

SPIRITUALITY (SPIR)

SPIR 414 Theology and Spirituality of Vocation (3 Credits)

This course will address the theological, spiritual, and practical dimensions of Christian vocation. Students will examine the history and development of Catholic and Protestant theologies of vocation, with attention to creation, providence, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The course emphasizes vocation both as general, the calling Christians share together, and as particular, the unique ways God calls each person. We will study callings as they pertain to the whole of life, across the lifespan (children, teens, young adults, adulthood and the elderly), and in regards to work and professions. We will examine practices of discernment as well as interfaith perspectives on vocation. Cross listed with PTHM 414.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PTHM 414

SPIR 416 Contemporary Spiritual Practice (3 Credits)

Why is spiritual practice on the rise? What do contemplation and social justice have to do with each other? Can people from different religions borrow practices from others? Students in this course will examine spiritual practices and ways of thinking about them that have become prominent in recent decades. These movements include the retrieval and redefinition of ancient practices (e.g., lectio divina, centering prayer, and the Jesus Prayer); the intersection of spiritual practice and social issues (e.g., the influence of other religions; the environment; and social justice); and contemporary theological emphases (e.g., work, the body, art, science, and gender). Students will explore recent scholarship on the rise of spiritual practice, the theological foundations as well as the actions and disciplines that comprise these approaches. Cross listed with PTHM 416.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PTHM 416

SPIR 424 History of Christian Spirituality I (3 Credits)

An exploration of the significant formative elements, experiences and writers of Christian spirituality in its first 700 years. Cross-listed with HCHR 424.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HCHR 424, HHTH 424

SPIR 425 History of Christian Spirituality II (3 Credits)

A study of the Christian spirituality of the Middle Ages, especially from the end of the seventh century to the Reformation. Special attention will be given to notable figures, writings, events, institutions and movements that shaped the expression of Christian convictions and practice, up to the dawn of the "modern" period. Cross-listed with HCHR 425.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HCHR 425, HHTH 425

SPIR 426 History of Christian Spirituality III (3 Credits)

The development of Christian spirituality from the Protestant and Catholic Reformations to the present. Also included will be events in Asia, Africa, North and Latin America. Cross-listed with HCHR 428.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: HCHR 428, HHTH 428

SPIR 429 Spiritual Biography, Spiritual Journey (3 Credits)

This course involves critical and reflective reading of works that might be classified as "spiritual autobiography" in the Christian theological and spiritual tradition. Examining these "self-presentations" as theological fonts, the course introduces students to this genre and an understanding of each work in its historical and theological context. Particular attention is given to presentations of life as a "journey" with emphasis on those experiences which advance the person in his or her relationship with God. Themes such as grace, sacramental action, self-examination, prayer, and good works inform the way in which the course considers progress in the life stories, and the course will invite students to think about how biography might shape on-going insights into current Christian thought and practice. Cross listed with HCHR 429.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: PTHM 429

SPIR 430 Theology and Spirituality (3 Credits)

The relationship between concrete experience and theological inquiry as seen in the works of outstanding spiritual writers of the Christian tradition. Prayer in Christian life. Forms of spirituality and asceticism.

Prerequisites: None

SPIR 431 Christian Prayer (3 Credits)

A study of the place of prayer in Christian life, with special emphasis on the Our Father, using various classical commentaries as a case in point. Theological problems and considerations related to doctrine of prayer are included, e.g. discernment in prayer, content of prayer, polarities in prayer (such as its apophatic and mystical, individual and communitarian, sacramental and liturgical aspects), and laws of the spiritual life emanating from teachings on prayer.

Prerequisites: None

SPIR 432 Spirituality and Mysticism (3 Credits)

The mystical dimension of Christianity as exemplified in ancient and modern mystics. Questions of discernment of true from false mysticism; comparative studies; influence of psychology on studies of mysticism to the Church.

Prerequisites: None

SPIR 434 Monastic Spiritual Theology (3 Credits)

The development of monastic spiritual theology will be studied from the perspective of monastic primary sources. Texts will be studied as guides and sourcebooks for models of monastic spiritual progress and human maturity. Special emphasis will be placed on: (1) the original meanings of "active" and "contemplative" in the vocabulary of early monasticism; (2) models of spiritual development in the early church and in the early monastic movement; (3) the interrelationship between the cenobitic and eremitic lifestyles; (4) the theory and practice of lectio divina; (5) the mystical interpretation of the scriptures and the practice of liturgical prayer; (6) monastic reform and renewal; (7) spiritual guidance in the monastic tradition. Cross-listed with MONS 434.

Prerequisites: None

SPIR 435 Christian Asceticism (3 Credits)

The development of Christian asceticism will be studied from the perspective of primary sources, drawn chiefly from the Christian monastic tradition. Texts will be studied as guides and sourcebooks for models of conversion, growth in human maturity, and spiritual progress. Special emphasis will be placed on: (1) classical and Christian understandings of ascesis; (2) repentance and the call to conversion as the basis for authentic ascetical practice; (3) the dynamic interrelationship between ascetical practice and contemplative vision; (4) philosophical and monastic models of virtue and vice; (5) the contrasting and interdependent asceticism of hermitage and cenobium; (6) friendship as the form and ascetical school of virtue; (7) spiritual exercises and the love of learning-implications for monastic reform and renewal. Cross-listed with MONS 435.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: MONS 435

SPIR 436 Bible and Prayer (3 Credits)

This course will examine early Christian and monastic attitudes toward the biblical text and the interplay between the Bible and forms of prayer. Topics will include: methods of interpreting the Bible; ways of encountering the Bible (reading, memorization, meditation), kinds of early monastic prayer and their biblical basis. There will also be some attention to the subsequent history of those traditions and a consideration of present-day implications. Cross-listed with MONS 436.

Prerequisites: None

SPIR 437 The Practice of Discernment in Prayer (1 Credit)

An exploration of how our personal image of God evolves as we discern God's ways of being present to us in prayer and in life. By both studying and practicing discernment of spirits we can become sensitive to inner movements, understanding where they come from and where they lead us. The course will include an introduction to the practice of lectio divina applied to our lived experience. Required: Access to computer with built-in camera OR attached web cam. Grading is S/U only.

Prerequisites: None

SPIR 440 Perennial Wisdom of the Rule of Benedict (1 Credit)

This course explores important themes in the Rule of St. Benedict, such as doing good works in order to reach God's kingdom, being an apprentice in the spiritual life, having the right interior dispositions (e.g., humility), and the usefulness of observances. In addition to reading the Rule, we will look at some materials from the historical context in which St. Benedict wrote and some contemporary treatments of related topics. This course will be valuable for those looking to engage the perennial wisdom of the Rule more deeply.

Prerequisites: None

Equivalent courses: MONS 410, MONS 440

SPIR 467 Topics in Jewish Spirituality (3 Credits)

Prerequisites: None

SPIR 468 Topics in Spirituality (1-3 Credits)

Prerequisites: None

SPIR 470 Independent Study (1-3 Credits)

Prerequisites: None