Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary- Boston
Spiritual Formation for Ministry: Integrative Seminar

“Practices of the Word-Centered Life” IS 521

Sept 7, 2013 1:30-3:30pm 12th Baptist Church  Course Director: Teri Elliott-Hart
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Facilitators:  Dean Borgman, Cherry Gorton, Mark Harden, Teri Elliott-Hart, Mark Scott,

Seminar Description: This Integrative Seminar addresses the spiritual life of the Christian in the context of preparation for ministry. In a multi-denominational, multicultural learning community it is important to develop sensitivity to the different ways people encounter God in work, worship and prayer. This course introduces students to practices of Christian spirituality for their own formation and for leading others in the processes of spiritual transformation.

This Seminar, comprised of 5 modules, fulfills a non-credit graduation requirement across all degree programs. Students entering in fall 2013 will take 5 modules; other students will attend the seminars for the duration of their studies.

Spread out five semesters, the Integrative Seminar provides resources and opportunity to integrate aspects of seminary life and learning with the student’s personal formation as a disciple and leader. The “Articles” of the Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary Mission Statement are embedded in the themes of the course, organized into distinct but overlapping expressions of Christian Spirituality. ¹ These themes will be discussed in one of five modules, offered at the beginning of each term.

SEQUENCE OF MODULES:
Module 1. IS 521 Practices of the Word-Centered Life  (fall 2013 & spring 2016)
Module 2. IS 522 Practices of the Virtuous Life  (spring 2014)
Module 3. IS 523 Practices of the Compassionate Life  (fall 2014)
Module 5. IS 525 Prayer and the Practices of the Sacramental Life  (fall 2015)

¹ These six “streams” or traditions are reflective of the work of Richard Foster and Renovare, a church resource for understanding and promoting the breadth of Christian practices within Christianity historically and cross culturally.
Course Objectives: This course aims to encourage students to engage in meaningful study and praxis of spiritual formation and provides ample opportunities to: 1) explore the diverse spiritual traditions of the church 2) engage in various experiential spiritual formation practices in and outside the classroom, 3) grow in the ability to integrate theology and spirituality with everyday life and 4) begin to be able to articulate their own framework for understanding how people thrive spiritually and apply that to ministry settings. (MDiv goal 4/MA goals 2, 6)

Module 1: Practices of the Word Centered Life

The first module, offered Sept 7, 2013, is divided into two components: a presentation and breakout groups. Module 1 explores approaching the Scriptures as God’s Living Word to each of us in the midst of challenging academic studies. The module and readings emphasize historical and contemporary spiritual practices that lead to deeper integration of faith and life through scripture. Our theme also encompasses the following “Articles” of the Seminary’s mission statement. Article 1: To encourage students to become knowledgeable of God’s inerrant Word, competent in its interpretation, proclamation and application in the contemporary world. Article 2: To maintain academic excellence in the highest tradition of Christian scholarship in the teaching of the biblical, historical and theological disciplines.²

Module design: We will gather in the sanctuary of 12th Baptist Church for a presentation. Students will then split into smaller groups with an assigned faculty/staff person as facilitator. Please note the color coded assignment you received before lunch and proceed to the assigned classroom space for small group discussions.

Reading for Module 1:


² These “Articles” are articulated in “The Mission and Vision Statement” of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary.

**Description of assignments** (Grading is “credit”/”no credit” only)

**Participation:** Students will receive credit toward the completion of the Seminar for attendance at the Saturday Sept 7th Module and the completion of personal reflection assignments. The purpose of the assignments is to foster habits of reflection and nurture the students’ relationship with God as integral to seminary life. *Every semester you are registered for classes you should also register for a Seminar module.*

1. **Read Calhoun and Peterson**
2. **Ongoing written reflection exercises** (due by the last day of each semester): Students are asked to complete the readings and to keep a journal related to the theme and readings. This journal is a space for responses to the readings as well as to take note of experimenting with spiritual practices recommended by Peterson and Calhoun.

Students should be attentive to how course materials and lectures in their other classes intersect with the theme of the Word-formed life. Students will be provided with an optional journaling template as well as other resources on line (at the Sakai page for IS 521).

We encourage you to write your reflections at least twice per month:

✓ Your **requirement** is to turn in one of these (1-2pp) as a reflection essay on the theme the Word Centered Life intersecting with your fall classwork. It is due by **December 20th**.

✓ Professors may accept submission of this work to be considered for extra credit in their class. Extra credit may be applied to the participation/reading log portion of the course grade. The process for submission will be decided upon by the faculty member of the course.

✓ All students should submit a copy of their reflective essay to Dr Elliott-Hart, Course Director, via the SAKAI website to receive credit toward the graduation requirement no later than December 20th; work will not be returned.
Course Bibliography and Recommended Reading


Campolo, Tony and Mary Darling. *The God of Intimacy and Action: Reconnecting Ancient Spiritual Practices, Evangelism, and Justice*


Mulholland, M. Robert, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation.*


“When we carefully consider how Jesus lived whole among us in the flesh, we learn how we are to live-truly live-empowered by him who is with us always…We then begin an intentional *imitatio Christi*, imitation of Christ, not in some slavish or literal fashion but by catching the spirit and power in which he lived and by learning to walk in his steps (1Pet 2:21).”

(Foster, *Streams of Living Water*)