

MS/TH 3XS3
Sacred Journeys
(Spiritual Autobiographies)

McMaster Divinity College
Fall 2014

Franklin Pyles, Ph.D.

Location: McMaster Divinity College, Hamilton, ON
Day and Times: Tuesdays 7:00-9:00 p.m.

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In an effort to be environmentally friendly please submit your papers by email to pylesf@mcmaster.ca. On the subject line please put your full name and the assignment. Please also put your name on the paper itself. Failure to do so will create a 2pt (out of 100) deduction in your grade for the paper.

Your professor will also email you an invitation to a dropbox account set up for this class. In that dropbox you will find various resources relating to the authors, the books or generally the topics being studied. You may download those that interest you to your computer.

Description

Throughout church history godly people in all church traditions have heard God's call on their life, have responded to that call, have entered into a spiritual life, and then have recorded this life journey. In this course twelve spiritual autobiographies, ranging from Augustine to C. S. Lewis to Dietrich Bonhoeffer will be read and discussed with a view to understanding the call of God in conversion and vocation, the empowerment of God for service and godly living and the affirmation of God in the influence of this person on both the church and the world.

Course Objectives

The inner life is the spring from which ministry flows and the lives of great men and women of faith provide models and warnings as to how to nurture an inner life with God so that the outer life may be effective in ministry.

Knowing

For students to know the inner lives of some of the great people of the Christian church, their fears and their faith, their temptations and their triumphs, their dependence on God and their daring for God.

Being

For students to grow in self-awareness of their own relationship with God and the ramifications of that relationship for ministry and to cultivate and develop this relationship as they gain new insights into the spiritual life.

Doing

For students to practice spiritual disciplines and faith as modeled by the autobiographies and to articulate their own walk of faith.

Assignments

Twelve books have been assigned. These books will be discussed in a seminar/workshop format, two authors each evening of class time. It is imperative for every person in the class to have deeply read the author for that hour. Students are urged to begin reading immediately as the summer module format makes it difficult to read as one goes along. Interact as you read, mark your book up, put in sticky notes, and even consider posting thoughts on social media accounts or blogging. Let's immerse ourselves in these entrancing, inspiring and often heart wrenching stories, and then come to class ready to share our thoughts as well as the accompanying passion that they have elicited.

Knowing: At the beginning of each evening students will be asked to turn in a signed affirmation that they have read, in their entirety, the assigned reading for the day. **15%**

Students will be expected to participate in lively and intelligent discussion, contributing meaningfully to the insight of others. **20%**

Doing:

Write a sermon or a lesson, 2500 words in length, in which you communicate three principles of the spiritual life revealed in the course reading, and in which you use stories from the autobiographies as illustrations. You will be graded on the interaction with the autobiographies as well as the depth and communication potential of your presentation.

Due: October 21, 2014 25%

Being: Students will write a reflection paper of approximately 4000 words covering the following:

- Meaningful lessons from each of the twelve writers that stood out to you.
- Five areas in your own spiritual life which you intend to change as a result of this reading.
- A careful description of how you intend to bring the aforementioned changes about in your own life.

Due: November 25, 2014 40%

Reading List

These books are required reading. They are to be read before coming to class on the designated day. You will be asked to sign an affirmation that you have thoughtfully read the books for the day before each session.

Frank C. Laubach. Letters by a Modern Mystic
Augustine Confessions, chapters 1 -- 10

John Bunyan: Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners
David Brainerd: The Life and Diary of David Brainerd
John Wesley: John Wesley's Journal: chapters 1 -- 9
St. Therese of Lisieux: Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux
C. S. Lewis: Surprised by Joy
Sheldon Vanauken: A Severe Mercy
Frederick Buechner: The Sacred Journey
Thomas Merton: The Seven Storey Mountain
Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison
Helen Roseveare: Give Me This Mountain

CLASS SCHEDULE

September 9

Introduction to class and Opening Lecture on Spiritual Autobiography

Frank C. Laubach, Letters by a Modern Mystic

September 16

Augustine Confessions: chapters 1 – 10

September 23

David Brainerd: The Life and Diary of David Brainerd

September 30

John Wesley: John Wesley's Journal, chapters 1 – 9

October 7

John Bunyan: Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners

October 14

St. Therese of Lisieux: Story of a Soul: The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux

