

Dr. Darleen Pryds
Spring, 2008
Mondays, 7:10-9:40 p.m. FST Classroom
Franciscan School of Theology/Graduate Theological Union
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HSSP 2460 Lay Spiritual Practices

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. *This class presumes that all participants are willing to experience each of the prayer forms respectfully.*

Student Learning Objectives:

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

1. investigate independently the historical development of Christian spiritual practices for 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:

There are far more devotional practices and forms of prayer than we have time to experience and discuss during the course of this semester together. For that reason, each participant will be asked to prepare a written project (15-20 pages) that the student will also present orally to the whole class (20-30 minutes) in a clear, well-organized presentation. 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.

The project should explore or develop in greater depth a spiritual practice of special interest. This project should be historical in its method of analysis; but, if you are in a pastoral degree program, the project 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.** The purpose of this assignment is to give each participant the opportunity to explore in depth a particular practice in depth.

Evaluation Procedure:

Evaluation of each student's work will be based on individual written project (25%), thoughtful and respectful participation in class discussions (25%), oral presentation of final project (20%), two written book reviews (20%), peer evaluation and feedback (10%).

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*.

Important Dates:

March 10: Book review of Lauren Artress, Walking the Sacred Path due in class

March 31: Book review of book related to your own research project due in class

May 5: All written research projects due in class

Required Reading:

Artress, Lauren, Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Path

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

Palmer, Parker, Let Your Life Speak: Listening to the Voice of Vocation

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

The Cloud of Unknowing, (ed. William Johnston)

Schedule of Classes

Feb. 4:

- **Lecture:** Introduction to Lay Spirituality and the Origins of Christian Monasticism
 Why should monastic spirituality be a model for the lay spiritual life?
 Benedictine Monasticism meets U.S. pop spirituality: Thomas Merton (1968), Kathleen Norris (currently writing), and Joan Chittister (currently writing)
 How to read a book or article (<http://courseweb.fst.edu/pryds/Study/notes.pdf>)
- **Required Reading:** Thompson, Ch. 1, 3, 9
- **Optional Experiential Component:** Write Your Own Personal Rule of Life

- Film Clip: Into Great Silence (2007); The Trouble with Angels (1966); The Nun's Story (1959).

Feb. 11: Monasticism as a Lay Spiritual Practice/ Lay Adaptations on Monasticism

- Lecture: 12-14th century models of lay religious life: 1.) Beguines—the vocation to be a single working, prayerful woman; 2.) Third Orders—associating with religious orders is enough for me; and 3.) Humiliati—families and neighborhoods as “domestic monasteries”
- Discussion: Relevance of Monasticism as a Model for Lay Spirituality Today; Rule of Life for Lay People
- Optional Experiential Component: On your own attend a worship service at Incarnation Monastery at 1369 LeRoy in Berkeley (preferably a Sunday mass when a larger lay community is present). Address and other contact information at <http://www.contemplation.com/Hermitage/Incarnation.html>
- Required Reading: Joan Chittister, Rule of Saint Benedict. Insight for the Ages: For today's class read JUST the Rule of St. Benedict,. i.e. the italicized passages.

To focus your reading, as you read the Rule of St. Benedict, notice the structure of the Rule, itself, as a text. What kinds of prayers are delineated; how is daily life structures for the monks; what are the seasonal changes the monks experience; how do the monks interact with the outside world?

Feb. 18: NO CLASS PRESIDENT'S DAY

Feb. 25: Discerning Vocation

- Lecture: Historical Models of Discernment—Francis Xavier Loyola; Rose of Viterbo
- Discussion: Personal Rules
- Required Reading: Parker Palmer, Let Your Life Speak. Listening for the Voice of Vocation
- Suggested Film: Entertaining Angels, about Dorothy Day

Mar. 3: Reading as Prayer: *Lectio Divina*, Lectoring, Spiritual Reading

- Discussion: Be able to bring an analytical critique to Chittister's book: does it work to use the Rule of St. Benedict with commentary for spiritual reading? What agenda does Chittister bring to the Rule? Do the commentaries add to the meaning and depth of the Rule? Explain why/how.
- Required Reading: Thompson, ch. 2; Chittister's commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict (choose at least 30 sections of the book to read).

Mar. 10: Pilgrimage, Labyrinth, Stations of the Cross

- Required Reading: L. Artress, Walking the Sacred Path
- Lecture: History of Pilgrimage and Labyrinths
- Due Today: 4-5 page (1000 word) book review of Artress due in class.

Mar. 17: Praying with Beads: Rosary, Jesus Prayer. Introduction to Mary

- Lecture: Mantra prayers and Marian Devotion

Mar. 24: No Class Spring Break

- Optional Experiential Component: Walk a Labyrinth, for example, the Chartres Labyrinth at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco.

Mar. 31: Marian Devotion: What does Mary Mean?

- Guest Speaker: Ginny Kubitz Moyer, author, teacher, wife, and mother (and many other roles). Her recently published book, Mary and Me explores the complex relationship women have with their devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, the Virgin Mother, the Blessed Virgin, etc.
- Due Today: 4-5 pages (1000 words) book review of a book related to your research project.

Apr. 7: Saints and Holy People

- Lecture: Hagiography as Story Telling; Canonization and What Makes it “Official”; Iconography and How Saints are depicted.
- Experiential Component: Each student is to tell a story about a holy person (i.e. the label “holy person” is defined and determined by you).

Apr. 14: Contemplative Prayer/Hermits and the Anchorite Tradition

- Lecture: Silence and Solitude in Christian Prayer
- Discussion: Be able to explain the method of prayer outlined in the Cloud. Analyze the usefulness of this book in pastoral settings today.
- Required Reading: The Cloud of Unknowing

Apr. 21: Community, liturgy, family life, story telling

- Lecture: Domestic “Monasteries;” Beguines, and Humiliati as Medieval Precursors to Small Christian Communities.
- Experiential Component: Each student is to tell a short story about a family member who has been influential in their life (positively or negatively).
- Required Reading: Thompson, Chapter 4, 8

Apr. 28: Confession, repentance, Lay Preaching

- Lecture: History of Confession and Lay Preaching
- Optional Experiential Component: Each student may present a short sermon (5 minutes maximum) (Please notify the professor by April 21 if you are going to preach.)
- Required Reading, Thompson, chapter 6

May 5: Student Presentations**May 12: Student Presentations**