Longing for God?
Christian Spirituality in Theological Perspective

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- Course Description: This course endeavors to introduce the broad traditions of spirituality from different historical eras in Christian history, from Antiquity, to Medieval time, through to Renaissance/Reformation and then to Modern time. It aims to achieve this by exposing the students to primary spiritual texts and then trying to highlight and extract the theological foundations and dimensions of the spiritual orientations in these texts, so that students with be introduced to theological hermeneutics in the study of spirituality. The primary goals of the course are for the students to learn what are some of the basic spiritual trends in Christianity, and to be able to assess every trend from a theological perspective and in light of the Christian theological tradition as a whole.

- Course’s Objectives:
  At the end of the course the students would:
  1- acquire conceptual, scriptural and historical understanding of the pluriform nature of Christian Spirituality/Religious Experience
  2- would have a chance to perceive the substantial and constitutive link between Spirituality and theology and to discern their mutual importance to each other.
  3- will learn how to reflect on and analyze some primary spiritual texts written by different Christian figures at different eras and learn how to connect them to today’s spirituality in Christianity.
  4- Will be given the chance to develop their education on one of the spiritual traditions in Christianity today by making presentations and reflections on them themselves.
- **Office Hours:** I shall be available every Monday and Tuesday, 10:00 am-1:00 pm. Students are welcomed to drop by my office after making an appointment. Asking for an appointment can be done via my email: nawad@hartsem.edu, or via my cell phone: 860-987 8048.

- **Suggested Primary Readings:** there is no single textbook for this course and there are no required texts to be read before the beginning of the class. Students are required to read the assigned texts for every session during the semester (you will find them recorded underneath the title of every session in the course’s outline section, and you will be able to obtain a pdf copy of each text from SONISWEB).

- **Course’s Outline and Reading Assignments**

**I- Week One (2017):**

1- Introducing the Course & Syllabus

2- On Christian Spirituality in the Course

**I- Conceptual Framework**

**II- Week Two (2017):**

3- On the Nature of Religious Experience (1): The Metaphysical Approach

4- On the Nature of Religious Experience (2): The Psychological Approach

**II- Scriptural Framework**

**III- Week Three (2017):**

1- Spirituality in the Old Testament (1): General Overview

2- Spirituality in the Old Testament (2): Textual Samples
   [R.R: Texts from the Bible: Abraham conversing with God; Jacob’s Dream; Job; the Suffering Servant]
IV- Week Four (2017):

3- Spirituality in the New Testament (1): An Overview (Dr. Shanell Smith)

4- Spirituality in the New Testament (2): Samples

III- Historical Framework

V- Week Five (2017):

1- Spirituality in Roman Empire (100-600 A.D.) (1): Overview
[**R.R:** A. Holder, *Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, pp. 73-89]

2- Spirituality in Roman Empire (100-600 A.D.) (2): Samples

VI- Week Six (2017):

3- Spirituality in Byzantium & the East (600-1700 A.D.) (1): Overview

4- Spirituality in Byzantium & the East (600-1700 A.D.) (2): Samples

VII- Week Seven (2017):

5- Spirituality in Medieval West (600-1450 A.D.) (1): Overview
[**R.R:** Holder, *Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, 106-121]

6- Spirituality in Medieval West (600-1450 A.D.) (2): Samples

VIII- Week Eight (2017):

7- Spirituality from Renaissance to Modern Time (1450-2000 A.D.) (1): Overview
[**R.R:** Holder, *Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality*, 122-155]
8- Spirituality from Renaissance to Modern Time (1450- 2000 A.D.) (2): Samples
[R.R: M. Luther, Luther’s Spirituality, pp. 4-5; Luther, Luther’s Works: Devotional Writings, pp. 183-186; Luther, Conversations with Martin Luther, pp. 210-211; Luther, What Luther Says, p. 1075; St. Teresa of Avila, Interior Castle, pp. 15-17; 35-37; 146-149; T. Merton, The Monastic Journey, pp. 11-23; 167-177; D. Bonhoeffer, Meditating on the Word, pp. 98-100; Bonhoeffer, Life Together, pp. 77-79; Bonhoeffer, Letters and Papers from Prison, pp. 347-349]

IV- Communal/ Churchly Framework

IX- Week Nine (2017):

