DESCRIPTION

Beginning with an investigation of the nature of Christian spirituality and related hermeneutical and methodological issues, this course will examine the foundations of Franciscan spirituality, its key features and practices, as well as its approach to the choice of poverty, chastity and obedience. The central focus will be given to an understanding of Franciscan life as a “life of penance,” as this was understood and lived by Francis and Clare, and the men and women of the various branches of the Franciscan family. A schematic historical survey of the tradition will serve to underline the creativity of the Franciscan tradition of spirituality, as well as its possible distortions and excesses.
REQUIRED TEXTS


NOTE: The John Beevers translation from Image or Image Classics is highly preferred of De Caussade’s classic work on spirituality.


GOALS and OBJECTIVES

Students will develop an understanding of the nature and study of Christian spirituality in general and, in particular, of the Franciscan tradition of spirituality by:

1.) Gaining familiarity with hermeneutical theories and epistemological debates in the study of spirituality and religion.

2.) Investigating the origins of Franciscan spirituality in the religious experience of Francis of Assisi.

3.) Examining the contribution of “Franciscan mysticism” to the development of the Christian mystical tradition.

4.) Analyzing the writings of the major spiritual writers of the Franciscan tradition, e.g., Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, Jacopone da Todi, Ubertino da Casale, etc.

5.) Using the writings of early-modern and contemporary authors (De Cassaude, Hopkins, Solzhenitysn, Cizek, Escriva) to help illuminate the secrets of Franciscan spirituality, applying a multidisciplinary approach that uses abstracts from novels,
autobiographies, poetry, spiritual treatises, and visual media to highlight and bring to life important Franciscan themes.

6.) Analyzing the major debates and controversies surrounding late-medieval Franciscan spirituality and identity in connection to the form of life, interpretations of poverty, Joachite eschatology, the Franciscan Spirituals, and the relationship to the popes.

7.) Examining the historical development and distinctions in spirituality between the First, Second, and Third Orders of St. Francis.

SYLLABUS and DAILY READINGS

WEEK 1: Spirituality and Hermeneutics

June 26  Introduction: The Study of Christian Spirituality and the Identification of Francis of Assisi within the Christian Mystical Tradition

Perrin: Introduction
Chapter 1 – Question of Definitions


De Caussade: Chapter 1: On Doing Our Part and Leaving the Rest to God.

June 27  Sacred and Secular Space: the Franciscan Contribution

Perrin: Chapter 2 – Questions of Context
Chapter 6 – Questions of Text

De Caussade: Chapter 2 – Embrace the Present Moment as an Ever-Flowing Source of Holiness


June 28  History and Hermeneutics

Perrin: Chapter 5 – Questions of History
De Caussade: Chapter 3 – To Surrender to God is to Practice Every Virtue


June 29  The Curious Case of Friar Joseph Cupertino and Levitation: An Epistemological Challenge


De Caussade: Chapter 4 – Complete Surrender to the Will of God is the Essence of Spirituality.
June 30  Spiritual Development, Mysticism, and the Hermeneutical Challenge of Reductionism

Perrin: Chapter 7 – Questions of Human-Spiritual Development
Chapter 8 – Questions of Spiritual Practice


**WEEK 2: Francis, Clare, and Bonaventure**

July 3  True and Perfect Joy: Abandonment and the Path to Spiritual Freedom


De Caussade: Chapter 5 – Only Complete and True Faith Enables the Soul to Accept with Joy Everything that Happens to It.
Chapter 6 – All Will Be Well if We Abandon Ourselves to God


July 4  The Writings of St. Francis

From *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* (also available in FA:ED I):

The Admonitions
**July 5**

**St. Clare and the Second Order:**

**The Privilege of Poverty**

“The Letters of Clare of Assisi to Agnes of Prague” and “The Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges,” in Francis and Clare: Complete Works, pp. 189-208.


**July 6**

**Bonaventure of Bagnoregio**


Bonaventure, The Soul’s Journey into God, Prologue–Chapter 7, pp. 53-116.

**July 7**

**The Tree of Life: Prayer, Meditation, and the Mysticism of the Historical Event**


Bonaventure, Tree of Life, pp. 119-175.
**WEEK 3: The Rise of the Spirituals and the Third Order: Poverty, Penance, and Debating the Form of Life**

**July 10**  
**Jacopone da Todi: Tortured Mystic and Poet of the Franciscan Spiritual Movement**


**July 11**  
**Leaders and Theologians of the Franciscan Spiritual Movement**


**July 12**  
**Dante and the Franciscans; Scotus and the Immaculate Conception – Contributions to Illustrious Poetry and Mariology**


FILM: *Blessed Duns Scotus: Defender of the Immaculate Conception*

**July 13**  
**The Third Order**


July 14  Hidden Treasures of the Franciscan Third Order: Joan of Arc, John Marie Vianney, Maria Valtorta


NOTE: The instructor reserves the right to adapt or change the above based on the needs of the class.

REQUIREMENTS and GRADING

READING AND PARTICIPATION (20%): Completion of assigned reading for class and active participation. A part of each class will constitute a discussion section of the assigned readings, therefore active participation in class discussions will be essential. A part of the final grade will be determined by class participation.

DISCUSSION STARTERS (20%): Each student will be assigned days to write a 200-word discussion-starter, usually one paragraph with 2-3 questions, regarding one or more of the assigned readings for that day. These statements will be summarized in class with hard copies made for the professor and all students during the assigned day.

RESEARCH PAPER (60%): Students are to write a 10-15 page final paper on either a major Franciscan figure, issue, controversy, or theme within the tradition of Franciscan spirituality. Papers will be graded on the basis of the student’s grasp of the material, logical and well-argued insights, and depth of research.

A       Distinguished Course Work
A-      Very Good Course Work
B+      Good Course Work
B       Adequate Course Work
C       Below Standard.
F       Failure