

## SF/CH 616: Spiritual Autobiography and Women



*But here I feel constrained to give over, as from the smallness of this pamphlet I cannot go through with the whole of my journal, as it would probably make a volume of two hundred pages...But for the satisfaction of such as may follow after me, when I am no more, I have recorded how the Lord called me to his work, and how he has kept me from falling from grace, as I feared I should. In all things he has proved himself a God of truth to me.*

*Jarena Lee, Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee*



*My Design in this little Tract [is] to give  
a brief Account of the Lord's Loving-kindness to my Soul.  
Anne Dutton, Autobiography*

Come and hear, all you who fear God;  
Let me tell you what he has done for me.  
Psalm 66:16, NIV

## SF/CH 616: Spiritual Autobiography and Women

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Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary – Hamilton

Fall semester, 2018; Mondays, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Contact info: given in class

Office Hours: Mondays 5:30-6:30 p.m., Tuesdays 2:00-4:00 p.m., Thursdays, 3:00-4:00 p.m., and as posted outside my office.

### **Course Description**

This course will explore the writings of women about their own spiritual lives. We will do close readings of the autobiographies, diaries, journals, letters, blogs, and poetry of women throughout the 2000 years of the history of the Church. We will study the women in their historical contexts, analyze their texts, and learn from their spiritual practices. We will examine such questions as: What are the continuities and discontinuities in women's spiritual experiences and practices? Can the process of writing an autobiography or memoir, or keeping a diary or journal, be a spiritual discipline? How can the various kinds of autobiographical writing be used in strengthening one's devotional life? In what ways does writing shape personal identity, help process suffering, create a sense of meaning and purpose, and deepen one's relationship with God? Can reading others' autobiographical writing enhance our understanding of our selves and God?

We will peek over the shoulders of women as they record and discuss their journeys with God. We will see Perpetua standing strong in the midst of persecution and the threat of death and Egeria exploring the Holy Land; fourteenth century English mystics Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe studying their own visionary experiences; Puritan and post-Puritan Hannah Allen, Anne Bradstreet, and Abigail Bailey facing deeply emotional struggles over depression, loneliness, and spousal abuse; Counter-Reformation nuns in Mexico such as Madre María de San José and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz processing their spiritual lives at the behest of their spiritual directors; the eighteenth century Baptist theologian Anne Dutton weaving theology into her life; Sarah Osborn conversing with God from the Great Awakening through to the American Revolution; nineteenth-century African-American Jarena Lee chronicling her itinerant journeys to proclaim the gospel; Anne Judson and other nineteenth-

century women missionaries' journals and letters being embedded in memoirs after their early deaths on the field; Dorothy Day bringing together social justice and spiritual disciplines; Liliias Trotter and others incorporating the arts into their devotional lives; Korean-American women clergy wrestling with issues of calling, gender, and ethnicity; and Lauren Winner combining Episcopalian liturgy and Jewish ritual in a modern conversion memoir.

### **Course Objectives/Outcomes:**

With successful completion of this course, students will:

- Become familiar with many of the key women, works, trends, and formats in the history of spiritual autobiography within Christianity. (In line with GCTS Mission Statement Articles 2, 6)
- Demonstrate familiarity with a variety of terms and issues in the study of autobiography, such as genre, narrative, agency, catharsis, memory, identity, voice, literary quality, intended audience, and more. (In line with GCTS Mission Statement Articles 2, 5)
- Discover a range of methodologies, tools, and formats to use for their own personal reflection on/in their walks with God in order to strengthen their devotional lives. (In line with GCTS Mission Statement Articles 3, 4)
- Formulate a plan for incorporating some form(s) of spiritual autobiography as a spiritual discipline. (In line with GCTS Mission Statement Articles 4)
- Strategize how to use autobiography as a tool in ministry with various age groups, to help people gain insights into their lives with God, winsomely engage seekers, strengthen discipleship, build community, and pass on spiritual legacies, etc. (In line with GCTS Mission Statement Articles 3)
- Hone their ability to research a topic using primary and secondary sources, analyze texts, develop an argument, structure a paper, and write more effectively. (In line with GCTS Mission Statement Article 2)
- Increase their awareness of challenges many women face, including depression, spousal abuse and incest, racism, abuse of power, injustice, persecution, poverty, cross-cultural adjustment, loneliness, obstacles and opposition to their using their spiritual gifts, etc. Study and learn from the writings of women who have had the strength to endure and/or the ability to overcome many of these challenges. (In line with GCTS Mission Statement Articles 3, 5, 6)
- Be inspired by women from the past who have walked closely with God, learning from them about prayer, Bible study, spiritual disciplines, passion for Christ and the gospel, compassion for the hurting, and so much more. (In line with GCTS Mission Statement Article 1, 4, 6)