October 21 -- Paper Due

C. S. Lewis: Surprised by Joy

October 28

Sheldon Vanauken: A Severe Mercy

November 4

Frederick Buechner: The Sacred Journey

November 11

Thomas Merton: The Seven Storey Mountain

November 18

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Letters and Papers from Prison

November 25 – Paper Due

Helen Roseveare: Give Me This Mountain

December 2

Concluding Discussions

Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore, Room 145, McMaster Divinity College. Texts may be purchased on the first day of class. For advance purchase, you may contact READ On Bookstores, 304 The East Mall, Suite 100, Etobicoke, ON M9C 5K1: phone 416.620.2934; fax 416.622.2308; email books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that may take any number of forms, including plagiarism, the submission of work that is not one's own or for which previous credit has been obtained, and/or unauthorized collaboration with other students. Academic dishonesty can result in severe consequences, e.g., failure of the assignment, failure of the course, a notation on one's academic transcript, and/or suspension or expulsion from the College.

Students are responsible for understanding what constitutes academic dishonesty. Please refer to the Divinity College Statement on Academic Honesty ~ <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/programs/rules-regulations>.

Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all of its publications. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected. The NRSV and TNIV are examples of the use of inclusive language for human beings. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments.

Style

All assignments are to be typed in double-spaced format, with footnotes and bibliographic references conforming to the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses* <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/MDCStyleGuide>. Failure to observe appropriate format and style will result in grade reductions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Augustine of Hippo

Brown, Peter. Augustine of Hippo. 1967.

David Brainerd

Grigg, John A., The Life of David Brainerd: The Making of an American Evangelical Icon. 2009.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Metaxas, Eric. Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: A Righteous Gentile Vs. the Third Reich. Thomas Nelson, 2010.

Weikart, Richard. The Myth of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Is His Theology Evangelical? International Scholars Publications, 1997.

Fredrick Buechner

Brown, Dale. The Book of Buechner: A Journey Through His Writings. (2006)

Victoria S. Allen. Listening to Life: Psychology and Spirituality in the Writings of Frederick Buechner. 2002.

John Bunyan

Brown, John. John Bunyan, His Life, Times and Work. 1885. Google ebook.

De Vries, Peter, John Bunyan on the Order of Salvation. American University Studies. Series VII. Theology and Religion.

Whyte, Alexander. Bunyan Characters. Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1908

Frank C. Laubach

Roberts, Helen M, Champion of the silent billion: the story of Frank C. Laubach, apostle of literacy. St. Paul: Macalester Park Pub. Co. 1961

C. S. Lewis and Sheldon Vanauken

<http://stuartbuck.blogspot.ca/2011/05/sheldon-vanauken-letters.html>

Gresham, Douglas. Lenten Lands: My Childhood with Joy Davidman and C. S. Lewis. 1994

Schakel, Peter J. and Charles A. Huttar, ed. Word and Story in C. S. Lewis. 1991.

Victor Reppert, C. S. Lewis's Dangerous Idea: In Defense of the Argument from Reason. 2003.

Thérèse of Lisieux

Monahan, Joan. Thérèse of Lisieux. 2003

O'Connor, Patricia. Thérèse of Lisieux. 1984

O Madagain, Murchadh. Thérèse of Lisieux: Through Love and Suffering. 2003

Thomas Merton

Shannon, William H. Silent Lamp: The Thomas Merton Story. 1992.

Forest, Jim. Living With Wisdom: A Life of Thomas Merton (*revised edition*). 2008.

Helen Roseveare

Burgess, Alan, Daylight Must Come: the story of Dr Helen Roseveare. 1977

Lagerborg, Mary Bet *Though Lions Roar: The Story of Helen Roseveare : Missionary Doctor to the Congo*, 1995.

John Wesley

Maddox, Randy L. and Vickers, Jason E. (Ed.). The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley. 2010

Oden, Thomas. John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine. 1994

Wood, A. Skevington. The Burning Heart, John Wesley: Evangelist. 1978

Disclaimer

This syllabus is the property of the instructor and is prepared with currently available information. The instructor reserves the right to make changes and revisions up to and including the first day of class.