

Christian Spiritual Formation

Sample Syllabus

Philip Bustrum, Ph.D. ext. 1256
Philip.Bustrum@Cornerstone.edu

***Make haste, O God, to deliver me!
O LORD, make haste to help me!***

Psalm 70:1 (ESV)

Course Description

Provides a biblical, theological, and historical foundation for spiritual development. A special emphasis of the course is the understanding and practice of traditional and modern spiritual practices or disciplines.

Course Textbooks

Required

- The Holy Bible: English Standard Version.* (2003). Nashville, Crossways. ISBN: 978-1581345964
- Edwards, G. (ed), (1985). *Practicing His presence.* Jacksonville, FL: Seedsowers. ISBN: 9780940232013
- Foster, R. J. (1998). *Streams of living water: Celebrating the great traditions of Christian faith.* SF: HarperSanFrancisco. ISBN: 0-06-062822-7
- Willard, D. (2002). *Renovation of the heart: Putting on the character of Christ.* Colorado Springs: NavPress. ISBN: 1576832961

Recommended

- Jones, T. (2005). *The Sacred Way: Spiritual practices for everyday life.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan. ISBN: 031025810-3
- Willard, D. (1998). *The Divine conspiracy.* SF: HarperCollins.

Course Objectives

At the conclusion of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Define and illustrate spirituality and spiritual formation in a historical and contemporary context.
2. Explain the basic biblical and theological foundations of the soul, spiritual formation, and spiritual development.
3. Practice, evaluate, and analyze the main historical and contemporary traditions of spiritual formation.
4. Understand, appreciate, and evaluate the use of spiritual disciplines in spiritual formation.
5. Value the need for corporate and personal spiritual formation.

Question of the Course

What is spiritual formation, why is it important, and how can I implement it in my daily life?

Course Outcomes

To demonstrate mastery of the objectives, the student will:

1. ***Personal Journal and Personal History (5*)***

Each week you will write a 500 word maximum personal *journal* relating the issues presented in class to your personal life or detailing your personal soul journey.

Every week you will also submit a 500-word maximum personal *history* email answering all of the questions from the Personal History paper that apply to you. The questions are in the course documents section of our electronic classroom.

Both assignments are due via e-mail each week before the class period begins. Your email and comments from the professor will be returned to you via email before the next class period. In the subject line of your e-mail, note which assignments you are submitting, for example, Journal and History #1 (PJ&H #1). Send your report as single spaced text and not as an attachment or zip file.

I will read your emails and return them with my comments by class time of the following week. After reading my comments, interact with my thoughts, ideas, or questions within 24 hours in a return email. Or if you have no comment to make in your email response to my observations, just summarize in your own words what you heard me saying in my remarks.

Weekly Journal and Personal History Criteria: Excellent weekly journal submissions are marked by the following:

- Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distracts the reader from the content.
- Every paragraph has sentences that represent critical thinking skills in summaries, opinions, applications.
- All questions that apply are answered completely and thoughtfully.
- There is a clear, well-focused topic for every entry.

2. ***Personal Growth Covenant (3,4,5)***

Our class is preparing you for the life-long journey of discipleship and spiritual formation. In order to help you set goals for this journey, you will write out a personal growth covenant. In this five-page paper you will identify key issues for continued growth in each of the following areas: Spiritual-physical, Spiritual-emotional, Spiritual-mental, Spiritual-relational, and Spiritual-moral. You will include a sixth page with a brief summary of “My Spiritual Growth Experience during our Christian Spiritual Formation Class.” Email me a copy of your paper and submit a hard copy in class. Keep a personal copy of your paper for your senior portfolio. See the more detailed explanation on Odyssey under Lessons, Personal Growth Covenant.

