

BRIERCREST

CM 600 Spiritual Formation Course Syllabus

Instructor:	Mark D. Wessner, PhD
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Credit Hours:	Three (3)
Dates and Times:	January 6 – March 2, 2014 (eight weeks)
Location:	Online (https://briercrest.instructure.com)
Prerequisites:	None

Description and Integration

Christian spiritual formation is a popular concept that stems from ancient roots. This introductory course will invite students to explore the nature of their own spiritual formation as well as introduce beliefs and practices of formation and community from Christian traditions of spirituality. Students will discover a variety of ancient and modern Christian spiritual practices that encourage a Biblical and holistic approach to life.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

1. Identify the Biblical, theological and historical elements of Christian spirituality.
2. Articulate a Biblical theology of personal spiritual growth.
3. Thoughtfully answer the question, "What does it mean to live a Christian life?"
4. Describe and evaluate the various principles, methods and teachings used to help people grow spiritually, in light of the Old and New Testaments.

Real learning takes place as you *carefully process* information through higher order thinking skills such as comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation (it is not simply taking in information from outside sources - a book, teacher, web site, field experience, etc). Your performance in this class will be based on your demonstration of your learning, not by simply repeating back basic facts (your knowledge of the facts will become clear as you demonstrate higher order thinking skills). In all you that do in this class, you should always remember to use higher order thinking skills, as described below:

1. *Comprehension*: demonstrates the ability to grasp meaning, explain, and restate ideas,
2. *Application*: demonstrates the ability to use learned material in new situations,
3. *Analysis*: demonstrates the ability to separate material into component parts and show relationships between parts,
4. *Synthesis*: demonstrates the ability to put together the separate ideas to form a new whole, to establish new relationships, and
5. *Evaluation*: demonstrates the ability to judge the worth of material against stated criteria.

Required Texts

Foster, Richard J., and James Bryan Smith. *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals and Groups*. Revised ed. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005.

Scorgie, Glen G. *A Little Guide to Christian Spirituality: Three Dimensions of a Life Lived with God*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2007.

Sittser, Gerald Lawson. *Water from a Deep Well: Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2007.

An English translation of the Bible (both Old and New Testaments).

Technical Requirements

Since this course is in an online format students will need access to a computer with a high speed internet connection. We recommend having Google Chrome installed as your internet browser. The course material will be available through Briercrest's Canvas site at: <https://briercrest.instructure.com>. Google Chrome, Adobe Reader are both available for free by following the links below. Technical requirements for these programs can also be found on their respective websites.

- Google Chrome: <https://www.google.com/intl/en/chrome/browser/>
- Adobe PDF Reader: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

Evaluation Procedures

- Seven Reflection Papers and Replies 35%
- Book Review 25%
- Church Visit and Report 25%
- Reading Report 15%

The learning goals and benefits of each of the assignments intentionally overlap, but as a way of highlighting the types of skills and experiences that each assignment stresses, please review this summary:

- Reflection Papers and Replies - Personal interaction with the subject matter
- Book Review - Critical thinking about the subject matter
- Church Visit and Report - Careful observation of the subject matter
- Reading Report - Familiarity with the subject matter

There are no extra credit assignments available.

Reflection Papers

Seven brief assignments in which you express your personal thoughts and interaction with both the reading and the Reflection Questions, as described below. Each reading is taken from a specific section in the *Devotional Classics* textbook. For each week's Reflection Paper assignment:

1. Read the entire section and work through each of the Reflection Questions (identified in the textbook, at the end of each reading), and write a 500 word summary of your observations about the text and

- your thoughts about its practical application.
2. Reply to two other students Reflection Papers, with a minimum of 250 words each.
 3. Grading is based on both quantity and quality of insightful, substantive messages posted (messages that simply offer one line comments will not count). Students who desire full marks for discussions will make well-thought contributions to the discussion that indicate careful reading of the course materials as well as careful thought about their fellow classmate's comments.
 - a. High quality comments reflect keen insight and analytical skills as well as original thinking and interpretation of the issues. Don't be afraid to disagree with someone but be sure to explain your own reasoning behind your disagreement. Better yet, take someone else's observations to the next level – apply your own unique twist to the points being made, add something beyond what someone else has said.

