

**MS 3XS3/5XS5/6XS6 Spiritual Formation in the Church
SYLLABUS Spring 2024**

McMaster Divinity College

Spring 2024

Phil C. Zylla, D.Th.

Office #: 215 - by appointment

May 6- August 2, 2024

Specializations: CS, PS, CC, CW

Class Sessions: Mondays 9:00-12:50 p.m.

Course Delivery: In Person/Livestream Intensive Spring

Bio:

Dr. Phil Zylla is *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, Christian spirituality, 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.

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 discipleship 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 of the gathered Christian community.

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.

Monday 9:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.

June 3 Module # 6: *Theology of Community*
Precept Group Reading : Mulholland, 141-168
 Wilhoit, Chapters 4-6, 81-146
 Nouwen, Chapter 9
Monday 11:00 a.m. – 12:50 p.m.

Module # 7: Cultivating Virtue in the Congregation
Precept Group Reading: Wilhoit, Chapters 8-10, 161-203.
Monday 11:00 a.m. – 12:50 a.m.

June 10 Module # 8 *Spiritual Life of the Ministry Leader*
Precept Group Reading: Westerhoff: 1-51.
Monday 9:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m.

Friendship Luncheon
Themes: Companionship, Ecospirituality, Lovingkindness
Monday 12:00 noon – 12:50 p.m.

June 17 Module # 9: *Prayer and Discernment*
Precept Group Reading: Nouwen: 111-162
 Mullholland, Chapter 8-10, 79-134
Monday 9:00 a.m. -10:50 a.m.

Module # 10: MA/PhD/DPT Lectures – topics TBA
Mullholland, 135-168
Monday 11:00 – 12:50 p.m.

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

Assignment # 1:

Paradigm Review 5-7 pages MS 3XS3 - 20 %

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: May 27, 2024

Assignment # 2:

Book Response 7 pages MS 3XS3 - 20 %

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: June 17, 2024

Assignment # 3

**Paradigm of Spiritual Formation 12-15 pages MS 3XS3 - 40 %
(MDiv/MTS/Cert. students only)**

Due Date: July 12, 2024

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 # 4 5-7 pages MS 3XS3 – 20 %

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 21st century? What are the relevant issues that are framed by this volume?

Due Date: **August 2, 2024

MA/PhD/DPT students:

Assignment # 1:

Paradigm Review 5-7 pages 5XS6/6XS6 – 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: May 27, 2024

Assignment # 2:

Classic Spiritual Writings 5-7 pages 5XS5/6XS6 – 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 21st century? What are the relevant issues that are framed by this volume?

Due Date: June 24, 2024

Assignment # 3/4 MS 5XS5/6XS6 MA/PhD/DPT Assignments

40-page essay and guest lecture –

Class Lecture **30%** Due: June 17, 2024

Written Paper **45%** Due: July 12, 2024

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 presentation is due June 10, 2024. The presentation (with PowerPoint or other presentation) is due on the day of class presenting – June 17, 2024. The final draft of the final 40-page polished essay is due July 12, 2024.

Additional Meetings Synchronous Online:

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

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.

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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.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is not qualitatively different from other types of dishonesty. It consists of misrepresenting the ownership of written work by deception or by other fraudulent means. In an

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academic setting this may include any number of forms such as: copying or using unauthorized aids in tests, examinations; plagiarism, i.e., submitting work that is not one's own (regardless of the means of its production) but passing it off as if it is; submitting work for credit in a course for which credit is being or has already been given, unless the previously submitted work was presented as such to the instructor of the second course and has been deemed acceptable for credit by the instructor of that course; aiding and abetting another student's dishonesty; giving false information for the purposes of gaining admission or credit; giving false information for the purposes of obtaining deferred examinations or extension of deadlines; forging or falsifying McMaster University or McMaster Divinity College documents.

AODA

In accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), the content of this course is intended to be accessible to all students who are enrolled in the course, including those with disabilities. If a student requires accommodation to participate fully in this course, that student is to contact SAS at McMaster University, who will then work directly with the McMaster Divinity College Registrar to negotiate reasonably appropriate accommodation for the student. The MDC Registrar will communicate with faculty regarding necessary accommodations. Please note that an accommodation is not retroactive and must be requested in advance to allow sufficient time for implementation.

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, for example, the following: NRSV (2021), NCV (1991), TEV/GNB/GNT (1992), CEV (1995), NLT (1996), NIV (2011), and the CEB (2011).

Bookstore

All required textbooks for this class are available from the Hurlburt Family Bookstore located beside the entrance to the Nathaniel H. Parker Memorial Chapel of McMaster Divinity College. To purchase in advance, you may contact the bookstore manager, Bernice Quek, by phone at 416.620.2934 or 416.668.3434 (mobile); or by email at books@readon.ca. The Hurlburt Family Bookstore also carries other books and merchandise and is open throughout the academic year during posted hours.

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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