MC 501 Spiritual Formation
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Fall 2010: Monday 9:15AM-12:15PM
S. Steve Kang: ss kang@gcts.edu or 978-646-4082
Office Hours: M 12:30-2PM; T & R 12:30-2PM; W 8-9:30AM
To sign up, go to:
https://docs.google.com/document/edit?id=11B8wVIWDOgUzYhoD5JkPJ9mQHCh3tuQL5I
H4RX-E&hl=en&authkey=CKTJhLMG#

Course Description:
The foundational course in the Division of Ministry, and an introduction to theological seminary. A beginning working knowledge of spiritual formation leading to a lifetime of continuing education. Spiritual exercise and small group practice for personal application and for leadership in the church (From the GCTS 2005-07 catalog).

This course aims to encourage students to engage in meaningful praxis by providing ample opportunities for students to (1) explore spiritual traditions of the church, (2) engage in various experiential spiritual formation opportunities in- and outside the classroom, (3) grow deeply in theory and practice of one of the spiritual traditions in relation to other traditions of the church, and (4) develop a plan for life-long habitus of spiritual formation. The class is intended to foster a sense of the “learning community” so as to live out more fully the notion of the communion of saints even during the seminary years.

Course Covenant:
“This course is intended to introduce you to both the academic fields of Christian Spirituality and Christian Spiritual Formation and to help you nurture your own spiritual life. Consequently, the course will have both an academic side as well as a very personal and applied side. I invite you to take this course with a desire to excel at both the bookish side as well as the personal side. You have been trained for years to take the academic aspects of a course seriously (e.g., paper writing, quizzes, and reports), and I ask you to take the applied side even more seriously. It is in applying the material that you have the opportunity for repentance and growth. It will be easy to ‘fake’ a performance in these areas, but the ease of doing so does not minimize the importance of doing this ...with all your might.

We are members of an academic community with high scholarly standards, a commitment to pursuing truth, a recognition that our actions affect others in the community and seeking to follow Jesus’ example of integrity and truthfulness. Academic honesty is essential for establishing and maintaining the trust that is fundamental to the educational process. Examples of academic dishonesty, which will result in disciplinary action, most pertinent to this class include, but are not limited to:

- CHEATING: Using unauthorized material or unauthorized help from another person in any work or examination submitted for academic credit.
- FABRICATION: Inventing information, citations, reporting participation in activities never done, or inflating the effort put in and/or the effect of various self-reported spiritual activities.
- FACILITATING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Providing unauthorized material or information to another person.
- PLAGIARISM: Representing the work of another as one’s own without acknowledging the source.
- MISREPRESENTATION: Giving the impression of having done more significant work than you actually did. Examples include: padding references with works not consulted, doing less than your fair share on a group project.
The readings in this class give you an opportunity to participate in the Communion of the Saints as you sit at the feet and learn from those who have gone before us. The expectation is that we will seek to engage these authors and traditions with a spirit of inquiry, learning and respect.\(^a\)

**Course Texts:**
**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**Course Expectations:**
- **Classroom Attendance and Participation** (10%)
  Students should be ready during each class period to (1) recall the major tenets of the readings and be able to reflect the readings theologically and ethically; (2) raise questions pertaining to the readings and brainstorm educational/ministerial implications on the readings; (3) actively participate in classroom activities and (4) promote and maintain the learning & formational community in class.

- **Spiritual Formation Small Group Participation** (30%)
  Students will participate in a semester-long small group spiritual formation experience based on *A Spiritual Formation Workbook* as they are to: (1) attend and be on time for at least seven out of eight sessions (if absent, the student needs to do the make-up work by the following session); (2) have read through carefully the corresponding section of the *Workbook* for each week and responded to all the “Reflection Questions” in writing in that section of the *Workbook* prior to the small group session (an accountability check at the beginning of the group time); (3) have put into practice and reflected (in writing) on one of the exercises that the student agreed in the prior group meeting; (4) participate fully and make every effort to facilitate spiritual formation and uplifting atmosphere in the lives of fellow students in the group; (5) facilitate one of the sessions during the semester and provide constructive comments to other facilitators during the debriefing time at the end of each session; and (6) write and include one single-spaced-page reflection of his/her small group experience when handing in the *Workbook* to the instructor at the end of the semester (December 6, at the beginning of the class).

