



Course Syllabus Wycliffe College Toronto School of Theology

Rooted in God: Fall 2017

This description is intended to assist in the course approval process and to assist students in determining whether this course will help them achieve their educational objectives and the learning goals of their program. It is not a learning contract. The details of the description are subject to change before the course begins. The course syllabus will be available to the class at the beginning of the course.

Course Identification

Course Number: WYP2636HS
Course Name: Rooted in God: Personal Prayer as the Soil for Ministry
Location: St. John's Convent, 233 Cummer Avenue, North York
Dates and Times: Saturdays 9 am - 4:30 pm (including lunch break)
Sept 16, Oct 7, Nov 3, Nov 25, Dec 5
OPTIONAL: Oct 28 - a day to discover prayer through creating art

Instructor Information

| | | |
|---------------|---|---------------------|
| Instructor: | Rev. Dr. Sr. Constance Gefvert | Teaching Assistant: |
| E-mail: | cj@ssjd.ca | E-mail: |
| Office Hours: | Before or after class each week By appointment other times | |

Course Prerequisites or Requisites

None.

Course Description

"Rooted in God" focuses on personal contemplative prayer as the "the one thing needful" for a personal relationship with God, and the essential soil out of which healthy and effective ministry grows. Including both theory and practice, the course covers Biblical teaching on prayer; the contemplative tradition arising from the early desert fathers and mothers; spirituality, theology and psychology of prayer; and various Christian traditions of prayer including lectio divina, Ignatian prayer, other forms of scripture prayer, centering prayer, Christian meditation, and the awareness examen. The course concludes with suggestions for planting and growing a prayer-based ministry for a parish or other context in which the student hopes to minister.

Course Methodology

Prayer involves our whole lives, and so we will use many methods to learn and practice forms of contemplative prayer

- Lecture: occasional direct input from the instructor especially when new topics are introduced
- Practicum: each time a form or way of prayer is introduced, we will practice it in class, and suggestions will be given for practicing at home.
- Class discussion: both in plenary and in small groups
- Use of visual and artistic media: film, art, music
- Reading and watching: students will learn from a variety of writers on prayer both in writing and occasionally via the internet or DVD
- Sharing ideas and reflections with one another between the Saturday classes, via the Discussion Board

Spiritual Direction. Every student should have a spiritual director or pastor to whom they have access as needed. Very often material will come up in prayer that needs to be shared and that needs the insight and discernment of another. The Instructor cannot play this role for students, because spiritual direction cannot be mixed with the process of evaluation and grading.

Course Outcomes

| COURSE OUTCOMES | COURSE ELEMENT | PROGRAM OUTCOMES |
|---|---|--|
| By the end of this course, students | This outcome will be achieved through these course elements: | This course outcome corresponds to these aspects of Wycliffe’s statements of outcomes (MTS, MDiv) |
| • will have learned some traditional and contemporary forms of contemplative prayer; | Lectures, practicum, readings | MTS: 3.2 MDiv: 3.1, 3.2 |
| • will have an understanding of the importance of spiritual practice for grounding a healthy ministry; | Lectures, practicum, readings, discussion | MTS: 3.2 MDiv: 3.1, 3.2 |
| • will have a commitment to continue some form of contemplative spiritual practice as they continue and grow in their active ministry | Practicum | MTS: 3.2 MDiv: 3.1, 3.2 |

Required Course Texts (in order of use)

Marie-Helene Delval, *Images of God for Young Children* (Eerdmans, 2010)
David Benner, *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer* (Intervarsity, 2015)
Henri Nouwen, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons* (Ave Maria, 2007)
Yushi Nomura, *Desert Wisdom: Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (Orbis, 2002)
Timothy Gallagher, *An Ignatian Introduction to Prayer: Scriptural Reflections according to the Spiritual Exercises* (Crossroad, 2008)

Class Schedule

Topics subject to change in response to the evolving needs and interests of the class.

September 16 Class 1

Preparation: Read *Images of God for Children*
Read *Opening to God* Chapters 1-2

Topics: The nature of prayer & images of God
The relationship between the contemplative life and healthy ministry
Examen prayer (awareness reflection)
Praying with scripture: introduction

October 7 Class 2

Preparation: Read *Opening to God* Chapters 3-6
Read *Behold the Beauty of the Lord*

Topics: Praying with scripture: Lectio Divina and Visio Divina; praying with Icons

October 21 Paper One due (submit by e-mail)

October 28 Optional Class: Art as a Language of Prayer (fee for materials \$10.00)

November 4 Class 3

Preparation: Read *Opening to God* Chapters 7-9
Read *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* [and Mothers!]

