CAREY THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

SPIR 699: Special Topic in Spiritual Formation:

Deepening Life with God

Summer 2020

Professor: Dr. Les Biggs

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3 graduate credit hours

Date: June 29, 2020 – September 4, 2020

While every effort has been made to be accurate as of January 15, 2020, syllabi produced before the beginning of class are subject to change.

# Course Description

This course gives the student an opportunity to do focused study in a specialized area of Spiritual Formation. Spiritual formation is the process by which our lives are joined to the kingdom story within the community of faith, by the work of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the world and to the glory of God. It involves both an inward journey of a deepening life with God and the outward expression of that life in compassion and witness. This course will lay a foundation for the inward journey. The themes of understanding the biblical basis for spiritual formation, the importance of engaging spiritual practices, recognizing the dynamics of spiritual formation and increasing our attentiveness to God will be the guiding focus points for this course.

# Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, you will be able to:

1. Articulate a biblical foundation for the practice and experience of the Christian life
2. Deepen the desire to grow in Christ and consent more freely to the love of God
3. Experience selected practices effective in the formation of love for God and for neighbor
4. Learn to live in ways that are increasingly attentive to God, oneself and others

# Course Textbooks

Nouwen, Henri J.M. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit.* New York: Harper Collins, 2010. 161 pages

Smith, James K. A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2016. 207 pages

Benner, David. *Desiring God’s Will: Aligning our Hearts with the Heart of God.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005. 123 pages

Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

# Course Expectations and Assignments

1. **Three online zoom conversation (1 ½ hours each).**

At the beginning, middle and near the end of the course, the professor and students will have 3 conversations covering topics related to the course.

The topics and dates for these zoom sessions are:

**Zoom Session 1 – Introduction to each other and course: June 29, 2020 at 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon PDT (BC Time)  
Zoom Session 2 – Deepening our commitment to the spiritual practices: July 27, 2020 at 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon PDT (BC Time)  
Zoom Session 3 – Gathering our learnings: August 31, 2020 at 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon PDT (BC Time)**

1. **Engaging two spiritual practices**
   1. **Engage the Practice of Examen (Starting Week 1 and going through Week 10)**Three times a week for 10 weeks, engage the practice of Examen and keep a journal of this experience. Near the end of the 10 weeks and drawing on your journal, submit a 750 word reflection paper focussing on the ways you have sensed God’s presence in your life over the past 10 weeks. This reflection paper should include comments on: the struggles, if any, you experienced in engaging the Examen, transformational experiences, your understanding of the role of being attentive to God, and insights into your own spiritual journey and spiritual formation in general. A guideline for the practice of the Prayer of Examen will be available on the Canvas site.

**Due: August 29, 2020**

* 1. **Planning (and beginning) a spiritual practice engagement – based on the desires God is giving you.  
     During the Second Week of the Course:** Read the Introduction, pages 15 – 23 to Calhoun’s book and then complete the Spiritual Growth Planner questionnaire (Appendix 1) in Adele Calhoun’s book, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook.* Following the guidelines in Appendix 1, choose one spiritual practice, as identified from the questionnaire, that you wish to explore more fully. The primary point of this assignment is to develop a plan for engaging the spiritual practice you have identified from doing the Calhoun questionnaire and secondarily to engage this practices as much as possible within the time constraints of this course. After you have done the reading and chosen a practice, write up a basic plan to put this practice into your life and then as is appropriate to the spiritual practice that you have chosen, engage this practice over the next few weeks. **During Week 5 of the Course:** Submit a 500 word reflection paper answering the following questions: 1. What spiritual practice did you choose after doing the Calhoun questionnaire? 2. Explain how this practice will help deepen the desire God is placing within you. 3. To what extent were you able to engage this spiritual practice and what was this experience like for you? 4. What is your plan for engaging this spiritual practice going forward? 5. What did you learn about your spiritual journey through doing this questionnaire and assignment?

**Due: August 1, 2020**

1. **Online Postings and Discussion (**Due: Every Wednesday and Friday Evenings that postings are required) Students are expected to participate in all online discussions and class activities. Students who do not post in a timely way will receive 0 for the week’s posting. The discussion for each week takes an average of 3 hours to complete (8 discussions; a total of **24 hours** online work for the course which excludes textbook reading time). Students are expected to respond to the discussion questions by midnight of every Wednesday and respond to peer-discussions of each unit by midnight of every Friday. Each student is required to integrate readings into the discussion and interact with two other student’s responses for each unit. To manage the amount of online reading and your mutual workload, your postings should be no more than 250-300 words in length. The response to peer submissions should be approximately 100-150 words each, for a total posting of 350 - 450 words.  
     