The seven Reflection Paper readings are:

- Week 1 – Either Jonathan Edwards (pages 19-25) or Francis de Sales (pages 26-32)
- Week 2 – Bernard of Clairvaux (pages 41-47)
- Week 3 – Blaise Pascal (pages 143-149)
- Week 4 – E. Stanley Jones (pages 281-287)
- Week 5 – Either Henri Nouwen (pages 80-86), Evelyn Underhill (pages 94-100) or Brother Lawrence (pages 369-375)
- Week 6 – Either Ignatius of Loyola (pages 193-199) or John Bunyan (pages 213-219)
- Week 7 – Either William Temple (pages 223-229) or Dietrich Bonhoeffer (pages 271-277)

Book Review

A ten page book review *A Little Guide to Christian Spirituality*, following the standard guidelines below (important: the assignment is to write a *book review*, not a book report):

- a. Introduction (6 marks):
 - i. A general description of the book: title, author, subject and format. Here you can include details about who the author is and where he/she stands in this field of inquiry. You can also link the title to the subject to show how the title explains the subject matter.
 - ii. A brief summary of the purpose of the book and its general argument or theme. Include a statement about who the book is intended for.
 - iii. Your thesis about the book: is it a suitable/appropriate piece of writing about the problem for the audience it has identified?
- b. Summary of Content (2 marks):
 - i. This can be done in the same way that it is done for a simple book report (do not spend too much time or paper on this section, as the analysis and evaluation of content is more important than a simple summary).
- c. Analysis of Text (11 marks):
 - i. What is the writer's style: simple/technical, persuasive/logical?
 - ii. How well does the organizational method (comparison/contrast; cause/effect; analogy; persuasion through example) develop the argument or theme of the book? (Give examples to support your analysis.)
 - iii. What evidence does the book present to support the argument? How convincing is this evidence? (Select pieces of evidence that are weak, or strong, and explain why they are such.)
 - iv. How complete is the argument?
 - v. Are there facts and evidence that the author has neglected to consider? (You may need to refer to other relevant material)

- d. Evaluation of the Text (6 marks):
- i. Give a brief summary of all the weakness and strengths you have found in the book. Does it do what it set out to do?
 - ii. Evaluate the book's overall usefulness to the audience it is intended for.

Church Visit and Report

Each student will visit the regular weekly service(s) of a local church, at some point during Weeks 1-5. Each student will choose one Christian church, and the choice must be approved by the instructor prior to the visit. If you regularly attend a local church, you must visit and report on a church other than your own.

The purpose of the visit is twofold: 1) to gain an exposure to the diversity of contemporary Christianity as expressed in Canadian society, and 2) to analyze and critique a corporate spiritual experience. To achieve these goals, the 1,500 word paper is to include the following four sections:

- a. A carefully calculated report of the total number of people (all ages) who attended the church's regular weekend service(s), as well as an explanation of the method that was used to calculate attendance. (4 marks)
- b. A brief description of the church's denomination, and the church's history in the community. (7 marks)
- c. A report on the church service(s) itself, any distinctive features, and your general impressions of the service(s) and the people. (7 marks)
- d. A report on the church's goals and strategies for their future ministry in the community. (7 marks)

Be sure to properly cite all of your sources in the paper, whether they are written or verbal. Church materials (brochures, documents, etc) should be scanned and posted with the assignment, if feasible.

Reading Report

Before the last day of class, you must indicate how much of the required reading you thoughtfully read (not skimmed) during the course, as a percentage (eg. 50%, 90%, etc), and also as a 500 word summary of your observations and comments about the readings.