1- Spirituality in Orthodox Christianity (presentation)
[R.R: T. Ware, The Orthodox Church, pp. 208-218; 264-273; 298-306]

2- Spirituality in Catholic Christianity (presentation)

Reading Week & Easter…Reading Week & Easter…Reading Week & Easter…

X- Week Ten (2017):

3- Spirituality in Lutheran Christianity (presentation)

4- Spirituality in Reformed Christianity (Presentation)

XI- Week Eleven (2017):

5- Spirituality in Anglican/Episcopal Christianiry (presentation)

6- Anabaptist/Born-again Spirituality (presentation)
[R.R: S. Murray, The Naked Anabaptist, pp. 109-127; 130-135; 138-141; 148-160]
XII- Week Twelve (2017):

7- Charismatic/Pentecostal Spirituality (presentation)

8- Black/African American Spirituality (presentation)
[R.R: M. Battle, The Black Church in America, pp. 22-42; 163-182]

XIII- Week Thirteen (2017):

25- Feminist Spirituality (presentation)

26- Mystical Spirituality (presentation)
[R.R: M. McIntosh, Mystical Theology, pp. 119-148]

XIV- Week Fourteen (2017):

27- Spirituality & Inter-Faith Encounter

28- Conclusion and Evaluation.

- Course Requirements

1) Assigned readings’ preparation and active class participation: Students are required to read these texts as thoroughly and perceptively as they can and then to demonstrate an active class participation by coming to the sessions with questions or comments on them and the taught materials therein.

2) Book Review: Students are required to write 4-6 pages-long book appraisals. The appraisal must:
   A- present a sufficient and accurate exposition of the book’s main argument and claims.
   B- offer a perceptive critical assessment of these argument and claims
   C- end with a proposal on how such a book is valuable for today’s readers on Christian Spirituality.

Students must submit this book appraisal to the instructor no later than the week Fourteen (the last week) of the course’s schedule. The book the students must review should be one of the following texts:

2) **Presentations**: the students are required to prepare a presentation on the spiritual experiences of one of the churchly traditions from section four in the syllabus’s outline. The text which the instructor proposes for every churchly spiritual theology has to be certainly read and prepared by all the students in the class. However, the presenter(s) are allowed to use extra materials and other information sources to prepare for their presentation and to make sure that they present the content of their presentation in the best way they deem necessary.

The instructor would ask the students to sign in for the required presentations during the first introductory session of the course. The presentation must be no more than **45 minutes** long. The second 45 minutes of the session would be spent in open discussion between the presenter and the classmates over the content of the presentation, the assigned text, and other aspects related to their subject. The students are free to use any audio-visual, additional reads or materials they need to perform their presentation. Every presenter must:

- present the subject of the presentation perceptively and coherently and to make sure that you include also some points from the content of the assigned text and the additional materials you use in your presentation.
- Give your own appraisal and point of view on the spirituality of the studied case. Do this objectively and positively, apart from any judgmental or contaminative attitude. Focus in your appraisal on the following question: **what is the central orientation in this churchly spirituality and how does it understand God-human Relationship?**
- attend to the questions of the classmates in a way that would invite for further class discussion on the studied spiritual case.

**- Grading Division:**

1- reading’s preparation and class participation **(40%)**
2- Presentation: **(30%)**
3- Book Review **(30%)**
- **Additional Policies:**

  1) **Forbidden in the Classroom:**

    - mobile phones, unless shut down completely, are disallowed in the classroom.
    - while bringing laptops or electronic Tablets is allowed for the purpose of recording or writing lecture notes, surfing the net or using any other program on the internet during the session is strictly forbidden.

  2) **Attendance:** Attendance in class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session please inform the professor in advance. Missing two sessions will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 10%. Missing three or more sessions will result in automatic failure of the course.

  3) **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the failure to give proper credit for the words or ideas of another person, whether published or unpublished, and is strictly prohibited. Credit will not be given for written work in this course containing plagiarism, and plagiarism may result in a failing grade for the entire course. Please consult the Plagiarism Policy on pp. 56-57 of the Hartford Seminary Catalogue 2011-2012, and/or contact the instructor with questions in this regard.

- **Selected Bibliography**

  The books enlisted here are by no means exhaustive of all the literature on Christian Spirituality that is available in the field. Students are encouraged to look for other primary and secondary literature and to use every theological book they believe is helpful for their presentations or their understanding of Christian Spirituality.