   Evaluating Online Discussions: The online discussion exercise is designed for students to engage an online community for learning and discovery. Discussions will be graded on the depth of thinking, the ability to integrate reading materials with life applications as well as Biblical theology, and fresh insights that enrich the community experience. Student postings are intended to be concise, with each sentence filled with content. It is fine to agree with and affirm another student’s work, but you need to articulate your reasoning for agreement. One does not need to submit ground-breaking revelations, but simply support your position.  
     
   Grading  
   10 / A Exceptional in all respects, demonstrating strong integration of reading and application with respectful and informed challenge.  
   9 / A- Very good work – well-directed, relevant and thoughtful contributions with referenced readings appropriate to the topic.  
   8 / B+ Solid work – thorough and informed contributions and interaction with the topic and the students.  
   7 / B Good in general but weaker in some areas – e.g. application, depth of understanding.  
   6 / B- More minimal contribution. Needs improvement – see parameters above.  
   5 / C+ > Inadequate contribution. Needs improvement – see parameters above.  
   0 Unexcused late work or failure.
2. **Read: Nouwen, Henri. *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit.***After reading this book, write 1000 words outlining:
   1. New possibilities/horizons for your spiritual journey that this book has opened your eyes to.
   2. The challenges and hindrances for your spiritual formation that this book has made you more aware of.
   3. Choose one of the “Movements of the Spirit” in Nouwen’s book and reflect on its relevance to your life at the present time.

**Due: July 18, 2020**

1. **Read: Smith, James K. A. *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit.***Identify two themes from this book that bring helpful insight to the nature/theological basis of spiritual formation. Briefly develop these themes and explain how they might be helpful in a current or future ministry context. 1000 words.

**Due: August 15, 2020**

1. **Final Paper 1500 words**The final paper will focus on two topics critical to this course and your spiritual formation. Drawing from the course readings and input, devote half of the paper to each of these two topics. Wherever possible, draw connections to your understanding of the theological basis for spiritual formation.
   1. Refute the argument that, “The spiritual practices are part of a ‘works program’ and are about earning salvation.” Provide Biblical support to refute this argument and articulate why spiritual practices are critical for our spiritual journey.
   2. During this course, what hindrances have you identified to your own spiritual formation? What hindrances to spiritual formation are commonly faced by Christians in your context? This may include cultural influences as well as internal influences. What are key ways to overcome these hindrances?

**Due: September 4, 2020**

# Course outline:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Week 1 June 29 – July 4, 2020 | 1. **Zoom Session # 1 – June 29** **10:30 a.m. – 12 noon** PDT (BC Time)  2. Begin the Practice of Examen (Do all weeks, See Assignment 2.a.)  3. Read Nouwen – Introduction and Part One to p.33  4. No Posting this week |
| Week 2 July 6 - 11 | 1. Read Nouwen – Part Two: pages 35 – p.71  2. Do Adele Calhoun reading and questionnaire – Appendix 1 (See Assignment  2.b for approach to this reading and questionnaire)  3. Post |
| Week 3 July 13 - 18 | 1. Read Nouwen, pages 73 - end  2. Post  3. Nouwen paper **Due July 18, 2020**  (See Assignment 4) |
| Week 4 July 20 - 25 | 1. Read James KA Smith – pages 1- 81  2. Post |
| Week 5 July 27 – August 1 | 1. **Zoom Session #2 – July 27 10:30 a.m. – 12 noon**  2. Read James KA Smith – pages 82 - 136  3. Calhoun Assignment **Due August 1, 2020** (See Assignment 2.b)  4. Post |
| Week 6 Aug 3 - 8 | 1. Read James KA Smith - pages 137 to end  2. Post |
| Week 7 Aug 10 - 15 | 1. Post  2. Smith Book Reflection Paper **Due August 15, 2020** (See Assignment 5) |
| Week 8 Aug 17 - 22 | 1. Read Benner pages 1 - 58  2. Post |
| Week 9 Aug 24 - 29 | 1. Read Benner read pages 59 to end  2. Begin Final Paper  3. Post  4. **Prayer of Examen Reflection Paper Due August 29, 2020**  (See Assignment 2b) |
| Week 10 Aug 31 –September 4, 2020 | 1. **Zoom Session # 3 August 31, 2020 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon (BC Time)**  2. Finish Final Paper **Due September 4, 2020** (See Assignment 6)  3. No Posting this week |

