

Houston Graduate School of Theology
CS 665 Christian Devotional Classics
Spring 2018
Dr. Stefana Dan Laing
Adjunct Professor of Theology
stefanadanlaing@gmail.com



Houston Graduate School of Theology equips women and men to be ministers and messengers of God's mission of reconciliation through academic excellence, personal transformation, and leadership development

I. Course Description

An intensive study of the writing of selected Christian spiritual masters, emphasizing how the texts can be read and applied for growth in spiritual formation and life. Three hours.

II. Course Learning Outcomes (MASD-2; MDiv-4; MTS-10)

Upon completion of this course, the student will:

- A. Apply and integrate spiritual practices gleaned from reading the selected texts from the patristic writers, desert fathers and mothers, and the Early and High Middle Ages, demonstrated through several brief reflection papers.
- B. Demonstrate a growing understanding of Christian spirituality through reading, class discussion and interaction, and several papers in response to the course texts.
- C. Determine how the spirituality of the selected spiritual masters is biblically grounded and Christ-focused, and avenues for broader ecclesial applicability, demonstrated through the response papers.
- D. Describe, examine, and interpret spiritual themes gleaned from the reading and class discussion by means of a final, comprehensive reflective and integrative paper.

III. Texts and Course Schedule

[PDFs of some of these texts as well as additional works by these authors are available for free download via Christian Classics Ethereal Library (www.ccel.org)]

Chryssavgis, John. *In the Heart of the Desert: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers*. Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2003.

Gregory of Nyssa. *The Life of Moses*. Translation, Introduction, and Notes by Abraham Malherbe and Everett Ferguson. New York: Paulist,

John of the Cross, St. *Dark Night of the Soul*. Translated by E. Allison Peers. Westminster, MD: Newman, 1953; San Diego: Book Tree, 2016.

Thomas à Kempis. *The Imitation of Christ*. London: Penguin, 1952.

CS 665 Christian Devotional Classics
Assignment and Reading Schedule

*Due dates for assignments are marked by asterisks.

17 Jan 2018	Introduction to History of Christian Spirituality
24 Jan 2018	Themes in Christian Spirituality Chryssavgis, Intro, Chs. 1-6
31 Jan 2018	Themes in Desert Spirituality Chryssavgis, Chs. 7-15
7 Feb 2018*	Desert Spirituality Chryssavgis, Chs. 16-18; conclusion Response Paper #1 Due
14 Feb 2018*	Patristic Spirituality and Holy Reading <i>Life of Moses</i> , pp. 1-51 Spiritual Practice Reflection #1 Due
21 Feb 2018	<i>Historia and Theoria</i> <i>Life of Moses</i> , pp. 55-91
28 Feb 2018*	<i>Historia and Theoria</i> (cont'd) <i>Life of Moses</i> , pp. 91-137 Response Paper #2 Due
7 Mar 2018*	Scholasticism and Devotion <i>Imitation of Christ</i> , 11-89 Spiritual Practice Reflection #2 Due
14 Mar 2018	SPRING BREAK
21 Mar 2018	Reform Within and Without <i>Imitation of Christ</i> , pp. 91-138
28 Mar 2018	Reform of the Inner Life <i>Imitation of Christ</i> , pp.139-182
4 Apr 2018*	Spirituality in Communion <i>Imitation of Christ</i> , pp.183-217 Response Paper #3 Due
11 Apr 2018*	Journey and Ascent <i>Dark Night</i> , pp. 33-90 Spiritual Practice Reflection #3 Due

18 Apr 2018	Themes in Medieval Mysticism <i>Dark Night</i> , pp. 91-139
25 Apr 2018*	Ultimate Communion and the way of Love <i>Dark Night</i> , 140-193 Response Paper #4 Due
2 May 2018*	Conclusions, Syntheses and Trajectories Final Synthesis Paper Due Spiritual Practice Reflection #4 Due

IV. Course Requirements

A. Reading Log (25%)

Students are to keep account of their reading of the texts and the dates completed. Readings are due on the date listed for class discussion.

B. Response Papers/Source Engagements (40%)

Students will write **one** 5-page paper engaging each text of the class, for **four** response papers total. Each paper must contain: Introduction, brief biography of writer, and his or her context (1 p.); a summary of the text (1/2 to 1p.); spiritual themes and personal/practical applications (2 pp.); applications to be retrieved for the church (1 p.) Due dates for these response papers are listed in the course schedule. They will generally be due on the final date of discussion for that text.