Topics: Prayer in scripture, the early church and the desert tradition
Centering Prayer and Christian Meditation
Prayer Aids: the Anglican rosary; praying with the Labyrinth

November 25 Class 4

Preparation: Read *An Ignatian Introduction to Prayer*

Topics: Praying with scripture: Ignatian Gospel contemplation

December 2 Paper Two due (submit by e-mail)

December 9 Class 5

Preparation: Summary of your final paper in the form of a brief oral book review

Topics: Student presentations
Rhythms of Life / Claiming your Spiritual Practice

December 18 Final paper due (submit by e-mail)

Evaluation

Learning Covenant:

- Each student will sign a Learning Covenant which includes self-evaluation as a significant part of the course grade. Students should feel comfortable with and committed to a form of evaluation in which the student himself or herself honestly evaluates those course components that cannot be measured directly by the instructor (private prayer, reading, and journaling).

Prayer, Reading, Class Participation, Occasional Quizzes (20% of course grade – evaluated by student and instructor)

- Daily personal prayer, 45 minutes per day, 5 days per week
- Keeping of a personal prayer journal, 5 days per week
- Reading of the required books and preparation for class
- Regular class attendance and participation in discussions
- Occasional quizzes on reading material

Written papers (80% of course grade – evaluated by instructor)

- Two short papers reflecting on your reading and experience of prayer (20% each)
- Final research paper of 15 pages max (40%)

Grading System

| Letter Grade | Numerical Equivalents | Grade Point | Grasp of Subject Matter |
|--------------|--------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| A+ | 90–100% | 4.0 | Profound & Creative |
| A | 85–89% | 4.0 | Outstanding |
| A- | 80–84% | 3.7 | Excellent |
| B+ | 77–79% | 3.3 | Very Good |
| B | 73–76% | 3.0 | Good |
| B- | 70–72% | 2.7 | Satisfactory |
| FZ | 0–69% | 0 | Failure |

Grades without numerical equivalent:

| | |
|-----|--|
| CR | Designates credit; has no numerical equivalent or grade point value |
| NCR | Designates failure; has no numerical equivalent, but has a grade point value of 0 and is included in the GPA calculation |
| SDF | Standing deferred (a temporary extension) |
| INC | Permanent incomplete; has no numerical equivalent or grade point value |
| WDR | Withdrawal without academic penalty |
| AEG | May be given to a final year student who, because of illness, has completed at least 60% of the course, but not the whole course, and who would not otherwise be able to convocate; has no numerical equivalent and no grade point value |

INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Writing Style: The writing standard for the Toronto School of Theology is Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 8th edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), which is available at Crux Books.

Submitting Papers: All papers should be submitted by e-mail (in Word 2010 or later version) or in PDF format. Title page, page breaks, etc. should be formatted clearly so I can print easily!

All Papers

- should be double-spaced, using 11- or 12-point font and standard 1" margins
- should include page numbers (starting with page one of your paper, not including the title page)
- should have a title page with student's name and college, course name and number, title of the paper, and date submitted
- should be free of errors in grammar and spelling
- should have clear references: when you refer to scripture, quote it – don't assume I know what Luke 4:17-18 means and don't expect me to look it up. As a former Methodist I'm quite good at identifying scripture from chapter and verse numbers but not perfect! (Same is true with the hymn book.)

Reflection Papers

These should be 2-3 pages each, and are best written a week before the class in which you will be submitting them, reflecting back on your prayer journal from the past weeks. Their purpose is to reflect theologically on your experience of prayer. The following questions will help you prepare for the paper, but the paper itself should not simply be a series of answers to the questions. There should be a theme, a purpose statement, and a sense of cohesion overall.

Read back over your prayer journal, and highlight anything that particularly strikes you.

- Where did God seem most present to you? most absent?
- What has your experience felt like?
- How do you feel now that you are revisiting your journal?
- What has been interesting, helpful, heart-warming? dry, boring, fearful?
- What metaphor comes to mind when you think back over your prayer experience?
- What understandings and images of God are reflected in your journal?
- What understanding of human nature and yourself is reflected in your journal?
- Has your image of God changed as a result of your prayer?
- Has your understanding of prayer changed?
- How about the connection between your prayer and your ministry?
- Are you drawn to change anything in your practice and understanding of prayer as a result of this reflection?
- What other observations might you make about your experience of prayer?

Class Presentation: This should be approximately 5 minutes. It should summarize the primary book you have chosen and show its contribution to the development of the prayer form your final paper will address.

Final Paper

The purpose of the final paper is to allow you to explore one particular prayer form in more depth, by reading a primary text that has influenced that prayer form.

Process:

- Choose a prayer form and a primary text. A book list will be distributed on the first day of class with suggestions. (For instance if you are research centering prayer, you might want to choose the *Cloud of Unknowing* as a primary text.
- Research the biblical/historical background behind this prayer form and the way it has become incorporated into the spiritual life of Christians in the 20th and 21st centuries.
- Summarize the book and its effect for a 5-10 minute class presentation on the last day of classes.
- Then write an introduction to that form of prayer (addressed to me as in any research paper)
- And plan a workshop teaching that form of prayer to a particular group of people

Part 1: About the type of prayer you are exploring (max 10 pages)

- What type of prayer is it?
- Why have you chosen it (meaningful to you? challenging to you? something you really want to share with others in your particular ministry context?)
- Describe/analyze your prayer type with careful notes, quotations, etc. using a formal research paper format
- Conclusion – how do you see this type of prayer being helpful to Christians (or seekers) today? Are there theological issues with your denomination or personal background?