# Time Investment

**Postings 25 hours**

**Reading 550 pages 28 hours**

**Writing 4750 words 41.5 hours**

**Spiritual Practices (Examen and**

**Spiritual Practice Plan) 27 hours**

**3 Online Zoom Sessions 6 hours**

**Total 127.5 hours**

# Assignments Due Date List

1. **Week 2 through 8** Online postings –See Assignment 3 p. 3

2. **Due July 18, 2020** - Nouwen Book Reflection # 1: See Assignment 4

3. **Due August 1, 2020** Calhoun Assignment: See Assignment 2.b

4. **Due August 15, 2020** Smith Book Reflection # 2: See Assignment 5

5. **Due August 29, 2020** Prayer of Examen Paper: See Assignment 2.a

6. **Due September 4, 2020** Final Paper See Assignment 6

# Grading

1. Postings 20 %

2. Book Reflection #1 15 %

3. Calhoun Assignment 10 %

4. Book Reflection # 2 15 %

5. Prayer of Examen Paper 15 %

6. Final Paper 25%

**Total 100%**

# Evaluation Methods and Criteria

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Grade class** | **Descriptors** | **Letter grades** | **Detail** | **%** |
| **A class work**  **Excellent, superior work** | Effectively and exceptionally accomplishes all course outcomes and objectives. Work produced is excellent quality, publishable, and beneficial to all. Shows exceptional growth/mastery. Exceptionally creativity and originality in approach to the subject. | **A+**  **A**  **A-** | Exceptional A-class work  Consistent A-class work  Generally A-class work, some lapses and areas for refinement | **100-98**  **97-94**  **93-90** |
| **B class work**  **Good solid work** | Accomplishes all course outcomes and objectives. Work produced is good quality, publishable after some revision, and beneficial to peers and fellow students. Growth/mastery of course material is good. Shows creativity and originality in approach to subject. | **B+**  **B**  **B-** | Primarily B-class, superior to some areas  Consistent B-class work  Generally B-class work, some lapses and areas for refinement | **89-87**  **86-84**  **83-80** |
| **C class work**  **Passible but needs to improve** | Accomplishes enough course outcomes and objectives to be passible. Work produced is not recommended for dissemination unless qualified. Growth/mastery is basic, but encouraged to repeat the course. Shows hints of creativity and originality, but not consistent. | **C+**  **C**  **C-** | Primarily C-class, better in some areas  Consistent C-class work  Generally C-class work, but this is based on generous interpretation. Elements that fall significantly short, marginally passable. | **79-77**  **76-74**  **73-70** |
| **F class work**  **Unpassible** | Fails to accomplish course outcomes and objectives. Work should not be disseminated under any condition. Little to no growth/mastery of course material. Fails to show creativity or originality in approach to the subject. | **F** | Generally unpassible work. | **69-0** |

# Bibliography

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# Academic Policies

Please see the **Carey Academic Catalog** for more details:  
<http://www.carey-edu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Academic-Catalog-2016-2017-FINAL.pdf>

**Course Attendance**

Students are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions to fulfil degree requirements. This includes on-line webinars and/or live-streamed portions of courses.

**Carey Grading Scale**

See the Carey Academic Catalogue for details on the Carey grading scale.

**Course Withdrawal Policy**

A student who withdraws after the period for which tuition refunds are available within the first half of the course will receive a “W” on their transcript. Beyond those dates, they will receive an “F.”

**Extensions**

Extensions for course work will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. If an extension will make it impossible for the professor to submit the final grade no later than one month following the final assignment, the student must petition the Registrar’s Office. If the Registrar’s Office grants such a request, the final extension deadlines will be clearly established. Work granted an extension may receive a grade reduction of up to one-third of the final mark.

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is honest and responsible scholarship. Students are expected to submit original work and give credit to other peoples' ideas. Academic dishonesty is acting in a manner to gain unearned academic credit. Examples of academic dishonesty are:

* Plagiarizing by misrepresenting the work of another person (in whole or in part) as a student’s own work or failing to give credit for either wording or ideas that belong to another.
* Submitting the same material for credit in more than one course (whether the earlier submission was at Carey or another institution).
* Using unauthorized aids of any sort in examinations, completing work in unauthorized collaboration with others, or the unauthorized recording and use of class lectures.

Penalty for a lack of academic integrity may include a failing grade in the assignment, examination or course, depending on the severity of the offense. All students are responsible for knowing and practicing academic integrity and must become familiar with the plagiarism student resource at: <http://learningcommons.ubc.ca/academic-integrity/>.

**Gender Language**

As language usage changes, the church must discern where its language must change in order to bear faithful witness to the gospel. Modern English usage has moved away from using masculine terms to refer to groups that include women. Using of such terms in worship, writing, or conversation miscommunicates the invitation of the gospel and the nature of the church. Assignments that don’t conform to the gender language policy will be returned to the student for resubmissions.

See the Carey Academic Catalogue for more details on this policy.