



McMaster Divinity College

Christian Spirituality **MS 5X5C/6X6C** **Winter 2021**

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Class begins online Jan. 4 with a webex gathering at 8:30 pm ET (details will be sent out well in advance), we meet on campus Mar. 12 – 13th (Mar. 12, 9:30-5:00, Mar. 13, 9:30 -1: 00). The class will also meet in small groups once throughout the semester (See below for specific information).

Instructor Biography

Dr. Lee Beach is the Associate Professor of Christian Ministry, the Garbutt F. Smith Chair in Ministry Formation and the Director of Ministry Formation at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario. He teaches courses on the church in culture, pastoral ministry and Christian spirituality. Prior to coming to MDC Lee pastored for over 20 years with the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada serving churches in Peterborough, Cobourg and Scarborough, Ontario. He is currently involved in a new church initiative in Ancaster, Ontario where he lives with his family. He is the author of the book, *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope after Christendom* (IVP) and co-author (With Dr. Franklin Pyles) of the book *The Whole Gospel for the Whole World: Experiencing the Four-Fold Gospel Today* (Wipf and Stock).

Course Description

Spirituality is our response to God. It flows from a hunger to know God more. Christian spirituality is a distinct response to God that is rooted in the person of Jesus Christ and the work of his Spirit. This course will consider the many ways that Christians have embodied their response to God over the centuries of Church history. We will explore a variety of movements within Christianity that have shaped how Christians respond to God, we will engage in spiritual practices that have emerged throughout history to help Christians encounter God and we will think about how the historic development of Christian spirituality has implications on our lives as spiritual seekers today.

As a hybrid course we will be using a course shell provided by McMaster Universities, Avenue to Learn as well as other online technology. Information about accessing and using these sites will be provided prior to the beginning of the course and as needed. If you have questions about the technological aspects of the course, or have any problems with the technology please contact the instructor. I will do my best to help and if I am not able to answer your questions I will work with our IT support team to get an answer for you as soon as possible.

Learning Goals:

Knowing:

1. Upon completion of this course students will be able to articulate a basic understanding of Spirituality as an aspect of human existence in general and Christian spirituality as distinct expression of spirituality.
2. Upon completion of this course students will be able to explain many of the key movements in the development of Christian spirituality throughout the history of the church.
3. Upon completion of this course students will be able to identify and describe many of the key figures in the development of Christian spirituality.

Being

1. As a result of this course students will be able to identify and respond to new perspectives and practices for personal and corporate spiritual formation.

Doing

1. Upon completion of this course students will develop their ability to practice at least one new spiritual discipline and be able to identify several other potential disciplines for future practice.
2. Upon completion of this course students will be able to identify specific cultural and contextual issues that affect their practice of spirituality and how Christian spirituality is a key element in the church's ministry in a post-Christian culture.

Working together as a learning community

A core value of our class is that it is a “learning community,” designed to be a place where each member of the community can grow through positive affirmation and constructive input. We should all come to the community as people in process, open to be deconstructed and formed through our mutual learning experience.

As a responsible member of our learning community you will be expected to commit yourself to the class throughout the semester that we are together. This means that in our class interactions you will endeavor to treat all members of our class with respect and dignity. Your presence is necessary for our community (that is our class) to function at an optimal level, therefore it is expected that each student will be “present” in the online aspect of the course and in attendance for the face to face aspect of the course Mar. 12 -13. Specific expectations for online interaction can be found in the “course schedule” section of this syllabus (below). Assignments should be handed in on time and in good order as an attachment to an email sent to the professor. Assignments should be sent in on or before the due date specified in this syllabus. All assignments handed in after the due date will be subject to a penalty of 2% for each day (including weekends) that they are late.

Instructor’s role and availability

As professor it is my responsibility to empower each class member as a learner by treating each student with respect and dignity. I come to position myself as a fellow learner in the community and to offer information, reflection, experience and questions for us to reflect on together. Further, it is my responsibility to give good evaluation and feedback to your thinking, both as you offer it to the class in our discussions and through written work so that your growth through this class can be maximized as a result of our collaboration.

