

**MS 3XS3/6XS6 Spiritual Formation in the Church
SYLLABUS Fall 2015**

McMaster Divinity College
Phil C. Zylla, D.Th.
Office #: 215

Fall 2015 (Term 1)
Mondays 3:30 – 5:20 p.m.
3 units/6 units

Specializations: CS, CW, PS, CC

Biography:

Dr. Phil Zylla is Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at McMaster Divinity College. He also holds the J. Gordon and Margaret Warnock Jones Chair in Church Ministry and is a member of the Faculty of Theology of McMaster University. His research interests include congregational studies, pastoral theology, virtue theory, and theology of suffering. His current project, *Spiritual Formation of the Congregation*, drives the research for this course. He lives in Ancaster with his wife Melodie and daughter, Chelsey. Dr. Zylla is interested in theopoetics, soccer, and is active in his local church here in Hamilton.

Course Description:

The cultivation of a dynamic and vital spiritual life is a central concern of all Christian ministry. However, more careful attention must be given to research on faith development, the structure of Christian commitment, and how spiritual practices are employed to advance the spiritual life of congregations. Participants will be challenged to reflect on their own experiences of spiritual formation in the church and to develop new approaches to the formation of faith in the context of Christian community. The course will focus on the nature of spiritual formation in the context of a faith community. The problems and complexities of spiritual formation will be explored and examined with a view towards strategic proposals for cultivation of authentic spiritual life in community. Assumptions regarding spirituality will be uncovered and fresh paradigms for the postmodern context will be developed in dialogue with other course participants. The course design assumes a high level of commitment to the development of strategic proposals for spiritual formation.

Course Objectives:

Knowing

1. Participants will expand their knowledge of resources for framing an understanding of the dynamics of spiritual formation.
2. Participants will learn to think theologically about discipleship and the practices of faith formation.
3. Participants will gain insight into the complexities of spiritual formation in the context of the faith community.

Being

4. Participants will examine their own assumptions with regards to the nature of spiritual formation and discipleship in the church.
5. Participants will deepen their commitment as spiritual guides in the process of spiritual formation in the church.
6. Participants will refresh their own spiritual practices of communion with God.

Doing

7. Participants will develop a paradigm for spiritual formation for their unique ministry context.
8. Participants will explore ways to enable the spiritual practices of the communities in which they participate.
9. *Advanced Degree participants will prepare and deliver a graduate level lecture in class.

Required Course Textbooks:

Bloesch, Donald G. *Spirituality Old and New: Recovering Authentic Spiritual Life*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2007.

Mulholland, M. Robert *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. Downer's Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1975.

Peterson, Eugene H. *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: A Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005.

“A healthy church is one in which we seek to stay connected with God by seeking to connect others with God; one in which we ‘win God’ by converting one another, and we convert one another by our truthful awareness of frailty. And a church that is living in such a way is the only church that will have anything *different* to say to the world.” – Rowan Williams, *Silence and Honey Cakes*, 34.

COURSE OUTLINE and TOPICS

Mondays 3:30 p.m. – 5:20 p.m.

September 14, 2015	Spiritual Formation in Community
September 21, 2015	The Myth of Discipleship
September 28, 2015	Cultivating the Paradigmatic
October 5, 2015	Spiritual Types
October 12, 2015	<i>Thanksgiving – no class</i>
October 19, 2015	Theology of Community
October 26, 2015	The Spiritual Life of the Ministry Leader

November 2, 2015	Discernment in Ministry
November 9, 2015	Cultivating Virtue in the Congregation
November 16, 2015	MA/Ph.D. Lectures – topics TBA
November 23, 2015	MA/Ph.D. Lectures – topics TBA
November 30, 2015	Practices of Corporate Spiritual Life
December 7, 2015	A Theology of Spiritual Formation

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Assignment # 1:

Paradigm Review 5-7 pages MS 3XE3 - 15 % 6XE6 – 10%

Read Henri J.M. Nouwen's, *Reaching Out*. In this volume Nouwen offers us a paradigm for spirituality. Write a 5-7 page analysis of Nouwen's paradigm, with regards to its usefulness for our course theme: spirituality and discipleship in the church. Explore carefully the structure of this paradigm noting its usefulness as an example of how to develop a template that is both consistent with a broader theological vision and flexible enough to adapt to specific contextual realities. Tease out the core aspects of a paradigm and the structural approach to cultivating a paradigm.

Due Date: September 28th, 2015

Assignment # 2:

Book Response 7 pages MS 3XE3 - 15 % 6XE6 – 10%

As a primer on the theme of spiritual formation in the church read, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*. Write a response (7 pages) describing Mulholland's approach to spiritual formation and your evaluation of it. Your response should include: a brief summary of the content (2 pages), an analysis of the author's working assumptions of spiritual formation (2 pages), and your own theological reflections on the themes identified in this book (3 pages) from the perspective of your ministry specialization (CS, PS, CW, CC).

Due Date: October 12, 2015.

Assignment # 3

Classic Spiritual Writings 5 pages MS 3XE3 - 15 % 6XE6 – 15%

Select and read a key volume from a historic or classic spiritual writer to engage some aspect of the course themes of spiritual formation in the church.