Part 2: Structure of the workshop (max 5 pages)

- Title of the workshop
- Who is it for?
- Where will it take place?
- When, how often, and over what period of time?
- Purpose of workshop and learning goals
- Outline of sessions

Endnotes

Bibliography

Appendix: Any supplementary material or handouts (not mine!), music, visuals, on-line and print resources, etc. you will give the students

Suggestions for Daily Prayer Time.

Plan to devote 45 minutes a day, 5 days a week for your personal prayer, and an additional 15 minutes for reflecting in your Prayer Journal – see below.

The purpose is to help you learn forms of contemplative prayer – that is, prayer that deepens your personal relationship with God and allows your roots “to go deep into the soil of God’s marvellous love” (Eph. 3 from The Living Bible).

Your prayer time needs to be in solitude and silence. You can go anywhere (your bedroom, living room, outdoors, a church or chapel) as long as you can be assured of silence and not being interrupted.

Each day should include:

- Preparation: You might use some meditative music to help you centre and focus, or go for a 5-minute meditative walk to “come down” if you have been working or studying before your prayer time. If you are praying with scripture have your Bible open and the passage you want to use marked ahead of time. A candle, icon, picture, or other “holy object” may also help you focus. Another way to focus is to quietly observe your breathing for a few minutes and let your body relax into the chair you are sitting in.
- Practicing: spend 30 minutes or so using one or more of the prayer forms we are learning in class and/or exercises from David Benner’s *Opening to God*
- Reflecting: After your prayer time, stand up and stretch or walk around the room. Pick up your journal (and maybe a cup of coffee or tea) and reflect on your prayer experience in your journal.

More suggestions will be forthcoming during the class. As with any relationship, time must be devoted to our relationship with God if it is to grow and flourish, and flexibility is required to meet the needs of circumstances or challenges that each day brings.

Course Website

Blackboard <https://weblogin.utoronto.ca/>

This course uses Blackboard for its course website. To access it, go to the UofT portal login page at <http://portal.utoronto.ca> and login using your UTORid and password. Once you have logged in to the portal using your UTORid and password, look for the **My Courses** module, where you’ll find the link to the website for all your Blackboard-based courses. (Your course registration with ROSI gives you access to the course website at Blackboard.) Note also the information at <http://www.portalinfo.utoronto.ca/content/information-students>. Students who have trouble accessing Blackboard should ask Thomas Power for further help.

Bibliography

To be distributed.

Policies

Accessibility. Students with a disability or health consideration are entitled to accommodation. Students must register at the University of Toronto's Accessibility Services offices; information is available at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/>. The sooner a student seeks accommodation, the quicker we can assist.

Assignment Extensions

Basic Degree students are expected to complete all course work by the end of the term in which they are registered. Under **exceptional circumstances**, with the written permission of the instructor, students may request an extension (SDF = "standing deferred") beyond the term. An extension, when offered, will have a mutually agreed upon deadline that does not extend beyond the conclusion of the following term. An SDF must be requested no later than the last day of classes of the term in which the course is taken. The request form is available on the college website or from the Registrar's office.

One percentage point per day will be deducted on the course grade if an extension has not been requested by the stated deadline.

Course grades. Consistently with the policy of the University of Toronto, course grades submitted by an instructor are reviewed by a committee of the instructor's college before being posted. Course grades may be adjusted where they do not comply with University grading policy (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/Assets/Governing+Council+Digital+Assets/Policies/PDF/grading.pdf>) or college grading policy.

Plagiarism. Students submitting written material in courses are expected to provide full documentation for sources of both words and ideas in footnotes or endnotes. Direct quotations should be placed within quotation marks. (If small changes are made in the quotation, they should be indicated by appropriate punctuation such as brackets and ellipses, but the quotation still counts as a direct quotation.) Failure to document borrowed material constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious breach of academic, professional, and Christian ethics. An instructor who discovers evidence of student plagiarism is not permitted to deal with the situation individually but is required to report it to his or her head of college or delegate according to the TST *Basic Degree Handbook* (linked from <http://www.tst.edu/academic/resources-forms/handbooks> and the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>), a student who plagiarizes in this course. Students will be assumed to have read the document "Avoidance of plagiarism in theological writing" published by the Graham Library of Trinity and Wycliffe Colleges (http://www.trinity.utoronto.ca/Library_Archives/Theological_Resources/Tools/Guides/plag.htm).

Other academic offences. TST students come under the jurisdiction of the University of Toronto *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).