I will do my best to answer any email enquiries within 24 hours during week days (Mon.-Fri). I do not generally answer emails Saturdays or Sunday during the day. If an email is sent later in the afternoon on a Friday it will probably not be answered until Sunday evening or Monday morning. I will do my very best to grade assignments within three weeks of submission.

I am not only available but also welcome and enjoy connections with each of you outside formal class time. If you would like to meet together via zoom or webex please feel free to make an appointment with me for a time that works for both of us.

Required Reading

Sittser, Gerald L. *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries*. Downers Grove, Mi: Intervarsity, 2007.

Haley-Barton, Ruth. *Sacred Rhythms. Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*. Downers Grove, Mi: Intervarsity, 2006.

Bloom, Anthony. *Beginning to Pray*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1970.

Smith, Gordon T. *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal: Why the Church Should be all Three*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017.

Recommended Text

Scorgie, Glen G. (editor). *The Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011.

Assignments

1. Reflecting on the legacy of a Christian Leader in Spirituality

Students will choose one person who is regarded as a key figure in the history of Christian spirituality and write a paper that explores their life and contribution to the tradition of Christian spirituality. The paper should include a short biography of the person, an analysis of their spiritual experience and how they impacted future generations of Christians. Thus the paper is part biography, part analysis of the persons spiritual experience and part reflection on their impact.

The paper should be 4000 words in length and is due Mar. 1, 2021. It will constitute 25% of the course grade.

1A Presentation

Students will meet online at a time to be determined during the week of Mar. 1-5 (every attempt to accommodate personal schedules will be made) to present their paper to other doctoral students in the course. The presentation should be 25 minutes in length, including time for interaction and questions. The presentation should give an overview of the person you chose, some insight into why you chose them and a reflection on the overall content of your paper. Please allow at least 3-5 minutes for questions at some point during, or at the end of your presentation. The presentation will be evaluated on clarity, creativity and the presenter's demonstration of a familiarity with their subject.

Class presentations will take place during the week of Mar. 1-5, 2021 (a schedule of exact times will be provided one week prior to these dates). They should be approx. 25 minutes in length (with a time for discussion to follow) and will constitute 5% of the course grade.

2. Practicing a New Spiritual Discipline

Choose a classical spiritual discipline (see appendix in this syllabus for a list of possibilities. If you want to engage in a discipline not listed in the appendix please clear it with the instructor early in the semester) that you have not engaged in regularly throughout your life and begin practicing it on a regular basis. Write a paper that explores the history and practice of this discipline in Christian spirituality and also chronicles your experience of practicing it in your own life. The paper should be part research on the discipline and part personal reflection on your own practice of it throughout the semester. Thus, provide some referenced research (at least five sources) into the background of the specific discipline that you have chosen and provide reflection on your experience of practicing it over the course of the semester.

The paper should be 10-12 pages (double spaced) in length and is due Mar. 22, 2021. It will constitute 25% of the course grade.

Also, as part of this assignment you will offer the class a presentation of your experience with this discipline during our face to face class meeting (Mar. 12-13). The presentation should be 15 minutes in length, including time for interaction and questions. The presentation should give an overview of the discipline you chose, some insight into why you chose it and a reflection on your practice of it thus far. Please allow at least 3-5 minutes for questions at some point during, or at the end of your presentation. The presentation will be evaluated on clarity, creativity and the presenter's demonstration of a familiarity with their subject.

Presentations will take place during our class gathering (Mar. 12-13, 2021). A schedule for presentations will be developed one week prior to the class gathering. The presentation is worth 5% of the course grade.

3. Paper: Christian Spirituality in a Post-Christian Age

For this paper students will interact with the question of how Christian spirituality relates to contemporary culture and how it can function in a way that aids the church's mission. Often our society is described as being "spiritual, but not religious." That is, we are living in a time when traditional religious views, like Christianity, are not embraced but the concept of "Spirituality" is welcomed. How does this reality present an opportunity to the church and its mission? Students should consult with the instructor as to how this topic can relate to their overall doctoral topic and how the larger topic of Christian spirituality in a post-Christian age can connect to their more specific doctoral work.

Doctoral students will be divided into small groups and papers will be posted and presented to their group with feedback given to each paper by each group member. More detailed instructions will be supplied at the start of the course.