C. Reflections on Spiritual Practices (10%)

Students will write four 500- to 600-word reflection papers (approximately 1 page, single-spaced) journaling their own practice of a particular spiritual practice associated with the masters under study. Students should select from the disciplines of: submission/humility, fasting, solitude, contemplative prayer, and holy/ contemplative Scripture reading. A different discipline must be undertaken for each reflection paper.

D. Final Synthesis Paper (20%)

Students will write a final paper of 7-8 pages in length. This **academic** paper will draw together all the themes and streams of thought and practice which are present across the sources studied in class. Students should note commonalities and overlaps, as well as divergences and features unique to each spiritual master/ mystic. Also notes should be spiritual counsel which is biblically grounded and Christ-centered, and which has the potential to impact the contemporary church. Use a minimum of 8 scholarly sources from the syllabus or your own research. The paper should follow Turabian format, use Times New Roman 12-point font, use page numbers in top right corner, use footnotes rather than end-notes, and be double-spaced.

E. Attendance (5%)

Regular attendance and regular submission of assignments on due dates in the syllabus is expected. The following guidelines have been approved for inclusion in all HGST syllabi and reflect standards for all courses:

Fall/Spring semester 15-session course – 3-absence maximum
 Summer term 8-session course – 1-absence maximum (equals 4 hours).
 6-session hybrid – 1-absence maximum
 4-session hybrid – 0-absence maximum

If a student reaches the designated number of absences, the student will no longer be allowed to stay in the class. The student does have the opportunity to appeal to the Academic Dean and should assume responsibility for scheduling that meeting as soon as possible.

F. Extra Credit

For 5 grade points of extra credit, you may put together a simple devotional guide of 10 devotions (for a general or specific church population) drawn from the four major texts we have covered in class or other sources you have encountered through the course readings. Each devotional must be 300-500 words, and include a Bible verse/passage, quote from a spiritual master, the devotional material itself, and a suggested practice/application for the reader. This will be due no later than **May 2, 2018**. This resource may be submitted in digital or hard copy format.

G. Student Workload Expectations

Class hours: 45

Reading (Chryssavgis, Gregory, Thomas, John): 613pp @ 10 pp/hr = 62

Final Paper: 8 pages @ 1 hr/pg = 8

Spiritual Practices reflection papers: 4 papers at 2 hrs/pg = 8

Response Papers: 20 pages @ 1 hr/pg = 20

Total Hours = 143

- V. Course Grading Scale** - Grading criteria include following the assignment directions (30%), compiling a paper or project with graduate-level content (50%), using proper grammar and writing techniques, and adhering to correct formatting, e.g., third person writing, paragraph spacing (20%). An “A” represents excellent work in all categories; “B” is good; “C” is fair; and “D” is poor. Plusses and minuses will be assigned as appropriate.

A	100-92	C+	79-78
A-	91-90	C	77-74
B+	89-87	C-	73-70
B	86-84	D	69-68
B-	83-80	F	below 68

Assessment: (% of grade from each assignment)

Reading:	25%
Response Papers:	40%
Reflection Papers:	10%
Final Synthesis paper:	20%
Attendance:	5%

Explanation of Grades:

You should not expect the highest grade for merely meeting the requirements of any assignment. All submitted work will be evaluated according to the following criteria: content, critical thinking skills, organization, communication, documentation, grammar, spelling, style, and form.

An “A” paper is exceptional in all of the above criteria. The writing style engages the reader. Organization is characterized by coherence and logic. The text is marked by originality of ideas and outstanding critical reflection. Documentation is plentiful and accurate. The student not only thoroughly answers each question or addresses each topic; he or she provides a convincing presentation that explores all of the implications related to the question or topic.

A “B” paper is technically competent in all of the above criteria. The writing style is clear and reasonable, and the writing is generally effective without rising to sustained excellence. Each question or topic is covered completely and the student engages in above average critical reflection and commentary.

A “C” paper represents competent but underdeveloped work. C papers are adequately but obviously organized, and the argument tends toward oversimplification without being implausible. The student fails to answer all of the questions or has failed to cover the topic completely. Errors are sprinkled throughout. In some C papers, excellent ideas are marred by poor presentation. In other C papers, the organization, structure, and grammar are not flawed, but the ideas and how they are developed need work.

A “D” paper demonstrates some effort on the author’s part but is too marred by technical problems or flaws in thinking and development of ideas to be considered competent work.

An “F” paper has received a failing grade, usually reserved for work that demonstrates minimal effort on the author’s part (adapted from Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching*).