**Lecture Schedule (subject to change as necessary)**

1. **September 10: From Prison to Pilgrimage: Early Church Diaries**
    - a. Required reading: Perpetua's prison diary and Egeria's pilgrimage diary
  2. **September 17: Pondering Visions of Another World: Contrasting Approaches by Two Medieval English Visionaries**
    - a. Required reading: Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* (c. 1373)
    - b. Recommended: Margery Kempe's *Book* (15<sup>th</sup> C)
  3. **September 24: Overcoming Depression and Abuse: Hannah Allen and Anne Bradstreet's Puritan Era Writings; Abigail Bailey's Memoirs**
    - a. Required reading: Hannah Allen (1683)
    - b. Recommended reading: poems by Anne Bradstreet (17C); Abigail Bailey's *Memoirs* (1815)
  4. **October 1: Cloistered in Mexico: Counter-Reformation Nuns in Latin America**
    - a. Required reading: Madre Maria de San Jose, *A Wild Country Out in the Garden*
- October 8: READING WEEK
5. **October 15: Anne Dutton's Autobiography: A Calvinist Baptist Theologian's Life**
    - a. Required reading: Anne Dutton's *Autobiography* (c. 1750)
  6. **October 22: Sarah Osborn's Prayer Journal: Conversing with God from the Great Awakening to the American Revolution**
    - a. Required reading: Sarah Osborne (1799)
  7. **October 29: From Slave Narratives to Civil Rights Memoirs: the Voices of African-American Women**
    - a. Required reading: Autobiography of Jarena Lee (1836)
    - b. Recommended reading: Dorothy Height, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir*
  8. **November 5: Distant Shores: Nineteenth-Century Missionary Memoirs and the Birth of a Movement**
    - a. Required reading: memoir from a shared list (sign up in class)

November 12: READING WEEK

- 9. November 19: Dorothy Day's Long Loneliness: Social Justice and Spiritual Disciplines in a Diary**
- Required reading: Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*
  - Recommended reading: Dorothy Day, *Duty of Delight* (Diaries) and Dorothy Day, *All the Way to Heaven* (Letters); Josephine Butler, *Personal Reminiscences of a Great Cause*.
- 10. November 26: Praising God with Paint and Brush: Lilius Trotter and the Use of the Arts in Spiritual Journaling**
- Recommended reading: Lilius Trotter, *A Blossom in the Desert*
  - Recommended reading: Amy Carmichael, *Mountain Breezes*
  - Recommended reading: Ann Voskamp's blog: [annvoskamp.com](http://annvoskamp.com)
- 11. December 3: Shared Life Stories of Korean-American Women Clergy: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Use of Spiritual Gifts**
- Required reading: *Here I Am: Faith Stories of Korean American Clergywomen*.
- 12. December 10: Lauren Winner's Girl Meets God: Weaving Liturgy and Ritual in a Modern Conversion Memoir**
- Required reading: Lauren Winner, *Girl Meets God*

**Required Reading Texts** (Read at least 60 pages [or 2 hours] from each of the following before the scheduled class discussions. See reading guide on CAMS for questions and helps for reading each text in preparation for discussions):

- Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love: Short Text and Long Text*. Translated by Elizabeth Spearing (Penguin Books, 1999). ISBN: 978-0140446739. Kindle \$2.99 or \$16.20 on [gcts.christianbook.com](http://gcts.christianbook.com) (or can download free pdf of a different version through link on CAMS)
- Kathleen A. Myers and Amanda Powell, eds., *A Wild Country Out in the Garden: The Spiritual Journals of a Colonial Mexican Nun* (Indiana University Press, 1999). – available second-hand.
- Catherine A. Brekus, ed., *Sarah Osborn's Collected Writings* (Yale University Press, 2017). ISBN: 978-0300182897. \$17.85 on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).
- Joann Ford Watson, ed., *Selected Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton: Eighteenth-century, British-Baptist: Autobiography* (Mercer University Press, 2006). \$4.65 and above on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).
- Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee, Giving an Account of Her Call to Preach the Gospel*. (Create Space, 2017). 978-1545431535. \$6.79 on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com). – OR download free pdf through link on CAMS.

6. Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of the Legendary Catholic Social Activist* (HarperOne, 2009). ISBN: 978-0060617516. \$14.39 on [gcts.christianbook.com](http://gcts.christianbook.com); \$5.99 ebook/kindle
7. Grace Ji-Sun Kim, ed., *Here I Am: Faith Stories of Korean American Clergywomen* (Judson Press, 2015). ISBN: 9780817017637. \$13.49 at [gcts.christianbook.com](http://gcts.christianbook.com). OR Kindle \$12.99
8. Lauren Winner, *Girl Meets God*. ISBN: 978-1565123090. \$13.49 on Kindle.

