MC 501 Spiritual Formation  
Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary  
Spring 2013: Monday 9AM-12PM  
S. Steve Kang: sskang@gcts.edu or 978-646-4082 (and mc501sf@gmail.com)  
Office Hours: Drop-in hours (no appointment necessary): Monday 1-2PM; Tuesday 1:30-2:30PM; Appointment only: Monday 2-3PM; Tuesday 8-11AM  
To sign up for an appointment, please visit: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FLjPsF1FvZNgnKh0pLIW6d8tUixLIf/Fs5zjzVr7eVAx8B/edit

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 & small group practice for personal application and for leadership in the church (From the GCTS 2012-13 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, 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.”

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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.
**Course Texts:**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**Course Schedule:**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading &amp; Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>Session 1 - Introduction to the Course &amp; Spiritual Formation Small Group (SFSG)</td>
<td>Spiritual Formation Small Group – Sign up by 2/1 Friday</td>
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<td>I. Elected in/to Love - Spiritual Formation &amp; Spiritual Theology</td>
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<td>February 4</td>
<td>Session 2 - Spiritual Theology (Sp. Theo.) I: The Triune God &amp; Election</td>
<td>Spiritual Exemplar – Sign up by 2/4 Monday</td>
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<td>- Invitations from God, ch. 11 (the Most Excellent Way)</td>
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<td>Session 4 - Soul Sabbath Report due on 2/20 Wednesday</td>
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<td>February 20 - NO CLASS – READING WEEK 1</td>
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<td>Soul Sabbath (9AM-4:30PM) @ Notre Dame Convent, Ipswich, MA</td>
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<td>February 25</td>
<td>Session 5 - II. Made to Receive - Discovering the Contemplative Life</td>
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<td>I - &quot;Spiritual Formation When Life Is Happening at Full Speed&quot; – Rama</td>
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<td>- Discovering Lectio Divina, chs.1-3</td>
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<td>- Invitations from God, ch. 9 (Pray)</td>
<td>SFSG 3</td>
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<td>Session 5 - Discovering the Contemplative Life II</td>
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<td>- Discovering Lectio Divina, chs.4-8, Conclusion</td>
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<td>- Invitations from God, ch. 4 (Rest)</td>
<td>SFSG 4</td>
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<td>Session 6 - Discovering the Redemptive Life</td>
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<td>- The Jesus Way, chs.4&amp;5</td>
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<td>- Invitations from God, ch. 1 (Participate in Your Own Healing)</td>
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<td>March 18</td>
<td>Session 7 - Discovering the Communal Life</td>
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<td>- The Jesus Way, ch.8</td>
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<td>- Invitations from God, ch. 3 (Practice the Presence of People)</td>
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<td>March 25</td>
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<td>Spiritual Exemplar II – Spiritual impact &amp; legacy (4-5) due on 3/29 Friday</td>
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<td>April 1</td>
<td>III. Called to Participate</td>
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<td>- Practicing Holy Inefficiency</td>
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<td>- Practicing Downward Mobility</td>
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<td>- Spiritual Exemplar III – Essay Exercise (6-7)</td>
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<td>- Invitations from God, ch. 6 (Admit I Might Be Wrong)</td>
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<td>- The Return of the Prodigal Son, Prologue, Introduction, Part I &amp; II (The Younger Son &amp; The Elder Son)</td>
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<td>- Invitations from God, chs. 5 (Weep)</td>
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<td>Compilation of Weekly SFSG Assignment due on 4/29 in class</td>
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<td>May 3</td>
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<td>SFSG 10</td>
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<td>Friday</td>
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<td>Spiritual Adventure Project due</td>
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**Course Expectations:**

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

- **Spiritual Formation Small Group Participation** (40%)
  Students will participate in a semester-long small group spiritual formation experience based on *Invitations from God* as they are to:
  1. Sign up by 4Pm on February 1 (Friday) for a group by visiting:
     https://docs.google.com/document/d/170ZGJ_EwsurOt6y7vaYWPECdywRGTgi_rH-jrEEpAc/edit
  2. Attend and be on time for at least ten out of eleven sessions (if absent, the student needs to do the make-up work by the following session);
  3. Will have read through carefully the corresponding chapter of *Invitations for* each week;
  4. In writing, prayerfully respond to all the prompts* (see below) while interacting specifically with the salient parts of the chapter – i.e., quotes, specific ideas from the chapter, the scriptural passages, etc.

