

WS 613 SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

FALL 2018

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Course Description

*What does the Lord require of you but to do justice,
to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*

This prescription sums up life in the Spirit: A faithful disposition of heart, a practice of right relating, and an orientation toward the Holy One. In this context, justice and compassion are cornerstones of the spiritual life and the foundations of social transformation.

As spiritual values, these are understood in the context of covenants of mutuality, inclusion and egalitarianism that foster right ordering of relationships. As transformative practices, they encompass a dialectical relationship between individuals and society, within which is an awareness of ways in which the dominant culture could be reordered to reflect life-enhancing values and just social systems.

In this course, we will explore how these virtues cooperate in an engaged spirituality, grounded in the Holy One and attentive to the needs of a suffering world, in both personal and political contexts by 1) contemplating how they are embodied and operative in our own spiritual lives, and 2) analyzing a situation of oppression and injustice with a critical and compassionate eye, proposing solutions which are transformative, life-giving and just.

Learning goals and outcomes. In this framework, you will:

1. Acquire knowledge of the theological, philosophical and spiritual understandings of justice and compassion in a variety of secular and religious traditions, and explore how these are operative in the frameworks of common course readings and films, case studies and your personal spirituality.
2. Learn to identify and critically analyze a situation of oppression and injustice, identify clues to the common elements that arise from a core of justice, compassion and spiritual groundedness, and propose remedies for those situations in ways that are life giving and transformative.
3. Explore how your personal spirituality impacts your way of being in the world in the personal and communal arenas.

Required Texts

Cimperman, Maria. *Social Analysis for the 21st Century*. Maryknoll, NY. Orbis. 2105

ISBN: 978-1-62698-143-0

O'Connell, Maureen. *Compassion: Loving our Neighbor in an Age of Globalization*.

Maryknoll, NY. Orbis Books. 2009 ISBN: 978-1-57075-845-4

Selected Articles as listed in syllabus; available on Canvas course site.

Assessment expectations and percentages of grade.

Discussion Board assignments: 50%

Discussion Board Assignment expectations:

1. Your post response to the prompt question should be no more than 100-125 words.
2. Your response to two of your classmates' posts is to be one paragraph (75 word maximum). You may want to offer a question for further reflection or request clarification.
3. All submissions must be written and posted directly to Discussion Board (DBd).

DO NOT submit in Word docx format. I will be unable to open your post, which means you will not receive credit for your submission for that week.

Project Outline: 10% (specific guidelines will follow)

Final Paper: 40% (specific paper guidelines will be forthcoming as we approach end of term.)

You may also consult Hartford Seminary Research Paper Guidelines may be found at
<http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/>

Assignment due dates:

All modules open on previous Friday before the next week's module starts. DBd posts are due the following Friday at 5pm. Responses to your peers are due by Saturday, 9pm.

Attendance Policy

This course is asynchronous – i.e. you do not have to log on at a particular time to do assignments, although you do have a firm submission date for assignments (see above). If you are unable to submit on time, please communicate that to me in advance.

Office hours: by appointment, via either email, Skype or phone

A Note about Plagiarism

In all assignments, it is assumed that what is submitted is the student's own original work. Plagiarism is strictly forbidden. As described in the Hartford Seminary General Guidelines for a Research Paper, plagiarism occurs when students "submit another person's work, lift paragraphs, sentences, or even a choice phrase from another writer, or make use of another person's ideas (even if the student puts these ideas in his/her own words) without acknowledging the source."

A related kind of dishonesty is to resubmit a paper which was done for a different course, even if it is the student's own work. These practices are not permitted at Hartford Seminary. They will be reported to the Dean's Office and may result in disciplinary action. If a paper is found to contain plagiarism, the minimum penalty will be failing that assignment, with no opportunity to rewrite.

Resources: further information on this policy can be found at:

<http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook>

Further information about questions, concerns, re: academic and other policies are listed at

<http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.