**Required free pdf's (see links on CAMS)** – please download all of them, but note above which ones are required to be read; the rest are only needed for use in class and don't need to be read as part of required reading. If you prefer print or kindle editions, many of these can be found on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

1. Perpetua – read in advance of discussion
2. Egeria – read in advance of discussion
3. Hannah Allen – read in advance of discussion
4. Anne Bradstreet's poetry – bring to Hannah Allen discussion
5. Abigail Bailey's *Memoirs* – bring to Hannah Allen discussion
6. 19<sup>th</sup> C missionary memoir (the one that you sign up for in first class) – read in advance of discussion
7. Josephine Butler's *Reminiscences* – bring to Dorothy Day discussion

### **Course Requirements:**

1. **Research Paper** (60%) – 14-18 double-spaced pages (Due: Final day for written work at 4:00 p.m. under professor's office door or in box outside the office; or postmarked on or before the due date; the page count does not include the required title page, bibliography and 2-3 page reflection appendix). Paper will be graded on strength of argument/thought, quality of research (should be grounded in primary sources but interact well with secondary works), clarity of structure, and polish of style (grammar, literary expression, proper format). Please follow the "Guidelines for Church History Research Papers" posted on CAMS. The topic should be related to the spiritual autobiographical writings (autobiography, journal, diary, memoir, personal letters, etc.) of a woman from 100-2000 A. D.

If all other work for the course is completed fully and all class sessions fully attended, the grade on this research paper/creative writing project will be the final grade for the course.

2. **Reading** (20%) - 1400 pages (or 47 hours) of reading in the required texts. Please submit an annotated (brief paragraph of personal reflections per book) list of the books read, including the pages or hours read for each, and indicate the total number of pages (or hours) read as well. (Due: final day for written work, under professor's office door or in box outside office door; or postmarked on or before the due date). Read at least 60 pages (or 2 hours) from each of the required texts. To reach the 1400 page total (or 47 hours), read additional pages (or hours) from the above required or recommended texts that you are particularly drawn to.

Grading method for the reading: If 100% of the reading (and all other assignments) has been completed, the Research Paper (or creative writing project) will be the grade for the course. Otherwise, the proportion of reading not done will be deducted from the grade at the following rate:

100 % (ex: A to A = no change)

80-99% (ex: A to A- = 1/3 grade drop)

60-79% (ex: A to B+ = 2/3 grade drop)

40-59% (ex: A to B = 1 grade drop)

20-39 % (ex: A to B- = 1 1/3 grade drop)

Below 19% (ex: A to C+ = 1 2/3 grade drop)

For example, if your research paper is an A, if you have completed only 78 % of the reading (and completed all other work for the course), your final grade for the course will be a B+.

3. **Application** (20%) – (Due final day for written work, under professor's office door or in box outside her office door; or postmarked on or before the due date). Spend one hour per week (for 10 weeks) writing (or painting, etc.) a journal, diary, memoir, autobiography, or prayer journal. You are encouraged to try out various formats / tools discussed in class, as appropriate. Write and submit a 2-3 page paper reflecting on the experience and on how you might incorporate these practices going forward.

Grading of Application paper: If the application is not fully completed, the final course grade may be reduced by up to 1 full grade (ex: A to B).

#### **Estimated time for completion of course**

Class meetings	36 hours
Reading (30 pages/hour)	47 hours
Application	10 hours
Application reflection paper	3 hours

Research paper	39 hours
TOTAL	135 hours

- **Class attendance** may be taken into account, with one point per missed, unexcused session being taken off of the final grade, with three or more missed sessions possibly resulting in failure of the class. Official auditors and those doing the course pass/fail must attend at least 9 of the 12 class sessions.

- **Grading scale** is the one indicated in the Gordon-Conwell academic catalog guidelines:

"Grade A is given for meeting with *conspicuous excellence* the demands which can fairly be made in relation to the requirements of the course. These demands would normally include unusual accuracy in fact, completeness in detail, perfection in form of work, independence of method, grasp of the subject as a whole and constructive imagination.

Grade B is given for exceeding the minimum of satisfactory attainment and for *meeting certain aspects of the course with excellence*.

Grade C is given for attaining satisfactory familiarity with the course and for demonstrating at least some ability to use this knowledge in a satisfactory manner.

Grade D is a passing mark but indicates unsatisfactory control over the material. Grade F declares that the course has been failed."

- **Plagiarism** is considered a serious academic offense at GCTS. Please follow guidelines at <http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html>.

- **Extensions** must be requested from the Registrar by the final day for written work. Penalties may be applied in absence of extenuating circumstances (illness, death in family).

- **Intellectual Property / Privacy Rights:** In order to protect intellectual property and privacy rights: No audio, photographic, video recordings or transmissions (including, for example, internet posting and broadcasting) may be made in class without the consent of the professor. This paragraph applies to all visitors and auditors as well.

- **Internet Usage:** In order to foster focused attention, learning, and community, students are required to refrain from accessing the internet or

playing computer/cell phone games, etc. at any point during class sessions, unless otherwise instructed by the professor. "Surfing the web," checking email, and other internet-based activities are distracting to other students and to the professor, and prevent the student from fully participating in the class sessions. This paragraph applies to all visitors and auditors as well.