3. ***Spiritual Biography (5)***

In 8-10 typewritten pages (2,500 words), write out your spiritual biography. Explain in essay form how God has been at work in your life. Richard Peace has an excellent discussion of this activity in his book, *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story*. I have placed pp. 57-87 of his book on Odyssey and you would do well to read it in preparation for writing your story. Dan Allender in his book, *To be told: Know your story: Shape your future*, has an informative chapter entitled “Writing Your Destiny” which give hints on how to write your story with honesty and transparency. You will find this article on Odyssey also. Email your biography to me (attachments are acceptable for this one assignment) and keep a copy for your senior portfolio.

4. ***Practicing the Disciplines (3,4,5)***

During the term you will be given weekly opportunities to practice some of the spiritual disciplines that were practiced by Jesus and have been affirmed by religious traditions down through the ages. In particular, we will look at the contemplative, holiness, charismatic, social justice, evangelical, and incarnational models. Your responsibility will be to practice the discipline and answer the reflective questions on Odyssey about your experience and what happened at the level of your soul. These will be submitted by e-mail.

5. ***Small Accountability Communities (5)***

During the term you will have the opportunity to do spiritual formation in a small community with four or five of your peers from our class. The emphasis of these communities will be “grace based accountability.” It is not a self help or self improvement program but a place to recognize that while we are sinners and will always sin grace abounds even more and grace can heal

and transform. The communities are sacred and safe spaces for honest confession and need to include support and encouragement. It is a place to help each other stay faithful to the teachings of Jesus or as James says, “Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (James 5:16). You will meet for one hour each week giving you an opportunity to discuss a mutually agreed upon issue such as lust, greed, gossip, etc. Approximately half of your time together should be spent in prayer and half in discussion/accountability on the agreed upon issue. Every member of your community must be present for the entire hour for the session to count toward the fulfillment of the required 11 meetings. The leaders of the communities will meet with me weekly for a leaders briefing.

6. *Personal Retreat (4,5)*

On Saturday December 11, we will have a personal retreat of worship, silence, prayer, and communion. This retreat is part of our class and your attendance is expected. If your schedule does not permit your attendance, you should drop the class and take the course at another time. If at the last minute, circumstances prevent you from attending, illness or your death for example, then you will need to make up the day, at your own expense, with your own personal 24-hour retreat at, for example, the Hermitage. A detailed journal will be required if you do your own retreat.

7. *Presentations (1,2,3,4,5)*

You will be paired with another student in the class and together you will give a 15-20 minute teaching presentation to the class describing and explaining one spiritual practice. This might include a definition of the practice, its Biblical and theological basis, its practice in church history, and modern application. Since our class emphasizes the integration of theory and practice it would be appropriate to give the class an opportunity to practice the spiritual discipline. A sign-up sheet will be handed out in class.

8. *Willard’s Odyssey (1,2)*

This term we will read Dallas Willard’s book, *Renovation of the Heart*, and discuss it on our classroom discussion board on Odyssey. The class schedule gives you the reading assignments. You will make a minimum of two entries per week, an original post and a response to another post.
Discussion Board Criteria: Excellent discussion board participation is marked by the following:

- Participation is distributed throughout the week rather than on a single day.
- Submits well-developed original posts that fully address and develop all aspects of the theme.
- Extends meaningful discussion by building on previous posts through demonstrating analysis of others’ thoughts in the follow-up posts.
- Posts factually correct, reflective, and substantive contributions; advances discussion.
- Uses references to literature, readings, and not only personal experience to support comments.

- Contributes to discussion with clear, concise comments formatted in an easy-to-read style that is free of grammatical or spelling errors.

9. Foster Readings (1,3)

We will also read Richard Foster's classic book, *Streams of living water: Celebrating the great traditions of Christian faith*. For your reading accountability, in Odyssey, write out the thesis or main idea of each assigned chapter in one complete sentence. Then give 3-5 direct quotations from the chapter that support your thesis (include page number where you found the quote, i.e. "p. 53") and one question that arises in your mind. The due date for the Foster reading assignments are found on the course schedule.

