Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary- Boston
Spiritual Formation in Ministry: Integrative Seminar
“Practices of the Virtuous Life” IS 522

January 25, 2014, 1:30-3:30pm

Course Director: Dr Teri Elliott-Hart
telliott-hart@gcts.edu

Facilitators:  Prof. Dean Borgman, Rev Ralph Kee & Cherry Gorton
Prof. Jim Chritchlow Prof. Jacqueline Dyer
Prof. Patricia Batten Mentor Mark Scott
Prof. Eldin Villafane

Description: The Integrative Seminar addresses the spiritual life of the Christian in the context of preparation for ministry. This Seminar, comprised of 5 modules, spread out over five semesters 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. Every semester you are registered for classes you should also register for a Seminar module.

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 2: Practices of the Virtuous Life

Description: This module, offered January 25, 2014, is divided into two components: breakout groups and student reading and reflection throughout the semester. Module 2 explores practices which help us grow in the virtues that characterize the life of Jesus and are accessible to us by the Holy Spirit. The module and readings emphasize historical and contemporary spiritual practices that lead to deeper integration of faith and life through scripture.

Module design: Our theme is introduced during the Convocation. We continue the seminar after lunch. Students will 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 2:**


**Writing Assignment** (Grading is “credit”/”no credit” only)

- **Written reflection exercise** (due by the last day of each semester) Students are asked to complete the readings and encouraged through weekly class devotions to experiment with the spiritual practices recommended by Thomas and Calhoun. Students should be attentive to how course materials and lectures in their other classes intersect with the theme of the Practices of the Virtuous Life.

  ✓ Your requirement is to turn in (1-2pp) reflection essay on the theme the Practicing Virtue. It is due by **April 25th**. Prompts for reflection are on the course webpage. All students should submit a copy of their reflective essay to Dr Elliott-Hart, Course Professor, via the SAKAI website to receive credit toward the graduation requirement.

  ✓ Professors may accept submission of this work to be considered for extra credit in their class. The process for submission will be decided upon by the faculty member of the course.

  ✓ **Participation:** Students will receive credit toward the completion of the Seminar for attendance at the Module as well as the completion of personal reflection assignments.
CLASS DEVOTIONS: TOPICS for SPRING SEMESTER

Class devotions should focus on the virtues, or character development in Christ, from the point of view of our distinct course content each week. We are providing a unified experience as a worshipping community throughout the semester. This list of devotional topics will be posted around the campus for faculty and students.

Topics are provided for all weeks of classes, excluding the exam period at the end of the semester.

**WEEKLY TOPICS**

**Wk 1  Humility**  Jesus says: “Apart from me you can do nothing.” How do we cultivate radical dependence on God? What practices help us renounce self-righteousness, pride, and an independent spirit?

**Wk2  Surrender**  “...we share in his sufferings in order that we also share in his sufferings.” What practices help us be open to God’s shaping us through blessings and trials? How do we get the place of giving up control to the Lord’s lead?

**Wk 3  Detachment (Freedom from idolatry) **  “Delight yourselves in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart”. How do we pursue radical attachment to Christ? What things do we need to give up attachments to so that we are free to worship, to trust, and allow God to define our desires?

**Wk4  Hope**  Hope gives us victory over despair. Hope is built on Christ’s promises. Is Christian hope the same as optimism?

**Wk5  Generosity**  “Blessed are those that hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.” How does God’s Spirit move us to generosity? Is being filled with the spirit enough to satisfy our hungers?

**Wk6  Obedience**  “...Godliness consists not merely in having a heart intent on doing the will of God, but having a heart that actually does it.” Jonathan Edwards

**Wk7  Love**  “Now abide in faith hope and love, but the greatest of these is love. What does the practice of love look like in your life? How do we nurture our affections for God through Christ?

**Wk8  Thankfulfulness**  “Give thanks in all circumstances.” Joy and thankfulness seem to go hand in hand. How can we make thankfulness our normal attitude?

**Wk9  Patience**  “A person’s wisdom gives patience: it is one’s glory to overlook his offense.” (Prov 19) Are you growing in patience and long-suffering?

**Wk10  Penitence**  “Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is here.” Do you regularly practice confession? Why is penitence one of the classical virtues?
Wk11  **Gentleness** Jesus described himself as “gentle and humble in heart” (Matt 11). How does that quality look in your life? When is it a challenge to exude gentleness.

Wk12  **Courage** “…He has given unto us a spirit of power, a spirit of love and a sound mind.” Which fears keep you from embracing the fortitude that faith provides?

---

**Why pay attention to the Virtues?** Discipleship includes developing spiritual practices so that the goodness of God’s divine nature can shine through us. “We ...are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is Spirit.” 2 Cor 3:18