VI. Classroom-related Academic Policies

- A. Work is expected on the due date. Late papers will incur a grade reduction.
- B. Turnitin.com
 - 1. All written assignments are subject to required submission to www.turnitin.com to check for originality and style. The assignments that are required for submission will be described in the syllabus.
 - 2. Students will create an account at www.turnitin.com. After doing so, the student will join the course page with the code and password supplied by the instructor. A list of assignments and due dates will be available on the course page.
 - 3. Students will submit assignments by the due date and time and will be required to submit the assignments in a hard copy format as well.
- C. *Please review the Academic Catalog for requirements regarding Incompletes and Plagiarism issues. For more information on Library Services, please download the Library Handbook from the HGST website.*

VII. Notes for Writing Assignments

All writing assignments should conform to Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 8th Edition. This includes matters of style and format.

The instructor requires the use of footnotes for documentation when more than one resource is cited. The student should number pages. According to Turabian, page numbers should be in the upper right hand corner, except on pages with major headings (titles). Margins should be one inch on all four sides, except where major headings (titles) require a two-inch top margin. The student should use 12-point Times New Roman font throughout. The instructor prefers that the student **not** use presentation or report binders or folders. She prefers submission of papers with staples or binder clips.

Critical, or formal, writing differs from colloquial writing or spoken English at several points. The student should note the following guidelines for critical writing. The instructor expects students to follow these guidelines strictly for academic-style assignments. Failure to do so will be penalized.

- Avoid 1st or 2nd person references (“I,” “we,” or “you”). Keep the written projects objective and professional. The student must remember that imperative forms are second person.
- Never use contractions.
- Avoid passive voice construction (i.e., The student should write “God chose Joshua” rather than “Joshua was chosen by God.”). Some exceptions are necessary, but limiting the use of passive voice is a good policy.
- Be sure that number and tense always agree (i.e., Do not write in one place that “Brueggemann argues . . .” and at another place “Brueggemann argued . . .”). Subject-verb agreement is imperative.
- Spellcheck! Dr. Towne does not tolerate misspelled words. Failure to spellcheck will result in a substantive reduction on the grade for written assignments. Grammar check works as well!
- All pronouns should have clear antecedents. Avoiding “it is” and “there is” in the paper removes much of the ambiguity of pronoun usage.
- Sentence fragments are unacceptable. Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate.

VIII. Bibliography of Additional Resources

Athanasius. “Life of Antony” In *Early Christian Lives*. Translated and edited by Carolinne White. New York: Penguin, 1998.

Augustine. *Confessions*. Translated by R. S. Pine-Coffin. London: Penguin, 1961.

Davis, Stephen. *The Cult of St. Thecla*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Foster, Richard. *Celebration of Discipline*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998.

Foster, Richard J., and Gayle D. Beebe. *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2009.

Gerontius. "Life of Melania." In *Handmaids of the Lord*. Translated by Joan M. Petersen. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1996.

Gregory of Nyssa. "Life of Macrina." In *Handmaids of the Lord*. Translated by Joan M. Petersen. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1996.

Harvey, Susan Ashbrook, and David Hunter. *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Laing, Stefana Dan. *Retrieving History: Memory and Identity Formation in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.

MacHaffie, Barbara J. *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition*, 2nd ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006.

McIntosh, Mark A. *Mystical Theology: Challenges in Contemporary Theology*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1998.

McLaughlin, J. B. trans. *St. Antony of the Desert, by St. Athanasius*. Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1995.

Mursell, Gordon, ed. *The Story of Christian Spirituality: Two Thousand Years, from East to West*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001.

Petersen, Joan, ed. and trans. *Handmaids of the Lord: Holy Women in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1996.

Pioneers of the Spirit: Julian of Norwich, DVD. The Trinity Television Collection, 2005.

Rousseau, Philip. "Christian Asceticism and the Early Monks." In *Early Christianity: Origins and Evolution to A.D. 600*, edited by Ian Hazlett, 112-122. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.

Sittser, Gerald L. *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2007.

Tucker, Ruth A., and Walter Liefeld. *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987.

Underhill, Evelyn. *The Mystics of the Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002.

Velasco, Concha, Hector Alterio, Francisco Rabal, et al. *St. Teresa of Ávila*, DVD. Directed by Josefina Molina. Ignatius Press, 2008.

Williams, D. H. "Similis et Dissimilis: Gauging Our Expectations of the Early Fathers." In *Ancient Faith for the Church's Future*, edited by Mark Husbands and Jeffrey Greenman, 69-89. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.