*These numbers relate to the course objectives above.

Grading

Since this course focuses on personal growth and spiritual formation through reflection, reading, and class interaction, the course requirements are simple. Every student begins the class with an "A" and there are three requirements for maintaining it.

- First, attend class and participate in your small community.
- Second, complete all the course assignments in a timely manner.
- Thirdly, engage the processes of the course with openness and honesty.

On the final exam you will be asked to evaluate your faithfulness to these course objectives.

A further word on a "timely manner" is warranted. Papers (usually emails) should be submitted before class begins on the date they are due. Assignments submitted after this time will not be accepted. Rather than doing a paper to catch up, I would rather that you expend your energies on doing the next assignment well.**

**Failure to complete a major assignment on time could result in a failing grade.

Class Notes

Copyright, plagiarism, academic integrity, academic grievance, FERPA statement, and the American With Disabilities Act

University policies on copyright, plagiarism, academic integrity, academic grievance, FERPA statement, and the American With Disabilities Act can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/StudentPoliciesCU>. These are important statements on faculty, staff, and student responsibilities and therefore, I encourage you to read them. You must be logged onto Odyssey to view them in your browser.

Withdrawal Policy & Grade Permanence

Please reference to these policies and procedures in the undergraduate catalog.

Available Support Services

Library, Computer Center, & Media Center: Cornerstone University maintains excellent library and on-line, full-text databases available to all registered students. It is highly recommended that you visit the Cornerstone Library and become familiar with on-line databases. For more information regarding the library, computing, and media services, contact the Miller Library at 616-222-1458 or visit them online at <http://www.cornerstone.edu/library/>.



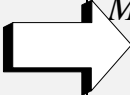
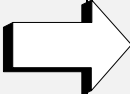
Writing Center: Students who want to receive help with writing and/or editing papers should contact the Learning Center in Miller Hall or phone them at extension 1596.

Informed Consent

This class may involve role-plays, case application, and personal sharing as a part of the learning process. You are expected to decide how much you want to share about your personal life. We encourage your active participation in these activities because we believe your personal awareness of your own process is central to being in vocational Christian ministry. Part of your grade depends on your participation in this process, not on the content that you choose to share.

Office Hours

I am available to answer your questions, clarify assignments, or just talk about the issues of the class. Use the following chart to decide how you ought to reach me.

If you need an answer ...	Do the following ...
<i>Immediately</i>	 <i>Phone me at my office, 1256, or at home 616.975.9588 or cell 616.706.1280</i>
<i>Within a day</i>	 <i>e-mail me at Philip_A_Bustrum@Cornerstone.edu</i>
<i>Face to face</i>	 <i>Make an appointment ... or come by my office during my office hours</i>
<i>Sometime this term</i>	 <i>Write me a letter or Facebook me</i>

Technology in the Classroom

I believe God invites us into sacred spaces to be present to Himself and others. This sacred space could be a walk in nature where the majesty of God and His creation are contemplated or it could be a quiet moment of solitude where one dialogues with Jesus as friend. The classroom is a sacred space of learning-together where scholars and budding scholars discover God's truth and how to live in His kingdom. A requirement of living in this sacred space is being present to God and to each other. Technology in the classroom can prevent us from being present in the moment and can draw us away from each other and the learning process. Therefore, generally we will not use computers or cell phones in class. This will enhance our presence in body, mind, and soul in the learning process of our classroom.

Learning Covenant

Professor: As professor of Christian Spiritual Formation, I covenant with God and each student that I will model Christ-like behavior, value and respect each student as a person in Christ, pray for you by name whenever I am aware of any specific needs or concerns, come to class prepared, begin and end class on time, make appropriate assignments and grade them fairly, and be available for consultation outside of class.

