460 Lay Spiritual Practices**

Dr. Darleen Pryds

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Tuesdays, 2:10-5:00 CDSP 222

Franciscan School of Theology/Graduate Theological Union

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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 Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

1. investigate independently the historical development of Christian spiritual practices to both scholarly and pastoral needs by means of a basic understanding of research tools.
2. discuss the origins of Christian spiritual practices within their historical context
3. have experienced a wide range of Christian spiritual prayer in class
4. think creatively about pastoral applications of spiritual practices within a multicultural and multi-generational range of pastoral settings

### **Course Procedure:**

This course will be conducted by way of historical lectures given by the professor; class discussion of readings; experiences of each spiritual practice covered in the syllabus; and discussion of these experiences.

### **Expectations:**

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 (approx. 15-20 pp.) and an oral presentation (20 minutes) 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 practice; or, if you are in a pastoral degree program, this may be a creative

exploration of a spiritual practice or a preparation of a pastoral program related to a spiritual practice. **All projects must be approved by the instructor.**

### **Evaluation Procedure:**

Student evaluation will be based on individual written project (35%), thoughtful participation in class discussions (30%), oral presentations (35%).

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 actively look for pastoral applications of material. All students are expected to participate in the full range of spiritual practices, but this participation does not lend itself to evaluation *per se*.

### **Required Reading:**

Chittister, Joan, The Rule of St. Benedict. Insights for the Ages

Muller, Wayne, Sabbath. Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in our Busy Lives

Thompson, Marjorie, Soul Feast. An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life

### **Schedule of Classes**

#### **Sept. 6:**

- Lecture: Introduction to Lay Spirituality

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

Monastic Rules as Models for Structuring Lay Spiritual Discipline

- Required Reading: Thompson, Ch. 1, 3
- Optional Experiential Component: Write Your Own Personal Rule of Life

#### **Sept. 15: Monasticism as a Lay Spiritual Practice/ Variations on Monasticism as a Model of Lay Spirituality**

- Lecture: Beguines, Third Order, Humiliati
- Discussion: Relevance of Monasticism as a Model for Lay Spirituality Today; Rule of Life for Lay People
- Optional Experiential Component: Write a Rule for a Community of Lay Christians
- Required Reading: Thompson, Chapter 9 “Rule of Life”; Joan Chittister, Rule of Saint Benedict. Insight for the Ages;

#### **Sept. 20: Self-Examination, Confession, and Spiritual Direction**

- Research Skills Workshop: Meet at GTU Library Computer Lab at 7:10
- Lecture: History of Auricular Confession and Spiritual Direction
- Required Reading: Thompson, Ch. 6

#### **Sept. 27: 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 5 minutes.

#### **Oct. 4: Feast Days, Processions, Festivals**

- Lecture: History of Christian Festivals
- Optional Experiential Component: Attend and be ready to discuss the commemoration of the Transitus of St. Francis, at FST, Monday, October 3 at 7:30 p.m. and/or attend 5:10 liturgy/dinner at FST on October 4 to commemorate the Feast of St. Francis

#### **Oct. 11: 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

#### **Oct. 18: 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.

#### **Oct. 25: NO Class—Reading Week**

**Optional Field Trip: On your own attend *Dia de los Muertos* Festival in Fruitvale District Oct. 29 or 30.**

#### **Nov. 1: Saints and Holy People**

- Opening Discussion: Sharing of Prayer Beads that each student made.
- Lecture: The Creation of Christian Saints
- Discussion: The Ever Changing Standards of Sanctity through History
- Experiential Component: All students are required to 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? Write a 2-5 page paper and be prepared to actively discuss your saint in class.

#### **Nov. 8: The Lay Contemplative: Centering Prayer and Gazing**

- Lecture: The Contemplative Tradition and the Mystical Tradition among Lay Christians
- Discussion: Muller's Sabbath
- Experiential Component: Centering Prayer, Gazing on Icon
- Required Reading: Muller, Sabbath

**Nov. 15: 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.
- Experiential Component: Be prepared to offer a short, 3 minute sermon/reflection
- Required Reading (on reserve): Read sections of Ernesto Cardenal, The Gospel in Solentiname; Kienzle and Walker, Women Preachers and Prophets

**Nov. 22: Religious Devotions as Body Prayer: Reading, Eating**

- Lecture: Book of Hours: Praying with Images, Words, and Texture  
Feasting and Fasting as Religious Devotion
- Experiential Component: *Lectio Divina*; Reading aloud to one another; creating personal prayer books
- Required Reading: Thompson, Ch. 2, 5

**Nov. 29: Student Presentations****Dec. 6: Student Presentations and Conclusions****Dec. 13 (If necessary to conclude presentations): Student Presentations and Conclusions**