SPGR 6834 -- **Methods in Christian Spirituality**  
Spring 2016 – Session A

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**Course Description**  
This course introduces graduate students to the academic discipline of Christian Spirituality and to methods for researching and writing a research paper at the MA and DMin level. In consultation with the professor, students are free to pursue a research topic of their choosing; however, their research agenda must include a Christian spirituality component. Students already working on a thesis or dissertation may, with the professor’s consent, use a chapter thereof as their research paper for this course. Christian spirituality topics include defining the discipline, the relationship between spirituality and theology, experience as an object of study, the importance of context, historical consciousness, multidisciplinarity and hermeneutic theory. In this practical seminar, students collaboratively (online) learn to research and write at the graduate level, as well as explore the rich offerings of Christian spirituality. Evaluation is based on Tuesday and Thursday postings, Turabian quizzes, and research paper drafts.

**Course Requirements**  
Evaluation for the course is based on

- Completing all weekly assigned readings and postings.
- Actively participating in online discussions and small writing groups.
- Writing a research paper (10-15 pages), the topic of which is to be determined in consultation with the professor.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Students will demonstrate facility with methods of research in specific theological disciplines for post graduate and doctoral studies.
2. Students will use tools of literary, cultural, historical, and social analysis in the interpretation of various cultures and their relationship to the Christian tradition.
**Texts**

**Evaluation**
10% Turabian Quizzes
20% Penultimate Research Paper Draft
30% Weekly Postings
40% Final Research Paper Draft

**RESEARCH PROJECT AND PAPER**
Please note: The Fordham University Libraries website includes a multi-step guide and aid to doing research online and on campus. Go to the following address: http://www.library.fordham.edu/onlinequiz/tutorialhome.htm,

Also, a "Turabian Blog" feature has been added to the Blackboard options column. This is an open blog, which all may use. When encountering a questions or clarification concerning the Turabian stylebook, you are welcome to make a posting to the "Turabian Blog," and other students may assist you.

We will use Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers* (8th ed.) as our guide for the research and writing component of this course. We have much to accomplish in only eight weeks of session A. For this reason, students MUST keep to the following schedule of assignments and commitments:

- Week 2: research paper topic
- Week 5: research paper thesis/argument
- Week 6: research paper initial outline
- Week 7: draft introduction and conclusion
- Week 8: penultimate draft completed, submitted, and comments made.
- Final draft submitted by week 8 of Session B.

Practically, this means that from Week Zero, students must begin thinking about research topics and engaging in research. You may want to keep a “research journal” as a log of your research. A week should not pass without your spending time in the library or on the Internet researching and reading. Follow your passion! This will carry you through the sometimes-difficult stretches of research and writing. Please note that all deadlines are final and an incomplete for the semester is not an option in this course.

*The “penultimate draft” of your research paper is due by week 8 of Session A; however, a “final draft” of your research paper is not due until week 8 of Session B.*
This extension offers students extended time to research and write the final draft of a research paper.

Students taking both this class and another Christian spirituality course this semester – on campus, online Session A, or online Session B – may write one research paper for both courses, as long as both professors consent. This means, for example, that if you are also taking a Session B online course, you could write one paper for both online courses, as long as the topic of the paper deals with a Christian spirituality topic and the Session B professor agrees to this possibility. Of course, to pursue this course of action, a student needs to communicate with his/her Session B professor during the first week of Session A.

TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week 0 – Introductions, Syllabus, And Initial Research Ideas

Module 1 – Introduction to the Academic Discipline of Christian Spirituality

1) By Tuesday, 9:00 AM:


b) READ the Santa Clara Lecture entitled “Religion and Spirituality: Strangers, Rivals, or Partners” by Sandra M. Schneiders, delivered February 6, 2000, at Santa Clara University. A text of the talk is available on the internet at the following address: http://www.scu.edu/ic/publications/upload/scl-0002-schneiders.pdf. If this link doesn’t work for you, go to the Santa Clara University website and search for a link to “The Santa Clara Lecture” or the Bannan Center.