- **Spiritual Adventure Project** (20%)
  Between October 23 (Sat) and 29 (Fri), the student will carve out an hour and a half each of the four days of the student’s choosing to: (1) engage in one of the four reflexive adventure exercise-prompt each time (The student is to engage in only one exercise per a day.); (2) write one single-spaced-page reflection (Please include your name, mail box number, date you completed the activity & time you spent on exercise.): a. In one paragraph, describe and reflect on your level of engagement (interaction with attention) and b. In two paragraphs, summarize what you did and what you discovered (about God

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\(^a\) I am indebted to a wise friend and former colleague from my Wheaton days, Jim Wilhoit, for articulating these valuable “covenantal” insights in a course such as this one.
The four reflexive adventure exercise-prompts are:

1. Reflect on the following passages and respond to the question “Do you believe you are God’s ‘beloved’?”

   “After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.’” Matthew 3: 16-17

   “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.” Romans 5:5-6

   “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? … No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:35, 37-39

   “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will – a to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.” Ephesians 1:4-6

2. As you review The Return of the Prodigal Son that you have already read, spend some time in solitude. Before God and your soul, seek to discern what are some of the ways you keep the reality of God’s love at a distance.

3. Henri Nouwen, in The Life of the Beloved, indirectly writes about the true and false self. He tells us that when we live out of our false self we are not able to experience the love of God because God loves people, not facades. Take some time in solitude to reflect on how the themes in these two paragraphs, arrogance and failure to listen to God’s voice of love, are present in your life.

   “Arrogance is the other side of self-rejection...putting oneself on a pedestal to avoid being seen as you see yourself...another way of dealing with the feelings of worthlessness.”

   “I want you to hear that voice. It is not a very loud voice because it is an intimate voice. It comes from a very deep place. It is soft and gentle. I want you to gradually hear that voice. We both have to hear that voice and to claim for ourselves that that voice speaks the truth, our truth. It tells us who we are. That is where the spiritual life starts – by claiming the voice that calls us the beloved.”

4. Forgiveness and healing are so central to experiencing God’s love. Take some time in solitude to discern where you may need to extend forgiveness or receive it. Also, reflect on what area(s) of your life & past that are in need of God’s healing. Ask God what forgiveness and healing issues you should work on first. Make plans to do it. 

   Later in the semester you will be asked to share with one person in the class in confidence.
• **Spiritual Exemplar Project** (40%)  
The student is to identify a historical exemplar/mentor from the list below at the beginning of the semester (no switching of the exemplar allowed after the second session); read up on his/her life, teaching, ministry, and his/her impact in the church throughout the semester; and write: (A) a research-reflection paper and (B) two single-spaced teaching-learning handout. The student is to send electronically (two separate documents **with the student’s name on the title of each document**, in the Microsoft Word format) to the instructor by 11:59pm on December 13.

(A) In the paper, the student is to respond to the following questions: (1) What was the condition of the Christian community s/he found herself/himself in?; (2) What were some salient life-issues from his/her background that propelled him/her to respond to the issues/conditions/challenges at hand?; (3) How was s/he biblically informed?; (4) How did his/her teaching, ministry, and/or devotion impact the church in his/her time?; (5) What are some enduring legacies of the exemplary figure and/or the institution or tradition s/he inspired?; (6) What have you learned about God and yourself from the exemplar?; (7) How has and will s/he inform your personhood – academically, spiritually and ministerially – as a minister of the Gospel?  The paper should be about 12 pages.

**All citations (footnotes) should be in Turabian format.** See Turabian, Kate L. *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 6th Edition.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996 or any online help on the formatting.

(B) Based on the paper, the student is to prepare two single-spaced teaching-learning handout: (a) introducing the exemplar based on his/her responses to (1) through (6) in the paper; and (b) generating appropriate spiritual exercises that stem from the exemplar’s life and ministry that would invite people to engage in or enhance group and/or personal spiritual formation in the church.