  When using computer, the student must print it out prior to the small group session:
  - **There will be no exceptions or any variations to these format requirements.**
  - a. The length of each assignment should be no more than one single-spaced page;
  - b. At the beginning of the group time, the student is to show his/her work to another student in the group and have that student sign and date his/her name on the top portion of the assignment;
  - c. If the student did not complete the assignment for the group time, the student is to write down on a piece of paper – i.e., "I was not able to complete the assignment for this week’s session.” Or "I was only able to do ___% of the assignment for this week's session – and have another student
in the group to **sign and date** it. This signed and dated page **must be included as a part** of the compilation of the weekly assignments at the end of the semester;

d. **If** the student is to **miss one session** *(the one allowed absence)*, s/he is responsible for making up that week's work by the next session – indicating "**Make-up work** for the one allowed absence") on the top of the assignment, and follow the same direction as "b" above. The student is also responsible for completing the assignment for the (i.e., the next session after the session missed) session at the same time. In other words, the student is to have two assignments ready for the session following the missed session.

e. Whether the student is to have the excused or unexcused absence(s), s/he needs to write a **note indicating his/her absence**(s) on a piece of paper and have a student in the group to **sign and date** the paper at the beginning of the next session. This signed and dated page, too, **must be included as a part** of the compilation of the weekly assignments at the end of the semester.

f. **If** the student has to be **absent for more than one** allowed session, s/he will receive **no credit for the absence – without exception**. However, s/he can still **make up the late work** by the next session. The maximum credit s/he could get for the make-up work will be **the half of the maximum credit** s/he could have received if it were handed on time. Follow the same direction as “b” above.; and

g. Once the weekly assignment receives a signature and is dated by another student in the group, the student is **not to add or subtract** from it.

(5) Participate fully and make every effort to facilitate spiritual formation and uplifting atmosphere in the lives of fellow students in the group;

(6) Facilitate one of the sessions during the semester (Please refer to the directions for leading SFGS on CAMS,) and provide constructive comments to other facilitators during the debriefing time at the end of each session; and

(7) Write and include one single-spaced-page reflection of his/her small group experience when handing in the compilation of the weekly assignments to the instructor at the end of the semester *(April 29, in class).*

* **Weekly Prompts for Small Group preparation** – All taken from *Invitations from God*

**SFSG 1 – Invitations from God, ch.10 – Remember**
- How do you tend to remember events? How do you focus on the sad or bad things that have happened to you?
- Spend some time writing out your exodus story. Where have you moved from bondage to freedom? How have you moved from anger or fear or anxiety into trust and the fruit of the Spirit?

**SFSG 2 – Invitations from God, ch.11 – The Most Excellent Way**
- When and how do you use “elaborate talk” as a substitute for doing the loving thing? How does critiquing what others say keep you from hearing what they are saying?
- Where do you attempt to be really excellent? What would it look like to put this effort into loving?

**SFSG 3 – Invitations from God, ch.9 – Pray**
- How does “father baggage” cloud your experience of God? What does Jesus want to tell you about His Father?
- How are you bringing God's reign to your relationships and community? How is God’s kingdom shaping your choices and plans?

**SFSG 4 – Invitations from God, ch.4 – Rest**
- How do you spend most of your time off?
- How do you like to spend your Sabbath? How can you begin to reclaim time in each day as a mini-Sabbath rest?

**SFSG 5 – Invitations from God, ch.1 – Participate in Your Own Healing**
- Where do you wish Jesus would use magic rather than involve you? How would participating in your own healing draw you deeper into Jesus and freedom?
- Where are you being invited to risk or trust God with a desire?
- Who are the “soul therapists” who could walk with you into your journey to health?

**SFSG 6 – Invitations from God, ch.3 – Practice the Presence of People**
- How do you feel about liming with people – that is, passing the time of day with others without an agenda, simply relaxing and being present with them even on short notice? How do you feel about people who interrupt and throw off your agenda?
- How easy is it for you to see goodness in people you dislike? How can catching a glimmer of God’s image in another person change the way you pray for them?

**SFSG 7 – Invitations from God, ch.8 – Wait**
- Describe the feelings you experience when you have to wait. What do these feelings reveal about the way you think life should work?
- What are you waiting for right now? What would it look like for you to enter the space between desire and demand and to hold what you want before God with open hands?

**SFSG 8 – Invitations from God, ch.2 – Follow**
- What does it feel like when you lead? What do you enjoy about it? Where does it hook your false self?
- What does it feel like when you are a follower? When do you enjoy this position? How does following affect your ego?

**SFSG 9 – Invitations from God, ch.6 – Admit I Might Be Wrong**
- Where have I formed relationships with people who think differently than I do? What have these people taught me?
- What does it mean to have faith in Jesus rather than certainty about absolute truth?
- How am I at trusting the Holy Spirit to lead another into truth? How do I discern when to correct another and when to keep my thoughts to myself for the time being?

**SFSG 10 – Invitations from God, ch.7 – Forgive**
- How are you praying for a heart that works forgiveness into your relationships?
- Consider the wrongs you have done and how they have hurt others. How does Jesus look at these wrongs? How does he look at you? Open your heart to what Jesus has to say to you.

