

NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

SPFM 7206 Christian Spirituality and Health (*online*)

Fall 2012 Preliminary Syllabus

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*Walk in all the ways I have commanded you, that it may be well with you
Jeremiah 7:23*

Note: This preliminary syllabus is posted as of May 29, 2012. The final syllabus with complete assignments will be available by June 26.

Course description:

The purpose of this spiritual formation course is to explore the interrelationships between spirituality and health from a personal faith perspective. The multiple dimensions of Christian well being will be considered focusing on the individual with consideration given to spirituality and the health of families, congregations and communities. 1 credit

This course can serve as a substitute for SPFM 6303 Embodiment.

Class format:

Class format will include online discussion, readings, didactic presentation, small group work, personal reflection, and action. Twice during the semester we will arrange simultaneous discussions. As a one credit class students should anticipate an average of 3 hours of work per week for class. Process is significant to the experience of spiritual formation class, thus one needs to allow unhurried time and space to reflect on the class material.

Course objectives:

1. Discuss the multiple dimensions of health as they interface with Christian spirituality
2. Identify and reflect upon the meaning of honoring the body from a personal faith perspective
3. Identify issues of stewardship in the care of one's own being
4. Engage in a personal discipline of health and reflect on the experience
5. Identify life affirming and life denying habits that influence one's well being

Course requirements:

- Class participation is essential to this class. Reading and assignments need to be completed in the allotted time frame so the class can progress together at an appropriate pace.
- Weekly discussion will occur through the discussion board that can be done at the student's convenience during the week. The content for each week will have discussion questions for your reflection and response to be posted by Wednesday midnight of each week, and by Friday midnight of each week responses to two fellow students are to be posted. The purpose of this schedule is to enable observance of the Sabbath – a health promoting commandment - for those who so choose.
- You cannot successfully complete this course without completing the weekly readings and assignments. If you miss more than 3 weeks of posting (which means either neglecting to post OR posting late without having requested prior approval from the professor), you will not pass this course.
- Students will identify an area for personal growth related to their health, set a **realistic** goal to work towards during the semester, and reflect on personal spiritual dimensions of this process. Students will be in accountability groups of 2-3 persons for following through on this goal.
- A 4-5 page reflection paper will be submitted at the end of class exploring one's personal journey of integrating spirituality and health.
- Students who have not taken a NPTS online class before are required to complete an orientation to online education.

Required Texts:

Body Talk Speaking the Words of Health (2007) by Ingrid Friesen Moser, Herald Press ISBN: 978-0-8361-9370-1

Awaken the Senses (2011) by J. Brent Bill & Beth Booram,
Intervarsity Press ISBN: 978-0-8308-3560-7

Office Hours:

Online: I will be active in the course on Monday and Thursday and check email regularly Monday – Friday.

On campus: Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1-3:30 PM

Office Location: Nyvall #31

Grading:

Pass/Fail based on participation and completing **all** course requirements. In order to pass students must complete assignments within the allotted time frame unless they have received **prior** approval for an extension from the professor.

Confidentiality:

This is a spiritual formation course and all personal information shared in class discussion is confidential and should not be shared with anyone. Students who have not done so for prior NPTS spiritual formation classes should read and sign the confidentiality agreement.

Integrative Reflection Guidelines:

Due: Friday, December 7, 2012

In light of what you have learned in this class write a 4-5 page reflection paper on the current state of your well being and identify plans for how you might grow in life-affirming behavior in the future, addressing the multiple dimensions of well being discussed in class.

Reflection papers should be a dialogue between you and the class material, not a report. Discuss the thoughts and feelings that this material evokes as well as any issues that it raises for you personally.

Talking about issues for people in general or seminary students in particular is not appropriate for an integrative reflection. Rather you should reflect on your own personal experience as your life has interfaced with the material of class this semester. One way to tell that you are doing this is your use of pronouns. A reflection paper should use “I” language rather than talk about others, as in the following example:

I have found the regular health discipline challenging. My personal goal was to run at least once a week, but I have found that I allow distractions to get in my way. It has been hard for me to make self care a priority, even though I know intellectually care of my body is important in being able to do my studies, I find it hard to live that way. This class has challenged me to look seriously at the values reflected in the choices I make about how I honor or dishonor my body.

There is no prescribed outline for the paper. In case it is helpful, the following questions are provided to stimulate your thinking as you write your integrative reflection. They do not all need to each be addressed explicitly:

- How are you currently experiencing your body? How is your experience of your body related to your spirituality and your relationship with God?
- What in this class did you find thought provoking or challenging, and why was that so?

- What was your personal experience with the self care discipline? What did you learn from the self care discipline experience?
- Where are you currently in taking care of your physical, mental and relational well being, and was there anything in the class that stimulated your thinking in these areas?
- In what areas might self care be challenging for you as you contemplate continued seminary studies and/or moving into ministry?

Guidelines for Spiritual Formation Groups

Twice during the semester we will have small group conversation via phone or Skype. The following are guidelines for that experience.

Begin with Silence

Leader: Invite the group members to respond.

- Read the conversation question for the day. It is in the syllabus.
- Encourage each member to include a statement about the Scripture passage from the week, if desired.

First Response (5 minutes)

Clarifying question (1 minute)

These questions are only to clarify something *already* shared. It does not expand the story, challenge the story or lead to getting more information.

Silence (1 minute)

Responses: (2 minutes) Other group members may give a brief response such as a word of encouragement or simply “that was touching”. This is not a time to give advice, tell one’s own story, challenge the theology or even “speak a word” to/at the presenter.

Silence

Leader: Invite the next Participant to speak when ready. Follow the same format (a. to e.) for each person

Continue until all who want to participate have done so.

Group Prayer:

The prayers may be of gratitude for what has already been spoken. It may also include needs and concerns of each group member. Please be in prayer for one another throughout the week.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Remember what is shared in the formation group cannot be shared with anyone outside the group (including spouses).

CLASS SCHEDULE

The detailed course schedule with readings and weekly assignments will be posted in the final syllabus.