

STML 563 Contemporary Expressions in Spirituality
Valerie Lesniak, PhD
Fall Quarter, 2013
Monday, 1:30-4:20
Hunthausen Hall 100
vlesniak@seattleu.edu
206-296-6936

“Every historical era reinvents the project of spirituality.”
Susan Sontag

This seminar, designed specifically for students who are following the M.A. in Transformational Leadership degree, is open and appropriate for all STM students interested in contemporary spirituality. This course provides a foundation for the interdisciplinary study of spirituality, in particular, for the variety of expressions found in contemporary spirituality. Current trends in spirituality will be assessed in light of their creative transformational potential in developing a new social and spiritual consciousness, global understanding and responsibility, and individual interconnectedness.

At the end of the course, students would have considered:

- Current trends that are emerging in contemporary expressions of spirituality as seen both within the literature and within our own practice of spiritualities
- What makes “experience” “spiritual” and not “religious”
- Some practical definitions and methods for the study of spirituality
- The spiritual concerns arising from the varying understandings of the human condition as found in contemporary spiritualities
- The contributions of psychology, the human sciences, the arts and contemplative traditions to the development of the “inner self” and authentic living
- “Hybrid spiritualities” and their roles in defining the current spiritual landscape
- Critical perspectives on reading and assessing current writings and movements in spirituality
- Methods for critically appropriating contemporary spiritual trends into one’s own personal life and praxis

MATL LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Demonstrate an understanding of the role and dynamics of human “meaning-making” in framing worldviews, and in impacting individual and collective human values formation, ethical and other forms of decision-making, and leadership ideals, goals and methodologies.
- Demonstrate a *reflective* capacity for analyzing and articulating the student’s personal spirituality and “meaning-making influences and

structure, and its impact on the student's leadership ideals, goals, and methodologies.

- Demonstrate an ability to *integrate* course material with their personal meaning structure and spirituality, and their ideals and goals for leadership.

REQUIRED TEXTS;

Gottlieb, Roger S. ***Spirituality: What It is and Why It Matters.*** Oxford University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-19-973875-5

Hillesum, Etty. ***An Interrupted Life: The Diaries of Etty Hillesum 1941-1943.*** Pantheon Books, 1983. ISBN 0-394-53217-1

King, Ursula. ***The Search For Spirituality: Our Global Quest For a Spiritual Life.*** Bluebridge Books, 2008. ISBN 1933346140

RECOMMENDED TEXTS;

Macy, Joanna and Johnstone, Chris. ***Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We're in without Going Crazy.*** New World Library, 2012. ISBN 978-1-57731-972-6

Wigglesworth, Cindy. ***SQ 21: The Twenty-One Skills of Spiritual Intelligence.*** Select Books, 2012. ISBN 978-1-59079-253-3

Lesser, Elizabeth. ***The Seeker's Guide: Making Your Life A Spiritual Adventure,*** New York, Villard, 1999. ISBN: 0-679-78359-8

Tacey, David. ***The Spirituality Revolution: The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality,*** London and New York: Routledge, 2004. ISBN 978-1-58391-874-6

Van Ness, Peter, ed. ***Spirituality and the Secular Quest,*** New York: Crossroad, 1996. 10-0-8245-0774-6

Pertinent articles can be found in a Reader which students can purchase at the SU Repro Department and are designated by a "***". Students will be responsible to pay for the cost of the reproductions.

Course Requirements and Means of Assessment:

1. Faithful class attendance, active participation in class discussions and processes, a critical reading of assigned texts and completion of assignments.

2. Keeping of a notebook/scrapbook which will contain responses to the readings.
3. Students will select and research a contemporary expression in spirituality that they are interested in exploring. It may be a contemporary spiritual writer, artist, movement, publication, practice, organization, website or emerging trend in spirituality that they find particularly interesting. Further details will be worked out in class. Students may want to form groups around a contemporary expression. Each student will be responsible for:
 - **Researching** their selected topic (Topics to be selected by October 21, 2013.)
 - **Presenting and engaging the class in their contemporary expression. Experiential engagement is highly encouraged. This will be discussed further in class.**
 - **Provide class members with a short annotated bibliography about their contemporary expression.**
 - Some helpful questions to keep in mind:**
 1. What spiritual concerns does this author/artist/movement/trend seek to explore or meet?
 2. In what ways does this author/movement/trend respond to a spiritual concern of the day?
 3. What are the particular strengths and limitations you find in their approach and description?
 4. How do you see this author/artist/movement/trend contributing to developing a new social and spiritual consciousness, global understanding and responsibility, and individual interconnectedness?