The paper is due Mar. 22, 29 or Apr. 5, 2021 (a presentation schedule will determined on the second week of class and your paper will be due on the date it is to be presented). The

paper should be approximately 6000 words in length, This paper will constitute 30% of the course grade.

4. Participation

As an online/hybrid course an ongoing commitment to participation in the online discussion forums is absolutely essential to the ethos and overall quality of the course. Thus, students will be graded on their participation based on the quality and frequency of their online participation. For each online discussion students are expected to offer one response to the discussion prompt provided by the instructor and at least two responses to classmates posts, except on the final week when only a response to the question is required (see instructions in the course schedule below). Doctoral students will be in their own small group for class discussions. Grades will be determined using the following rubric.

Class participation will constitute 10% of the course grade.

A-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (9-10 Points)

- The participant integrated evidence from the reading, lecture, or past experience in supporting their argument.
- The participant consistently posted insightful comments and questions that prompted on topic discussion.
- The participant consistently helped clarify or synthesize other class members' ideas. If disagreeing with other class members' ideas, the participant stated his or her disagreement or objections clearly, yet politely.

B-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (8 Points)

- The participant was notably lacking in one or two of the items listed for A-level participation.
- The participant consistently had to be prompted or coaxed to participate.
- The participant usually, but not always, expressed herself or himself clearly.

C-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (7 Points)

- The participant was consistently lacking in two or more of the items listed for A-level participation.

- The participant was extremely reluctant to participate, even when prompted.
- The participant rarely expressed himself or herself clearly.

D-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (6 Points)

- The participant frequently attempted (success is irrelevant) to draw the discussion off-topic, even if the participant's participation otherwise conforms to a higher level on the rubric

F-LEVEL PARTICIPATION (0-5 Points)

- The participant was rude or abusive to other course participants.
- The participant consistently failed or refused to participate at all, even when specifically prompted or questioned, even if the participant's participation otherwise conforms to a higher level on the rubric.

Course Outline and Expectations

Course Introduction: WebEx class meeting (online), Monday Jan. 4th, 7:30 pm ET (aprox. One hour) **details will be provided but please plan to attend this gathering via. the online platform if at all possible.*

- Course overview, introductions, time for student questions regarding the course.
- Student Responsibilities: Please review the course syllabus before this meeting and come prepared to offer a brief (1-2 minute) introduction of yourself (occupation, professional background, personal/family situation, your hopes for the course), and to ask any questions you may have about the course.

Unit One: Human Spirituality, Christian Spirituality and Spirituality in Biblical Perspective

Weeks of Jan. 4 & 11. We will consider the concept of “spirituality” and the distinctiveness of Christian spirituality. Also, we will consider how spirituality is presented in the Old and New Testaments.

Presentations: On-line lectures and other learning resources.

- Student Responsibilities: Please review the material posted each week for this unit. Also, begin engaging with the course text *Water from a Deep Well* especially the introduction.

Unit Two: The Beginning of Christian Spirituality

- The Weeks of Jan. 18. 25 and Feb.1. We will explore early Christian spirituality including the development of Christian community, martyrdom, asceticism, monasticism and mysticism.

- Presentations: online lectures and other learning resources. Online class discussion.

-Student Responsibilities: Engage with the resources provided and review the online lectures. Participate in the online class discussion during the week of Feb. 1st by posting your response to the discussion question provided by the instructor by Wednesday Feb. 3rd. Respond to at least two posts by your classmates by Sunday Feb. 7th. Continue Reading *Water from a Deep well* especially chapters 1-4.

Unit Three: The ongoing development of Christian Spirituality

- The weeks of Feb. 8, 15, 22. We will explore the ways that the division of the church between DoEast and West (the great schism of 1054) brought about new expressions and emphases in Christian spirituality.

- Presentations: online lectures and other resources. Class discussion on the book *Beginning to Pray*.

-Student Responsibilities: Engage with the lectures and resources provided. Read the book *Beginning to Pray*. Post your response to the book discussion questions provided by the instructor by Wednesday Feb. 24th. Respond to at least two posts by your classmates by Sunday Feb. 28th. Continue Reading *Water from a Deep Well* particularly Chapters 5-8.

