

Course Syllabus: Approaches to Spiritual Direction & Discernment
RGP3265HS
Regis College
Toronto School of Theology
Fall/Winter/Summer Year

Instructor Information

Instructor: Geoffrey B. (Monty) Williams, S.J., Ph.D
Office Location: Regis College Room Number, 204
Telephone: Office - (416)922-5474 x251
E-mail: monty.williams@me.com
Office Hours: by appointment

Course Identification

Course Number: RGP3265HS
Course Name: Approaches to Spiritual Direction & Discernment
Course Location:
Class Times:
Prerequisites: None

Course Description

An introduction to the dynamics, practice, and issues of spiritual direction and discernment in our contemporary culture with components of theological reflection on personal experience.

The student is expected to write eight (8) 500 word position papers in the course of the semester elaborating or refining a single point of personal significance --either from a theological, pastoral, or cultural point of view--from the class presentations and discussions around these topics.

These will be assessed in terms of how that single point has been developed competently beyond the class discussion using outside research and references. The papers are to be handed in over the course of the semester. The student will note that extensive bibliographies on spirituality, spiritual direction, and discernment are readily available on the internet or through the University libraries' resources. These should be used to help the student concentrate on areas of personal interest, and for topics explored in the class. For this reason no books are put on reserve.

It is expected that the papers will conform to approved manuals of style, spelling and grammar. Please note that a significant portion of a paper's mark will be deducted for failure to meet an appropriate level of proficiency in this area. For those whose grammar and writing skills are weak there is a writing clinic offered at Regis College.

Assessment:

Class participation: 20% (please note that this is for consistent, active, intelligent participation in class discussions)

Written work: 80%

Required Texts:

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. A translation and Commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. Institute of Jesuit Sources, St. Louis, 1992. ISBN 0-912422-86-6

Recommended Reading:

Jones, W. Paul. The Art of Spiritual Direction: Giving and Receiving Spiritual Guidance. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2002

(Please note that there are a number of good books on spiritual direction. Each of these has a different focus and so it is useful to read several of these to help you develop your own position).

Class timetable:

Class 1: Class organization; Overview of Course; What is Spiritual Direction

Class 2: The Spiritual Journey: Biblical Metaphors; Literary Metaphors; Metaphors from non-Christian traditions; The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

Class 3: Models of spiritual directors

Class 4: Paradigms of Spiritual Direction: Psychological/ Communal/Ecological/ Liturgical/ Artistic/ Ignatian

Class 5: Changing Traditions in Spiritual Direction: An overview of the cultural analysis of spiritual direction: The post-modern situation

Class 6: Practical concerns in spiritual direction today: a) traps
b) caring for oneself c) spiritual direction in/outside of a retreat setting
d) accessing another's interiority (e.g. the use of narratives) e.
facilitating a spiritual conversation f) performance aspects of spiritual
direction --rituals, the use of space; preparing to receive and give
spiritual direction.

Class 7: The stories we live by: of self/others/God. Their relationship to
spiritual direction. How we read another's story.

Class 8: Dealing with "Otherness": Gender/Culture/Nation/ Class/Race/ Age

- Class 9: Introduction to Spiritual Discernment: Various Forms/ various traps/ the basic ground. Cultural Structures in discernment- how basic world views influence the process, aims, and ends of discernment
- Class 10: The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Rules for Discernment
- Class 11: Ignatian rules for decision making
- Class 12: Case studies in discernment.