c) POST To Learning Space: Schneiders’ Santa Clara Address serves as an “exemplar” text within the academic discipline of Christian Spirituality. Note how well organized, argued, and articulated is her text. With a single posting, include the following three items [SLO #2]:

i) In one or two sentences, state Schneiders’ thesis, that is, what is her claim? You are free to employ colons and semicolons, but your articulation of her thesis must be limited to no more than two sentences.
ii) Using major headings, minor headings, and sub-headings (as needed), compose a complete outline of Schneiders’ talk. See Turabian (23.4.2.2) for directions on composing an outline.

iii) Compose and post an essay (300 to 500-words) in which you critically engage Schneiders’ essay. Be sure to plan and re-work your essay, so that you include an introductory paragraph, one or two middle paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph. Your introduction should contain your articulation of Schneiders’ thesis, a summary of how she supports it, and mention of the 2-3 critiques you intend to make of her presentation. In the middle of your essay, state, support and analyze your 2-3 critiques. In your concluding paragraph, restate your claim and summarize your supporting data. In this sort of an essay, your intention is to convince your readers (the professor and fellow students) that you have read, understood, analyzed, and critiqued Schneiders’ talk.

2) By Thursday 9AM:

a) WATCH the posted PowerPoint.

b) READ in Turabian (8th edition) all of the following:

i) Introductory materials

ii) “What Research Is and How Do Researchers Think about It?” §§ 1.1>1.2.5.

iii) “Moving From A Topic to A Question” §§ 2.1>2.2.

c) COMPLETE Module #1 Turabian Quiz [SLO #1]:

d) POST To Learning Space your responses to two other students’ Tuesday postings and write for each a paragraph critique/response (250-words or fewer).

d) POST To Research Space the current articulation of your research topic.

Module #2– Questions of Definitions & Questions of Critical Edges

1) By Tuesday, 9:00 AM:

a) READ Perrin, “Questions of Definitions” (pp. 15-56) and go through the posted study sheet.

b) READ or skim Perrin, “Questions of Critical Edges” (pp. 297-337) for further ideas on various contemporary topics in the academic study of Christian Spirituality. There is no study sheet for this chapter.

d) POST To Learning Space your response to one of the three following questions (+/- 500 words) [SLO #2]:

A. Based on your reading of Perrin's first chapter, use your own words (please do not quote extensively from Perrin) to define (1) authentic spirituality, (2) Christian spirituality, and (3) the role of experience in each. How do you see these definitions functioning within your research project? Don't worry if you have yet to settle on a specific research agenda. Go with one that looms large for you now.

B. Compose an essay in which you (1) briefly define and explain the four methods in the study of Christian spirituality presented in Perrin's first chapter (theological, historical, anthropological, and hermeneutical) and (2) explain which one of these methods is likely best suited to your likely research topic this semester. Don't worry if you have yet to settle on a specific research agenda. Go with one that looms large for you now.

C. In his article entitled “Spirituality and Its Critical Methodology,” Philip Sheldrake discusses the importance played by hermeneutics, critical theory, and theology in the scholarship of Christian spirituality. He then proposes a "contemplative method" within this academic pursuit. First, offer a précis of Sheldrake's article (no need for end/foot notes, simply provide page references if you quote from his text) and then show how you could employ these methods and methodology in your own research this semester. Don't worry if you have yet to settle on a specific research agenda. Go with one that looms large for you now.

If you are unfamiliar with writing a précis, see one of the following websites:

http://www.cgu.edu/pages/905.asp;

http://www.webster.edu/academic-resource-center/writingcenter/writing-tips/precis.html


Please post your essay to the discussion board: Module 2 - Learning Space by 9 am on 03/17/15.
2) By Thursday 9AM:


b) COMPLETE Module #2 Turabian Quiz [SLO #1]:

c) POST:

i) To Learning Space your responses to two other students’ Tuesday postings and write for each a paragraph critique/response (250-words or fewer).

ii) To Research Space:

(1) List your questions

(2) State your working hypothesis

(3) State your reasons

Module #3– Questions of Contexts; Sources and Bibliography

1) By Tuesday, 9:00 AM:

a) READ in Perrin, chapter 2, “Questions of Contexts,” (pp. 57-94) and review the posted study sheet.

b) READ in Lescher and Liebert, the article by Judith A. Berling, Christian Spirituality: Intrinsically Interdisciplinary,” pp. 35-52.

c) POST To Learning Space your response to one of the two following questions (+/- 500 words) [SLO #2]:

A. Given the current state of your research topic, that is, you may not yet have a definitive thesis statement, but you know the text(s) or author(s) you will likely investigate, explain and discuss the implications of a pre-modern, modern, and post-modern context for your project. For example, if you were writing a research paper on the text entitled Showings by the 14th century English anchorite and mystic Julian of Norwich, what aspects of her pre-modern cosmology might require particular attention within the context of a contemporary, post-modern appropriation of her text? If your research topic concerns a 20th-21st century author/text, what topics within post-modernity might require your special attention?
B. Write a précis of Judith A. Berling’s "Christian Spirituality: Intrinsically Interdisciplinary." Then, briefly explain what constitutive and problematic disciplines you might employ in your research agenda for this class. If you are unfamiliar with writing a précis, see module two for online resources.

2) By Thursday 9AM:


b) REVIEW in Turabian (8th edition) chapter 17, “Notes-Bibliography Style: Citing Specific Types of Sources” §§ 17.0>17.10.

c) COMPLETE Module #3 Turabian Quiz [SLO #1]:

d) POST:

i) To Learning Space your responses to two other students’ Tuesday postings and write for each a paragraph critique/response (250-words or fewer).

ii) To Research Space: Compose a bibliography of five (5) different resources (in alphabetic order). Your bibliography must include the following types of resources and relate to your research project:

(a) A book with one author;

(b) A book with multiple authors;

(c) A book with one or more author(s) plus editor or translator;

(d) A journal article in print;

(e) A journal article online.

Module #4 – Questions of God & Christian Anthropology

1) By Tuesday, 9:00 AM:

d) READ in Perrin, “Questions of God” and “Questions of Christian Anthropology,” (pp. 95-148) and go through the posted study sheets.

a) READ in Lescher & Liebert, “The Quest for Biblical Spirituality” by John R. Donahue, SJ (pp. 73-118) and “The Discipline of Christian Spirituality and Catholic Theology” by Sandra M. Schneiders, IHM (pp. 196-212).
b) POST To Learning Space your response to one of the following (+/- 500 words) [SLO #2]:

A. Write a précis for the articles by Donahue and Schneiders, then explain what role scripture and theology might play in your research agenda for this course. Avoid long quotes from the articles, using parenthetical page references when needed.

B. Given your research agenda this semester, (1) what model(s) of God is/are assumed in your original text/author, (2) what model(s) of God function(s) within your own Christian spirituality today, and (3) what, if any, challenges will you likely face when you consider a contemporary appropriation of your author/text? For example, if the model of God within the author/text you are examining were one of a harsh, judgmental, and distant father-figure model of God, whereas your personal experience of the divine operates more as a loving, compassionate, and easily approachable model of God, how might you interpret and appropriate your author/text for yourself?

C. Summarize Perrin's presentation of models of self in chapter four. That said, how would you characterize your current understanding of "the self?" What implications does this hold for your research agenda this semester?

2) By Thursday 9AM:

a) READ in Turabi an (8th edition) chapter 4, “Engaging Sources” §§ 4-4.6.

b) COMPLETE the Module #4 Turabian Quiz [SLO #1].

c) POST:

i) To Learning Space your responses to two other students’ Tuesday postings and write for each a paragraph critique/response (250-words or fewer).

ii) To Research Space:

(1) In a paragraph or two, update me on how your research is informing your working hypothesis. In other words, how has your working hypothesis evolved since you first composed it?

(2) Separately, using foot/end note style (NOT bibliographical style), create three content footnotes, that is, in addition to providing citation information, offer a one or two sentence explanation of how the cited reference:

(a) Supports your working hypothesis,
(b) Contradicts your working hypothesis, and
(c) Contextualizes your working hypothesis.

Module #5 – Questions of History & Texts

1) By Tuesday, 9:00 AM:

e) READ in Perrin, “Questions of History” and “Questions of Texts,” (pp. 149-218) and go through the posted study sheets.

a) READ in Lescher & Liebert, “The Genre of Gender: Gender and the Academic Study of Christian Spirituality” by Lisa E. Dahill (pp. 98-118).

b) POST To Learning Space your response to one of the following [SLO #2]:

A. Based on this week's Perrin reading on "Questions of History," select one historical topic, text, or author -- ideally the one that you are currently researching -- and discuss at least four "questions of history" that you should address as you proceed in your research and writing.