Unit Four: Small group Meetings and Student Presentations

The week of Mar. 1st we will gather in small groups (online) for student presentations on their historic figure paper. The date and time of your group gathering will be determined early in the semester, it will accommodate your schedule. See the “assignments” section of the syllabus for instructions on this assignment. Read the book *Sacred Rhythms* to prepare for the in-class (Mar. 12-13) session.

Unit Five: In Class Session (Mar. 12-13): Prayer, Scripture and Classic Spiritual Disciplines

The in-class section of the course will include lecture material and class discussion on the topics of prayer, scripture and some of the classic spiritual disciplines, including discussion of the book *Sacred Rhythms*. Also, student presentations on their own practice of a spiritual discipline will take place. (A schedule will be developed for these presentations one week before the start of our first in-class meeting. See the “assignments” section of this syllabus for further information on to how to prepare).

Student Responsibilities: Come to class prepared to engage in the class material and to share your thoughts and impressions on the textbook *Sacred Rhythms*. Prepare your class presentation for the assignment on “my practice of a new spiritual discipline” and be prepared to present your work to the class according to the presentation schedule that will be developed in the preceding week.

Unit Six: The Reformation, Protestantism, the Missionary Movement and Christian Spirituality

The week of Mar. 15 - 21 there will be no class content.

Student Responsibilities: Work on your “Spiritual Discipline” paper which is due Mar. 22.

The weeks of Mar. 22 and 29 We will explore the impact of the Reformation on Christian spirituality as well as the distinctiveness of Protestantism spirituality. Also, the unique contribution of the missionary movement in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Student Responsibilities: Review the online material on the course website for this section of the course during the weeks of Mar. 22 and 29. Continue Reading the book *Water from Deep Wells*, especially chapters 9-11. Submit your spiritual discipline paper on Mar. 22. If your final paper is due on the 22nd or 29th post your paper on time to facilitate group discussion. Participate in the group discussion on the posted paper. Also begin reading the textbook *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal: Why the Church Should be all Three*. Work on your final paper which is due Monday Apr. 5th.

Unit Seven: Christian Spirituality in a Post-Christian Age

The Week of Apr.5 we will explore the role of Christian spirituality in a Post-Christian society and how Christians can participate missionally in the conversation around contemporary spirituality.

Presentations: Online lectures with some educational resources. Online book discussion; *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal: Why the Church Should be all Three*.

-Student Responsibilities: Engage with the resources provided and review the online lectures. Post your response to the discussion question based on the book *Evangelical, Sacramental, and Pentecostal: Why the Church Should be all Three* provided by the instructor by Friday Apr. 9. Students are only responsible to offer one post to the question by the due date. This week it is not necessary to interact with classmate’s posts. If your paper is due on Apr. 5th post your paper on time to facilitate group discussion. Participate in the group discussion on the posted paper.

Additional notes:

A. Textbook Purchase

All required textbooks for this class are available from the College's book service, READ On Bookstore you may contact READ On Bookstore, at books@readon.ca. Other book services may also carry the texts.

B. 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 ~ <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/rules-regulations/>

C. Gender Inclusive Language

McMaster Divinity College uses inclusive language for human beings in worship services, student written materials, and all its publications. It is expected that inclusive language will be used in chapel services and all MDC assignments. In reference to biblical texts, the integrity of the original expressions and the names of God should be respected, but you will need to use gender-inclusive language for humans, and you will need to quote from a gender-inclusive version such as the following: NRSV (1989), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), TNIV (2005), and the Common English Bible (CEB 2011).

D. Style

All stylistic considerations (including but not limited to questions of formatting, footnotes, and bibliographic references) must conform to the McMaster Divinity College Style Guidelines for Essays and Theses: <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/> Failure to observe appropriate form will result in grade reductions.

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.

Appendix : Classical Spiritual Disciplines

Disciplines of Abstinence

Solitude
Silence
Fasting
Frugality
Sacrifice
Sabbath

Disciplines of Engagement

Study
Worship
Service
Celebration
Prayer
Fellowship
Confession
Giving
lectio divina
centering/breath prayer
Ignatian examen

Resources

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988. (Especially chapter 9)

Ruth Haley-Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging our lives for spiritual transformation*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2006.

**A Google search of any of these will provide you with definitions, descriptions and suggested practices.