

**MS 3XF3/5XF5/6XF6 Spiritual Formation in the Church  
SYLLABUS Fall 2021**

**McMaster Divinity College**

**Phil C. Zylla, D.Th.**

**Office #: 215; WebEx by appointment**

**Specializations: CS, PS, CC**

**Course Delivery: Intensive Hybrid**

**Fall 2021**

**Intensive Hybrid**

**Oct. 28 afternoon; Oct. 29 all day**

**Synchronous Class Sessions: Thurs 2-3:50 p.m.**

**Bio:**

Dr. Phil Zylla is *VP Academic* and *Professor of Pastoral Theology* at McMaster Divinity College. He also holds the *J. Gordon and Margaret Warnock Jones Chair in Church and Ministry*. His research interests include congregational studies, pastoral theology, theology of suffering and pastoral care. His current writing project, *Spiritual Formation of the Congregation*, drives the research for this course. He lives in Ancaster with his wife Melodie and daughter, Chelsey.

**Course Description:**

The cultivation of a dynamic and vital spiritual life is a central concern of Christian ministry. However, more careful attention must be given to research on faith development, the structure of spiritual commitments, 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 faith formation in the context of Christian community. The course will focus on the nature of spiritual formation in the context of our communal participations. 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. The historical trajectory of key developments in Christian spirituality will be explored. Assumptions regarding authentic 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 in community.

**Delivery Model: Intensive Hybrid**

Intensive Hybrid courses start the term online, meet for 1.5 days in person mid-term, and then continue online for the remainder of the term. This course meets Thursday, Oct. 28 1-4:30 p.m. and Friday, Oct. 29 9:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

**Course Objectives:**

***Knowing***

1. Participants will expand their knowledge of the dynamics of spiritual formation and the historical trajectory of Christian spirituality.
2. Participants will learn to think theologically about discipleship and the practices that facilitate spiritual formation.
3. Participants will gain insight into the complexities of spiritual formation in the context of the faith community.

***Being***

4. Participants will deepen their commitment as spiritual guides in the process of spiritual formation in the church.
5. Participants will refresh their own spiritual practices of communion with God.

***Doing***

6. Participants will develop a paradigm for spiritual formation for their unique ministry context.
7. \*MA/PhD and DPT participants will prepare and deliver a graduate level lecture on a key theme of spiritual formation.

**Required Course Textbooks (ALL):**

- 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.
- Sittser, Gerald L. *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries*. Downer's Grove, IL: IVP, 2007
- Westerhoff, John *Spiritual Life: The Foundation for Preaching and Teaching*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994.

“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.

**Additional Course Textbooks (MA, PhD, DPT) Participants:**

Submit a selected bibliography on a theme pertinent to the course of an additional 10 volumes (250-300 pages each) and 8-10 journal articles. Submit for approval by September 23, 2021.

**COURSE OUTLINE and TOPICS**

Synchronous (live online together) and Asynchronous sessions (independent and group work online) will precede our 1.5 days together in person. The synchronous meeting time for this course is **Thursday 2:00-3:50 p.m.**

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|--------------|--|
| September 16 | Module # 1: <i>The Nature of Christian Spirituality</i><br>Read: Mulholland, 1-44<br><i>Synchronous Session Thursday 2:00-3:50 p.m.</i>                                    |
| September 23 | Module # 2: <i>The Myth of Discipleship</i><br><u>Precept Online Group Reading</u> : Sittser, 1-72<br><i>Synchronous Session Thursday 2:00-3:50 p.m.</i>                   |
| September 30 | Module # 3: <i>Cultivating the Paradigmatic</i><br>Read: Nouwen, 1-62<br><i>Asynchronous Session</i>   |
| October 7    | Module # 4: <i>Spiritual Types and Models of Spirituality</i><br><u>Precept Group Reading</u> : Mulholland, 45-73;<br>Westerhoff, Chapter 5<br><i>Asynchronous Session</i> |

- October 14                    Module # 5: *Ancient Spiritual Practices*  
Precept Group Reading: Mulholland, 75-101;  
 Sittser, Chapters 3,4,5  
*Asynchronous Session*
- October 21                    **Reading Week            no class**
- October 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> **INTENSIVE IN-PERSON SESSIONS**  
 Thursday 1:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m.; Friday 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
Topics:  
*Theology of Community*  
*Spiritual Life of the Ministry Leader* (Westerhoff: 1-51)  
*Cultivating Virtue in the Congregation*  
Spiritual Practices: Journaling, Solitude, Service, Companionship,  
 Almsgiving, Fasting  
*Ecospirituality*  
*Lovingkindness*  
*Spiritual Audacity*  
Activities:  
*Spiritual Retreat* a.m. Friday  
*Friendship Luncheon* Friday noon  
*Precept Groups*
- November 4                    Module # 6: *Prayer and Discernment*  
Precept Group Reading: Nouwen: 111-162  
    Mullholland, Chapter 9  
    Sittser, Chapter 6  
*Asynchronous Session*
- November 11                    MA/PhD/DPT Lectures – *topics TBA*  
Precept Group Reading: Sittser 7, 10  
*Synchronous Session Thursday 2:00 – 3:50 p.m.*
- November 18                    MA/PhD/DPT Lectures – *topics TBA*  
 Mullholland, 135-168  
*Synchronous Session Thursday 2:00 – 3:50 p.m.*
- November 25                    Module # 7: *Moral and Spiritual Change*  
Precept Group Reading: Sittser, Chapters 8,9  
*Asynchronous session*
- December 2                    Module # 8: *Spirituality of Social Justice*  
*Asynchronous Session*
- December 9                    *A Theology of Spiritual Formation*  
*Asynchronous Session*

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS (MTS, MDiv, Certificate, Diploma):**

### **Assignment # 1:**

**Paradigm Review 5-7 pages MS 3XE3 - 15 % 5XE6/6XE6 – 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 themes. Explore carefully the structure of Nouwen's 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.