Further delineation of the presentation and writing assignment will be given in class.

All written work will conform to STM guidelines for writing papers and will reflect graduate level standards

Computation of Final Grade:

1. Class Participation 60%
2. Reflection Paper I 10%
3. Class engagement and presentation 20%
4. Annotated bibliography 10%

Tentative Syllabus

(This syllabus may be changed by the instructor according to the needs and concerns of the students.)

Articles pertinent to first class topic:

Preliminary Reading for First Class

Students are invited to read:

- *Lesniak, Valerie. "Contemporary Spirituality," (Essay) "North American Spirituality," and "New Age Spirituality," in **The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality**, edited by Philip Sheldrake, SCM Press in the U. K. / Westminster John Knox in the U.S.A., 2005.
- *McGuire, Meredith. "Mapping Contemporary American Spirituality: A Sociological Perspective," in **Christian Spirituality Bulletin**, Spring, 1997, Vol 5, No. 1, 1-8.
- *O'Donohue, John. "Spirituality as the art of real presence," in **The Way**, 1998/92:85-101.
- Gottlieb, pp.1-27.

1. September 30: Introductions and Getting started; mapping the landscape of spirituality

- What are the issues that we ourselves bring to the study of spirituality?
- What are some of the issues being discussed in the broader community about spirituality?
- In what ways do you agree or disagree with the descriptions found in the Gottlieb, Lesniak, McGuire and O'Donohue readings?
- What is "spirituality?" What is "religion?"
- How would you describe "contemporary spirituality?"

2. October 7: READ: Ety Hillesum, An **Interrupted Life**

- This seminar will use this work to raise up basic questions about spirituality and how one begins to study spirituality.
- Issues such as the role of experience, suffering, meaning-making, freedom, scandal, the body, context, tradition, relationships, etc. will be considered

PREPARE a 2-4-page response to the following question:

What theme/dynamic emerged in engaging the diary of Etty Hillesum for you as critical to appreciating her spirituality? Does this theme/dynamic have any relevance toward understanding “contemporary expressions of spirituality?”

Be prepared to read/share your reflections in class.

4. 10/14: Postmodern world, Pacific Northwest and the spiritual quest
Gottlieb, 28-79; 117-121
King, 1-56
 - *Shibley, Mark A. “*The Promise and Limits of Secular Spirituality in Cascadia*,”: 33-52 and *Killen, Patricia O’Connell. “*Memory, Novelty and Possibility in This Place*,” 65-88
in Todd, Douglas ed., **Cascadia: The Elusive Utopia: Exploring the Spirit of the Pacific Northwest**, Ronsdale Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-55380-060-6:

5. 10/21: What does it Mean to be ‘spiritual’ and not “religious?” Issues of “hybridity” and “interspirituality”
Gottlieb, 80-116
King, 78-102
 - *Schneiders, Sandra. “*Religion vs. Spirituality: A Contemporary Conundrum*,” **Spiritus** 3 (2003): 163-185.
 - * TBA

6. 10/28 : The Search for the Self: Healing, resources and practices for the development of the inner self
Gottlieb, 125-146
King, 103-141
 - *Nelson, Marcia. “*Oprah on a Mission*”, **Christian Century**, Sept.25-Oct.8, 2002, p. 20-25.

7. 11/4: Spirituality, Nature and Science-Exploring Mystery

Gottlieb, 147-166
King, 142-175
 - *“Danah Zohar,” in **Women In Search of the Sacred**, Anne Bancroft, Penguin Books, 1996, 57-78. ISBN 0-14-019494

- *Taylor, Barry. "Postsecular Soul Space," in **Entertainment Theology: New –Edge Spirituality in a Digital Democracy**, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2008: 106-172.

8. 11/11 Veteran's Day NO CLASS
9. 11/18 Students' explorations
10. 11/25 Students' explorations
11. 12/2 Students' explorations

University Resources and Policies

Academic Resources

- Library and Learning Commons (<http://www.seattleu.edu/learningcommons/>)
(This includes: Learning Assistance Programs, Research [Library] Services, Writing Center, Math Lab)
- Academic Integrity Tutorial *(found on Angel and SU Online)*

Academic Policies on Registrar website (<https://www.seattleu.edu/registrar/academics/performance/>)

- Academic Integrity Policy
- Academic Grading Grievance Policy
- Professional Conduct Policy *(only for those professional programs to which it applies)*

Notice for students concerning Disabilities

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an 'invisible disability' such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to arrange support services and/or accommodations through Disabilities Services staff located in Loyola 100, (206) 296-5740. Disability-based adjustments to course expectations can be arranged only through this process.