Course Outline

Week	Learning Objective(s)	Reading(s)	Assignment(s)
1 (Jan 6-12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasons of the Soul • Living Intentionally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any 10 of the Psalms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Paper #1
2 (Jan 13-19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational Spirituality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ephesians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Paper #2
3 (Jan 20-26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perspective Spirituality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sittser, pp. 27-49 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Paper #3
4 (Jan 27-Feb 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core Spirituality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sittser, pp. 209-230 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Paper #4
5 (Feb 3-9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplined Spirituality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luke 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Paper #5
6 (Feb 10-16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supernatural Spirituality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection Paper #6
7 (Feb 17-23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Spirituality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sittser, pp. 50-72 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book Review • Reflection Paper #7
8 (Feb 24-Mar 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Christian Beliefs • Finishing Well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sittser, pp. 281-295 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Visit Report • Reading Report

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism and Cheating

- Briercree supports and promotes academic honesty and personal integrity. Cheating can include, but is not limited to, the following actions:
 - Submitting another person's work,
 - Writing a paper for someone else,
 - Working in a group effort without the instructor's consent,
 - Obtaining a paper from a research service,
 - Getting outside help or giving outside help without the instructor's expressed permission, and
 - Submitting the same work for credit without approval (e.g. submitting all or part of the same assignment for different courses)
- The Internet has made it quite easy to copy and insert materials into a paper. Students must be careful to properly attribute materials found on the Internet and through other sources.

Writing Expectations

- All assignments must be submitted online through the course website.
- The **Book Review** must be uploaded as .doc, .docx, or .rtf file, and must adhere to the following format:
 - 11 or 12 point font in Arial or Times New Roman styles
 - Top, bottom and side page margins of 2.5cm (1 inch)
 - Double-spaced
 - Current Chicago Manual of Style or Turabian guidelines.

Late Assignments

- Manage your time well. Keep in mind that this is a full-semester course compressed into an eight-week timeframe. During the first week of class, review the required assignments and write out a weekly schedule for completing each assignment's research and writing.
- Assignments can be submitted prior to their due dates (often, it is better time management to do so).
- **Late assignments will be deducted 5% per day**, to a maximum of five days. Any assignment submitted more than five days late will not be accepted.
- Please note that **any assignment submitted after the last day of class will not be counted toward your final grade – there will be no exceptions**. It is your responsibility to ensure that all assignments are submitted on time. If you have requested and been approved for a formal course extension, it is your responsibility to submit all assignments before the expiry of the extension.

Extensions

- All extensions must be requested through the Academic Service's office. Professors do not have the authority to grant extensions beyond the syllabus due date.
- Extensions are normally not granted beyond the syllabus due date. However, in rare extenuating circumstances beyond a student's control (e.g., death in the family, extended illness or tragedy), the student may request an extension through the Academic Services office. Please note that school, family, or ministry commitments or busyness does not qualify as an extenuating circumstance for an extension. Should the student fail to complete the assignments by the due date (or the extension date, when applicable), a grade will be assigned according to the work the student has submitted.

- Important note: Acquiring an extension according to the policy above is the sole responsibility of the student.

Disclaimer Statement

- Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of this particular group.

Selected Bibliography

- Barton, R. Ruth. *Pursuing God's Will Together : A Discernment Practice for Leadership Groups*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books/Formatio, 2012.
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- Cymbala, Jim, and Dean Merrill. *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire : What Happens When God's Spirit Invades the Heart of His People*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1997.
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- Scorgie, Glen G., Simon Chan, Gordon T. Smith, and James D. Smith. *Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2011.
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- Smith, Gordon T. *On the Way : A Guide to Christian Spirituality*. Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 2001.
- Smith, James Bryan. *The Good and Beautiful God : Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows* The Apprentice Series. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2009.
- Tucker, Ruth. *God Talk : Cautions for Those Who Hear God's Voice*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2006.