**Soul Sabbath – a Silent Retreat (10%)**
Students will attend Soul Sabbath on **February 20** (9AM-4:30PM) at Notre Dame in Ipswich, sponsored by Pierce Center for Disciple-Building. Students are responsible to: (1) register at Pierce Center when directed (The cost: $20; You will have to commit to one of the two dates when registering.); (2) attend the retreat in its entirety; and (3) write one single-spaced-page reflection of his/her experience in terms of his/her level of engagement, any illumination experienced about God, discovery about oneself and any other issues; and (4) send electronically (with the student’s name on the title of the document – ex., “KangAbigail SSabbath.pdf”, in the .pdf format – no exception) to the instructor (mc501sf@gmail.com) by 11:59pm on **February 20**.

**Spiritual Exemplar Project (5% + 10% + 10% = 25%)**
- The student is to identify a historical exemplar/mentor from the list below by **February 4 Monday** (no switching of the exemplar allowed after that date); read up on and experience his/her life, teaching, ministry, and his/her impact in the church throughout the semester. To sign up, visit: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/17yr8A9bZGga01J1E2ipJWCI-PhGNFX0uUcRNjYKU8Xo/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/17yr8A9bZGga01J1E2ipJWCI-PhGNFX0uUcRNjYKU8Xo/edit)
- When writing the three-part report (see below for the direction and due dates.), be sure to demonstrate your personal understanding of your spiritual exemplar while interacting with primary and secondary sources (with citations), using your own words and/or paraphrases.
- The student is then to send electronically (with the student's name on the title of each document – ex., "KangAbigail SExemplar 1.pdf", in the .pdf format) to the instructor (mc501sf@gmail.com) by 11:59pm on the below due dates:

1. **Spiritual Exemplar I – Historical, Personal & Biblical Clues (February 22 Friday)** (5%) – one single-spaced page of the student's findings on the questions 1-3 below – including any pertinent quotes (and citations) of the spiritual exemplar's works and from secondary sources.
   (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?; and
   (3) How was s/he and his/her ministry biblically informed? (This might not be as obvious for some exemplars. Do as much as you can. The instructor is aware of the level and kinds (and lack) of information available.)

2. **Spiritual Exemplar II – Spiritual impact & legacy (March 29 Friday)** (10%) – no more than two single-spaced pages of the student's learning & reflection to the questions 4-5 below – again, including any pertinent quotes (and citations) of the spiritual exemplar's works and from secondary sources.
   (4) How did his/her teaching, ministry, and/or devotion impact the church in his/her time?; and
   (5) What are some enduring legacies of the exemplary figure and/or the institution or tradition s/he inspired?

3. **Spiritual Exemplar Essay Exercise (April 15 Monday)** (10%)
   This is a one-hour writing exercise on the student's spiritual exemplar, responding to the following two questions in a cogent manner:
   (6) What have you learned about God and yourself from the exemplar?; and
   (7) How has and will s/he inform your personhood – academically, spiritually and ministerially – as a minister of the Gospel?

   • Benedict of Nursia (c.480-c.547)
   • Gregory the Great (c.540-604)
   • Bernard of Clairvaux (c.1090-1153)
   • Francis of Assisi (1182 – 1226)
   • Thomas a Kempis (1379-1471)
   • Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556)
   • Teresa of Avila (or Teresa of Jesus) (1515-1582)
   • John of the Cross (1542-1591)
   • Sundar Singh (c.1889-1929)
   • Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997)
   • Henri Nouwen (1932-1996)

   • **Spiritual Adventure Project** (15%)
   The student is to reflectively engage in two reflective adventure exercise-prompts.
   1. As you review *The Return of the Prodigal Son* that you have already read, spend some time in solitude. Before the holy God, seek to discern what are some of the ways you keep the reality of God’s love at a distance. Then, do the business of confession to God as He prompts you. How do you understand and receive yourself as God’s ‘beloved’? Your typed reflection should be no more than one single-spaced page.
2. As you review and interact with *The Jesus Way* and *Discovering Lectio Divina*, write an initial draft of the rule of your life. Prayerfully consider about (no more than) 10 specific life values/patterns that would aid you to deepen your relationship with God and His people. For each value/pattern, demonstrate how certain specific ideas and quotes from *The Jesus Way* and *Discovering Lectio Divina* have inspired you to come up with that value/pattern. Your draft and its explanations should be no more than two single-spaced pages.

Send electronically (with the student's name on the title of the document – “KangAbigail SAAdventure.pdf”, in the .pdf format) to the instructor (mc501sf@gmail.com) by 11:59pm on May 3 Friday.

- 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.
- Please observe the page limit.
- Late Papers will be docked a letter grade for each day they are late.

**Bibliography**

Refer to the course bibliography document on CAMS.