Student: As a student in Christian Spiritual Formation, I covenant with God and the professor to model Christ-like behavior, show proper respect to the professor and my classmates, will have my cell phone turned off, use my computer only when directed by the professor, come to class prepared, arrive for class on time, and will submit assignments and participate in ways that demonstrate my integrity and desire to learn.

Spiritual Formation Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Reading Due Date	Assignment Due Date
1	T – Sep 13	Getting Acquainted Orientation to the Class Intro to the Traditions Centering Prayer Introduction to Growth Communities		
2	T – Sep 20	What is Spiritual Formation? Social Justice Tradition Practicing the Presence	Willard: Prelude & Chapter 1 (1)* <i>Foster: Social Justice Tradition (1.5)*</i> Edwards: <i>Practicing the Presence (3)</i>	History #1 (.5)* Journal #1 (.5)* Discussion Board (1)* Foster on Odyssey (1)
3	T – Sep 27	The Soul (Part 1) Evangelical Tradition	Willard: Chapter 2 (1) <i>Foster: Evangelical Tradition (1.5)</i>	History #2 (.5) Journal #2 (.5) Discussion Board (1) Foster on Odyssey (1)
4	T – Oct 4	The Soul (Part 2)	Willard: Chapter 3 (1)	History #3 (.5) Journal #3 (.5) <i>Social Justice Reflection (Odyssey) (1.5) – Due upon completion</i> Discussion Board (1) Spiritual Biography (5)
5	T – Oct 11	Contemplative Tradition	Willard: Chapter 4 (1) <i>Foster: Contemplative Tradition (1.5)</i>	History #4 (.5) Journal #4 (.5) Discussion Board <i>Evangelical Reflection (Odyssey) (1.5)</i> Foster on Odyssey (1)
6	T – Oct 25	Growth Community	Willard: Chapter 5 (1)	History #5 (.5) Journal #5 (.5) Discussion Board (1)
7	T – Nov 1	Holiness Tradition	Willard: Chapter 6 (1) <i>Foster: Holiness Tradition (1.5)</i>	History #6 (.5) Journal #6 (.5) Discussion Board (1) <i>Contemplative Reflection (Odyssey) (1.5)</i> Foster on Odyssey (1)
8	T – Nov 8		Willard: Chapter 7 (1)	History #7 (.5) Journal #7 (.5) Growth Community #1 (.5) Discussion Board (1)

9	T – Nov 15	Charismatic Tradition Spiritual Practice Presentations	Willard: Chapter 8 (1) <i>Foster: Charismatic Tradition (1.5)</i>	History #8 (.5) Journal #8 (.5) Discussion Board (1) <i>Holiness Reflection (Odyssey) (1.5)</i> Foster on Odyssey
10	T – Nov 22	Spiritual Practice Presentations Dark Night of the Soul	Willard: Chapter 9 (1)	History #9 (.5) Journal #9 (.5) Discussion Board (1)
12	T – Nov 29	Spiritual Practice Presentations Dark Night of the Soul	Willard: Chapters 10-11 (1) <i>Foster: Incarnational Tradition (1.5)</i>	History #10 (.5) Journal #10 (.5) Discussion Board (1) <i>Charismatic Reflection (Odyssey) (1.5)</i>
13	T – Dec 6	Spiritual Practice Presentations Pre-briefing for Retreat	Willard: Chapters 12 & 13 (1)	History #11 (.5) Journal #11 (.5) Discussion Board (1)
SFR	S – Dec 10 8 am– 6 pm	Spiritual Formation Retreat http://www.hermitagecommunity.org/		
F	T – Dec 13 6-8:00 pm Final	Final Review		<i>Incarnational Reflection (Odyssey) (1.5)</i> Growth Community #2 (.5) Personal Growth Covenant (3)

*The numbers in parenthesis on the schedule reflect the amount of time in hours that an average student will spend completing the assignment.

Note: The day there is a reading or assignment due from Foster or Willard, bring the textbook to class. For example, on September 20th bring your Willard and Foster text to class.