B. Based on this week's Perrin reading on "Questions of Texts," select one Christian spiritual text -- ideally the one that you are currently researching -- and discuss at least four hermeneutical problems that you should address as you proceed in your research and writing.

C. Write a precis for Dahill's article and show how her conclusions might influence your current or future research on a topic in the academic discipline of Christian spirituality.

2) By Thursday 9AM:


c) COMPLETE the Module #5 Turabian Quiz [SLO #1].

d) POST: Select two fellow students’ Tuesday postings and write for each a paragraph critique/response (250- words or fewer). Comment on two other students’ Tuesday posts.
d) POST:

i) To Learning Space your responses to two other students’ Tuesday postings and write for each a paragraph critique/response (250-words or fewer).

ii) To Research Space: Separately, in a few sentences, state

(1) The working hypothesis for your research project and

(2) A statement of your argument (thesis statement).

Module #6 – Questions of Human-Spiritual Development

1) By Tuesday, 9:00 AM:

a) READ in Perrin, “Questions of Human-Spiritual Development,” (pp. 219-264) and go through the posted study sheet.

b) POST To Learning Space your response to one of the following [SLO #2]:

A. Considering your research project this semester, how do you explain and understand the interaction of Christian spirituality and psychology. In what way to the development theories of psychology support or subvert the models of spiritual development implicitly or explicitly present in your Christian spiritual text?

B. Considering your research project this semester, in what ways does your author/text explicitly or implicitly employ the traditional threefold spiritual itinerary of the purgative way, illuminative way, and unitive way?

C. If neither of the above topics applies to your project or if you prefer to address another Christian spiritual author/text in terms of psychology or the threefold path, please do so.

2) By Thursday 9AM:

a) SCAN in Turabian (8th edition):

i) Chapter 22, “Names, Special Terms, and Titles of Works,” §§ 22>3.3.


b) COMPLETE the Module #6 Turabian Quiz [SLO #].

e) POST:

i) To Learning Space your responses to two other students’ Tuesday postings and write for each a paragraph critique/response (250-words or fewer).

ii) To Research Space, using headings and subheadings, post a draft outline of your research paper (see Turabian §§ 6.2.1).

Module #7 – Questions of Spiritual Practice & Self-Implication

1) By Tuesday, 9:00 AM:

a) READ in Perrin, “Questions of Spiritual Practice,” (pp. 265-296) and go through the posted study sheet.

b) READ in Lescher & Liebert, “Writing in Spirituality as a Self-Implicating Act: Reflections on Authorial Disclosure and the Hiddenness of the Self,” by Belden C. Lane (pp. 53-69).

c) POST To Learning Space your response to one of the following [SLO #2]:

A. In reference to the author/text that you are researching for this semester's paper, what questions of spiritual practice come into play, both within the text itself and in your contemporary appropriation thereof? What role does prayer, scripture, or spiritual direction have in your text?

B. With reference to Belden Lane's article, what role, if any, will "self-implication" play in the final draft of your research paper? If you do not intend to include a self-implicative component into your final research paper, please explain why.

2) By Thursday 9AM:

a) READ in Turabian (8th edition):

a) Chapter 6, “Planning A First Draft,” §§ 6>6.3.

b) Chapter 7, “Drafting your report,” §§ 7>7.11.

b) POST [SLO #1]:
iii) To Learning Space your responses to two other students’ Tuesday postings and write for each a paragraph critique/response (250-words or fewer).

iv) To Research Space draft versions of your paper’s “Introduction” and “Conclusion.”

Module #8 – Penultimate Draft

1) By Tuesday, 9:00 AM:

a) POST To Research Space the penultimate draft of your research paper [SLO #2].

2) By Thursday 9AM:

a) READ in Turabian (8th edition):

i) Chapter 9, “Revising Your Draft,” §§ 9>9.5.


b) REVIEW: in Turabian (8th edition):


iii. Appendix: Paper Format and Submission:

1. “General Format Requirements,” §§ A.1.1>A.1.5.

b) READ AND COMMENT UPON THE PAPERS SUBMITTED BY OTHER MEMBERS OF YOUR SMALL WRITING GROUP [SLO #1].
FINAL DRAFTS OF PAPERS ARE DUE TBA (a date at the end of Session B).