**The Contemplative Tradition**
- Benedict of Nursia (c.480-c.547)
- Clare of Assissi (c.1193-1253)
- Julian of Norwich (c.1342-c.1413)
- Catherine of Siena (c.1347-380)
- John of the Cross (1542-1591)
- Brother Lawrence (or Nicholas Herman) (1611-1691)

**The Holiness Tradition**
- John Cassian (c.360-c.435)
- Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)
- Thomas a Kempis (1379-1471)
- Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556)
- Teresa of Avila (or Teresa of Jesus) (1515-1582)

**The Charismatic Tradition**
- Gregory of the Great (c.540-604)
- Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179)
- Francis of Assisi (1182 – 1226)
- Sundar Singh (c.1889-1929)

- Aimee Semple McPherson (1890-1944)

**The Social Justice Tradition**
- Catherine of Genoa (1447-1510)
- Roger Williams (1603-1683)
- William Wilberforce (1759-1833)
- Sojourner Truth (c.1797-1883)

**The Evangelical Tradition**
- Basil the Great (c. 330-379)
- John Chrysostom (c.347-407)
- Dominic (c.1170-1221)
- Francis Xavier (1506-1552)
- John Mott (1865-1955)

**The Incarnational Tradition**
- John of Damascus (c.675-749)
- Michelangelo (1475-1564)
- John Henry Newman (1801-1890)
- J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)
- Flannery O’Connor (1925-1964)
- Late Papers will be docked a letter grade for each day they are late.

**Course Outline:**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading &amp; Assignment</th>
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<td>September 13</td>
<td>- Introduction to the Course</td>
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<td>- Spiritual Formation Small Group</td>
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<td>- Formation</td>
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<td>- Spirituality &amp; Spiritual Formation</td>
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<td>September 20</td>
<td>- Spiritual (Mal- &amp; De-) Formation during the Seminary Years</td>
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<td>- Spiritual Yearning, Longing for</td>
<td>Foster, Introduction, ch. 1, <em>Smith</em>, Introduction,</td>
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<td>- Home &amp; the Communion with God</td>
<td>Starting a Group, Session 1</td>
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<td><strong>Group Spiritual Formation Meeting 1</strong></td>
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<td>September 27</td>
<td>- Discovering and Practicing the Word-Centered Life</td>
<td><em>Foster</em>, ch. 6, <em>Smith</em>, Session 6</td>
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<td><strong>Group Spiritual Formation Meeting 2</strong></td>
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<td>October 4</td>
<td>- Discovering and Practicing the Prayer-Filled Life</td>
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<td>October 11</td>
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<td><strong>READING WEEK</strong></td>
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<td>October 18</td>
<td>- Discovering and Practicing the Virtuous Life</td>
<td><em>Foster</em>, ch. 3, <em>Smith</em>, Session 3</td>
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<td><strong>Group Spiritual Formation Meeting 4</strong></td>
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<td>October 25</td>
<td>10/25 NO CLASS</td>
<td><strong>Spiritual Adventure Project due on October 29 at 11:59pm</strong></td>
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<td>November 1</td>
<td>- Discovering and Practicing the Spirit-Empowered Life</td>
<td><em>Foster</em>, ch. 4, <em>Smith</em>, Session 4</td>
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<td>November 8</td>
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<td>November 15</td>
<td>- Discovering and Practicing the Compassionate Life</td>
<td><em>Foster</em>, ch. 5, <em>Smith</em>, Session 5</td>
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<td>November 22</td>
<td>- Discovering and Practicing the Sacramental Life</td>
<td><em>Foster</em>, ch. 7, <em>Smith</em>, Session 7</td>
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<td>November 29</td>
<td>- Spiritual Formation in the Church I</td>
<td><em>Wilhoit</em>, chs. 1-4</td>
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<td>December 6</td>
<td>- Spiritual Formation in the Church II</td>
<td><em>Wilhoit</em>, chs. 5-10</td>
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<td>- Closure</td>
<td><strong>Spiritual Formation Workbook due in class</strong></td>
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<td>December 13</td>
<td><strong>Spiritual Exemplar Project due at 11:59pm</strong></td>
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**Bibliography**

Forthcoming...