

AT 75/375 – THE ART OF MEDITATION

Easter 2017

W 130-415 PM

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Office: Seabury 409 Hours Wed 4:30

This course offers an introduction to classic ways of meditating, within and beyond Christianity. Such practices in the Christian tradition as Psalm repetition, Lectio Divina, Salesian and Ignatian meditation, and gazing at icons will form the core curriculum, supplemented by exploration of the practice of meditation in other faith traditions such as Zen Buddhism and Judaism, and the interface between meditation and other modes of prayer, including the Liturgy. A special feature will be to explore the Daily Office in The Episcopal Church's *Book of Common Prayer* as a resource for Christian meditation. We will examine the practice of the Office – its sequence of collects, lessons, psalms, and prayers and the various options – as a framework for personal meditation, as well leadership of the Office in various worship settings as a way of inviting congregations and other groups into meditative practice.

Students will, in consultation with the Professor, develop a term project congruent with their needs and aspirations.

Course Objectives—the student will:

1. Become acquainted with the classic methods of Christian meditation
2. Discover how meditation is supported by various art forms as well as techniques
3. Realize the significance of this tradition for contemporary spirituality—how, for example, knowing the teachings of Guigo II on meditation might be helpful in spiritual direction today.

Required Readings:

Books:

James Finley, *Christian Meditation: Experiencing the Presence of God* (2004)

Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Christian Meditation* (1989)
The Dalai Lama, *Stages of Meditation* (2003)
Thomas Keating, *Invitation to Love: the Way of Christian Contemplation* (1994)
Jones, Wainwright, Yarnold, *The Study of Spirituality* (1985)

Supplementary:

Jones, Wainwright, Yarnold, *The Study of Spirituality*
..., *The Study of Liturgy*
John Cassian, *Institutes*
Dom Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God*
A Monk of the Eastern Church, *The Way of the Pilgrim*
William Johnston, *Christian Zen*

Assignments

1. **Personal Expectations:** having read the course description, schedule, and other materials in this syllabus, all students will write a one-page description of their personal goals, or “what I would like to get from this course.” (This counts as first reflection paper, see below).
2. **Class Participation:** for the course to be a genuine exploration, this is mandatory. All students should plan to participate vocally every session.
3. **Weekly Reflection:** each week, every student will submit an **informal**, non-graded reflection paper about 1 page in length. These are due every week **by Friday noon**.
4. **Term project (10-20 pages):** each student will develop a term project/paper exploring some aspect of Meditation. This may take any of several forms (e.g., besides a conventional research paper, an adult education series) but must meet the 10-20 page criterion. The project must evince research beyond the required readings and original thought. (Most students in the past have found the weekly reflection papers a perfect way to discover what they want to do for the project). Project due 12 Dec; Rough outline and thesis statement (or other indication of what project is intended to be) due by the end of MARCH **(or earlier)**.
5. **(Optional) Class Presentation:** any student who wishes may share a 15-minute presentation of her/his term project (or other material relevant to this course) at any point during the term; see Professor ASAP to schedule and for assistance.

Evaluation

Grade: will be based on the volume and, especially, the quality of work evinced throughout the semester. Requirements for each grade:

C/auditor:

1. required reading (3 books).
2. Participation and attendance every session.

B:

1. all of the above plus:
2. weekly reflection papers
3. term project 10-15 pages, evincing intelligent research.

A:

1. all of the above plus:
2. term project 15-20 pages, evincing creative research.

GTS regulations stipulate that any student wishing to take this course Credit/No Credit must declare that intention at the beginning of the semester; send an e mail to Professor regarding this before the add/drop deadline. All others will receive a letter grade.

Course Policies

Laptops may be used for note-taking and for instant reference, but not for anything irrelevant to this course. Cell phones should be turned off.

Any student needing an accommodation because of disability or for any other reason should speak with Professor or e mail during first week, and provide some sort of documentation.

Schedule

2/1 Introduction: Meditation as Spiritual Art; the Nature of Spirituality; Modes of Prayer; Meditation and Liturgy; Meditation and Contemplation

2/8 The Way of the Desert: Psalm Repetition and Centering

2/15 The Benedictine Way: Ruminating Scripture; Lectio Divina

2/22 Hesychasm and the Jesus Prayer: Matt Buccheri, StM

3/8 Meditating with Icons

3/29 Early Medieval Meditation: the Old English Texts

4/ 5 The Methods: Ignatian Meditation Salesian Meditation

4/12 Using the Arts as Catalysts

4/19 Buddhist Meditation: Ralph de la Rosa, Insight Meditation Leader and Yoga Teacher

4/26 Meditation in Other Faiths: Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism

5/3 Meditation and the Daily Office