University of St. Thomas School of Theology at
St. Mary’s Seminary

Spirituality

YSM/YLSM/YMM 6305 A

Spring 2017

Fr. Bernard Mulcahy, OP

Course Description

This course will examine the dynamic and transformative relationship between the human person and God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The Trinitarian origins and goal of spirituality will be emphasized as well as the concepts of grace uncreated and created, the gifts of the Spirit, freedom, sin, conversion, growth in holiness, prayer, and prayer practices.

See the University of St. Thomas course catalogue for a complete course description.

Course Goals

1. Students will become familiar with the general history of Catholic spirituality, including its secular, ecclesiological, and theological contexts.

2. Students will understand the common terminology of Catholic spiritual theology (e.g., grace, sin, holiness, virtue, justification, perfection, imperfections, passions, divine providence, vocation, states of life, vows, purification, illumination, union with God, acquired contemplation, infused contemplation), particularly as these are used by St. Thomas Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, and the Councils of Trent and Vatican II.

3. Through independent reading, research, and the writing of an original term paper, students will acquire familiarity with one major work of Catholic spirituality, one major part of the history of spirituality, or one major idea or discipline in spirituality.

Required materials

One textbook is required for this class:

Course Requirements

All students are required to attend class and to contribute to our shared exploration of the history and theology of Catholic spirituality. This means at least sometimes answering or asking questions, and participating in class discussions.

All students will take a final exam on the material presented Fr. Sheldrake’s book and in the class lectures.

All students will undertake a small research or reading project (see details below), and submit their findings in the form of an original term paper, which is due no later than the last day this class meets (before the final exam). Students in the MDiv and MAPS programs must present a paper of at least 1,500 words. Those in the STB and MA-Theology programs must present a paper of at least 2,500 words. All papers are to be typed, double-spaced, and are to conform to the current Chicago Manual of Style, Garner’s Modern American Usage, and Fowler’s Modern English Usage (2nd ed.). All sources must be academically reputable and cited in footnotes. Do not add a separate bibliography.

Term Paper Topics

The term paper represents your independent pursuit of a topic in Catholic spirituality which interests you and would be of universal Catholic interest. It needs to be informative and engaging to the reader: it may help to imagine that you are writing a magazine article for Catholic professionals—people who are thoughtful and educated, but not versed in theology, history, or spirituality.

There are three kinds of papers you may write:

A. A paper introducing and explaining a major book (a spiritual classic)

B. A paper introducing and explaining part of the history of spirituality

C. A paper introducing and explaining an important idea or discipline in spirituality

Please note that no two students may write on the same topic. You must propose a topic for approval within the first two weeks of the semester, and settle on an approved topic by the end of the third week. You may not select a topic that is too recent, nor may you select anything too general. We are looking for topics that are specific, that have a scholarly literature you can consult, and that are important beyond their immediate cultural setting. Avoid topics that would be better treated in Liturgy, Ecclesiology, or other required courses in the seminary curriculum.

Here are some examples of appropriate topic proposals: they will have to become more specific as you develop them and do your reading.

Type A:  
The Ladder of Divine Ascent (St. John Climacus)  
The Way of a Pilgrim, and The Pilgrim Continues His Way (anonymous)
Type B:
- Desert Monasticism
- The French School of Spirituality for Diocesan Priests
- The *Devotio moderna*
- The Cistercian Reform
- The History of the Rosary (or any popular way of prayer)
- The Chinese Rites Controversy
- The Discalced Carmelite Reform
- Jansenism, Rigorism, and Laxism

Type C:
- The Evangelical Counsels
- Fasting
- The Apostolic Ideal
- Pilgrimage
- Conversion
- Worldliness
- Forgiveness
- Contemplation
- Holiness

**Course Grades**

Class participation and the final exam are each worth one quarter of the course grade. The term paper is worth half the course grade.

**Course Calendar**

TBA. The exact calendar of class sessions and readings from Sheldrake will be distributed at the first class meeting.