Basic Biography: 1 page -lived; - studied; - key influences; -primary writings; continuing influence

Key Contribution: 2 pages Reflecting on the key ideas, phrases and contribution of this writer, describe the importance of this volume for the church and relate the main ideas to the themes of spiritual formation in the church. Articulate the continuing influence of this author/book.

Analysis and Reflection: 2 pages - How does the writing of this author contribute to the wider questions of spiritual formation of the church in the 21st century? What are the relevant issues that are framed by this volume?

Due Date: November 9, 2015

Assignment # 4

**Paradigm of Spiritual Formation 12-15 pages MS 3XE3 - 40 %
(Professional Degree students only)**

Due Date: December 7, 2015 Christian

Pastoral Studies Specialization (PS):

Develop a paradigm of spiritual formation and discipleship that will serve your ministry context. This 12-15 page project should:

- a. outline the framework for strategic proposals of spiritual formation in your ministry context or in a context that you anticipate serving in.
- b. integrate the critical analysis of the core themes explored in the course through additional research (bibliography should include at least 5-7 books and 5-7 academic journal articles in the pastoral studies literature)
- c. demonstrate how this paradigm will be used in a ministry situation.

Counseling and Spiritual Care Specialization (CS):

Develop a working framework for spiritual intervention and support for persons under your care. This 12-15 page essay should involve:

- a. a clear paradigm or typology of spirituality that can be used in assessment
- b. well developed support literature for the approach taken
- c. strategies and intervention techniques for spiritual care
- d. some interaction with case studies or examples.

The essay should include at least 5-7 books and 5-7 academic journal articles in the specialization area.

Christian Worldview Specialization (CW):

Develop a working paradigm for spirituality that is oriented towards your own ecclesial and personal theology. Give evidence of integration of core concepts in the course with your approach to Christian spirituality. The essay should include at least 5-7 books and 5-7 academic journal articles in the specialization area.

This 12-15 page essay should involve:

- a. foundational support literature for the ecclesial and theological starting point of your approach to Christian spirituality
- b. evidence of integration with core themes in the course and your own worldview
- c. a clear conceptual framework for the development of spiritual practices
- d. some examples of how this paradigm will be used in your life or in relation to Christian communities in which you participate.

Church and Culture Specialization (CC):

Write an essay that engages some aspect of contemporary culture on the theme of Christian spirituality. The topics may include New Age philosophy, inter-religious dialogue on themes of spirituality, approaches to meditation and prayer, etc. The paper should present your position as a Christian thinker in conversation with various perspectives on spirituality in general. The essay should include at least 5-7 books and 5-7 academic journal articles in the specialization area.

This 12-15 page essay should include:

- a. a foundational theological perspective from which the author is operating with core assumptions identified
- b. a clear topic on the theme of spirituality that engages contemporary culture
- c. evidence of research and accuracy in representing alternate views (experts that you are drawing on)
- d. some application to how this essay can help church leaders to interface with cultural understandings of your core topic.

**Assignment # 5 MS 3XE3 - 15 %
(Professional degree students only)**

Precept Groups – Readings for each course session will be reflected on in *Precept Groups*. Participants will be graded on their leading of a specific session and the reading attached to that session. A sign-up list will be circulated in the first class for these reading/discussion encounters. The evaluation grid for this assignment includes:

- a. depth of analysis and reading
- b. ability to discern key issues and topics
- c. facilitation of group discussion
- d. application to course themes

A 2-3 page outline of the discussion design for the selected dates should be turned in on the date presented.

Assignment # 6 MS 6XE6 only MA/PhD Advanced Degree Assignment

40 page essay and guest lecture –

Written Paper	40%
Class Lecture	25%

In addition to the other assignments in the course read an additional 1500 pages (10-12 volumes) related to one core aspect of spiritual formation in the church. The bibliography for this should be approved by the professor. Prepare a 40 page essay on the approved theme and modify the paper for a lecture presentation to be shared with the class in one of the final sessions.

Due Date: The essay is due, November 9, 2015. ****Sign up with Dr. Zylla for a class presentation on either November 16 or 23rd, 2015****

n.b. The MA/PhD participants will have additional one hour seminars related to the research for these essays/lectures and for input, dialogue and collaboration. These will be scheduled with the group. A draft presentation/outline of the class lecture will be shared with the group for feedback and revision before presenting in class.

Submission of Assignment: Hard copy on the due date by 5 p.m. is the preferred option for submission of assignments with the exception of the assignments due on Thanksgiving Monday (these can be submitted digitally by midnight on October 12, 2015).

Late Papers: Late papers will be docked 1% each late day. (Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances such as extended illness, etc.)

Spacing: All assignments are to be double-spaced.

College Style for Submission of Written Work:

All written work—unless informed otherwise by the professor—is to be submitted in accordance with the *McMaster Divinity College Style Guide for Essays and Theses*, available on the McMaster Divinity College web-site: <http://www.mcmasterdivinity.ca/sites/default/files/documents/mdcstyleguide.pdf>

Statement on 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 at <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.

READ ON Bookstore: Textbooks are available from READ ON Bookstore, Room 218 at MacDiv. Books may also be ordered from other sources such as READ ON Bookstore, 100 – 304 The East Mall, Etobicoke, ON M9B 6E2; Phone: 416-622-2934; Fax: 416-622-2308; Email: books@readon.ca

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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 until the first day of class.