**Further Reading:** Read Zylla, "Contours of the Paradigmatic in Henri Nouwen's Pastoral Theology" in *Turning the Wheel: Henri Nouwen and Our Search for God*. Jonathan Bengston and Gabrielle Earnshaw, eds. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.

**Due Date:** September 30, 2021

### **Assignment # 2:**

**Book Response 7 pages MS 3XE3 - 15 %**

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 this themes identified in this book (3 pages) from the perspective of your ministry specialization (CS, PS, CC).

**Due Date:** October 15, 2021

### **Assignment # 3**

**Classic Spiritual Writings 5-7 pages MS 3XE3 - 20 % 5XE5/6XE6 – 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: 2-3 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: 2-3 pages How does the writing of this author contribute to the wider questions of spiritual formation of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What are the relevant issues that are framed by this volume?

**Due Date:** November 8, 2021

### **Assignment # 4**

**Paradigm of Spiritual Formation 12-15 pages MS 3XE3 - 35 %  
(MDiv/MTS/Cert. students only)**

**Due Date:** December 3, 2021

### **Pastoral Studies Specialization (PS):**

Develop a paradigm of spiritual formation that will serve your ministry context. This 12-15 page essay 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 critical analysis of the core themes explored in the course through additional research (bibliography should include at least 5-7 books including textbooks and 5-7 academic journal articles in the pastoral studies literature)
- c. demonstrate how this paradigm will be used in a ministry context

### **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 integrating spirituality and psychology
- c. strategies and intervention techniques for spiritual care and counseling
- 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.

### **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, social justice and spirituality, Eco 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, including the articulation of core assumptions
- b. a clear topic on a particular 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 as to how this essay might help church leaders to interface with cultural understandings of the issue identified.

### **Assignment # 5**

**Sermon or Workshop Presentation – Spiritual Practices 10 pages MS 3XE3 - 15 % (MDiv/MTS/Cert. students only)**

Write a sermon or a workshop talk on one key practice of Christian spirituality (this can be a practice that has been discussed in course or an alternative practice that you want to develop a framework for). Draw from the course textbooks and outline a clear framework for the introduction of that practice into the life of the Christian community. The sermon/workshop should reflect the focus of the course on corporate spiritual life, rather than the life of the individual. The assignment should be no more than 10 pages double-spaced.

### **MA/PhD/DPT students:**

#### **Assignment # 1:**

**Paradigm Review 5-7 pages 5XE6/6XE6 – 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 themes. Explore carefully the structure of Nouwen's 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.

Further Reading: Read Zylla, “Contours of the Paradigmatic in Henri Nouwen’s Pastoral Theology” in *Turning the Wheel: Henri Nouwen and Our Search for God*. Jonathan Bengston and Gabrielle Earnshaw, eds. New York: Orbis Books, 2007.

Due Date: September 30, 2021

### **Assignment # 2:**

#### **Classic Spiritual Writings 5-7 pages 5XE5/6XE6 – 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: 2-3 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: 2-3 pages How does the writing of this author contribute to the wider questions of spiritual formation of the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What are the relevant issues that are framed by this volume?

Due Date: October 22, 2021

### **Assignment # 3 MS 5XE5/6XE6 MA/PhD/DPT Assignments**

**40-page essay and guest lecture –**

**Written Paper 45%**

**Class Lecture 30%**

In addition to the other assignments in the course read an additional 2000 pages (8-10 monographs and 10-12 journal articles) related to one core aspect of spiritual formation in the church. The rationale for the topic and an appropriate bibliography for this must be approved by the professor.

\*Write 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 Dates: A draft of the essay is due, November 12, 2021. **\*\*Sign up with Dr. Zylla for a class presentation** on either November 18<sup>th</sup> or November 25, 2021. The presentation (with PowerPoint or other presentation) is due on the day of class presenting (either Nov. 18 or 25<sup>th</sup>). The final draft of the final 40-page polished essay is due on December 5, 2021

Additional Meetings Synchronous:

n.b. The MA/PhD/DPT participants will have two additional 90 min. 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. **\*\*Dates: TBD\*\***

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**Submission of Assignment:** Digital submissions on Avenue to Learn Dropbox.

**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 website. <https://mcmasterdivinity.ca/resources-forms/mdc-style-guide/>

**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 [www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php](http://www.macdiv.ca/regs/honesty.php).

**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).

**Hurlburt Family Bookstore:** Textbooks are available from Hurlburt Family Bookstore, next to the chapel at MDC. For orders in advance:

Read On Bookstore

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Bookstore Phone: 416 620 2934

**Cell to text orders:** 416 668 3434

**Email for orders** [books@readon.ca](mailto:books@readon.ca)

\*\*Free shipping is offered to students.

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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.

### *Selected Bibliography*

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