SD 820 Spiritual Direction and Formation Specialization (2 credit hours)
Spring 2016

Required Texts:

Course Description:
This seminar has three foci: one, to explore the importance of spiritual darkness and unknowing in spiritual direction; two, to become familiar with models of faith development; and three, to explore the wisdom of classical spiritual traditions for spiritual direction and formation.

Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:
1. Articulate an understanding of spiritual darkness and unknowing as they inform the practice of spiritual direction;
2. Appreciate the wisdom of the Desert Christian, Benedictine, Celtic, and Ignatian traditions related to spiritual formation and spiritual direction;
3. Identify helpful resources within the Desert Christian, Benedictine, Celtic, and Ignatian traditions for the practice of spiritual direction;
4. Have an increased understanding of the spiritual development process in their lives and in the lives of others.
5. Articulate their evolving spiritual experience through spiritual autobiography.

Pre-seminar Assignments: Due Thursday, January 14, 2016
1. Read the Kirvan text.
   a. Reflect on and interact with Kirvan’s statements as included in the syllabus (Appendix I). Engage with the material in the style of a journal. Notice invitations you sense in Kirvan’s words, as well as challenges. Be alert to the ways your own life-experience has been congruent with each statement. This reflection paper (6-8 pages) should be informal in style, but excellence in grammar is expected.
   b. Bring copies of your reflections to the seminar on January 14 for group discussion.
2. Read the May text.
   b. Write a reflection paper (6-8 pages, submitted via www.turnitin.com), discussing how the book illumines the student’s experience of spiritual darkness and the implications of the dark night experience for spiritual direction. Give specific attention to these sections in May’s book:
      i. A Journey of Consciousness (pp. 44-48);
      ii. The Hidden Transformation (pp. 71-74);
      iii. The Passive Nights (pp. 85-94);
      iv. Spiritual Companionship and the Dark Night (pp. 168-174).

3. A three-hour experience of personal retreat at a local retreat center, park, or other natural setting. This experience of silence and solitude (unplugged from electronic and digital media) provides an opportunity for attending to Presence. Come to the seminar on January 14 prepared to reflect on the day retreat.

Post-seminar Assignments: Due April 15, 2016
1. Read the Chittister text.
2. Read the Nouwen text.
3. Read the Newell text.
4. The student will write a reflection paper (6-8 pages, submitted via email to jt.webber@att.net) that addresses his or her understanding of spiritual formation and spiritual direction from the perspectives of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, Benedictine spirituality, and Celtic spirituality (as presented by Chittister, Nouwen, and Newell). Among other matters, the paper will specifically address:
   a. How these spiritual traditions inform the student’s understanding of the spiritual journey;
   b. Aspects of each spiritual tradition that seem pertinent to the student’s ministry setting and how they might be integrated into the life of the local congregation;
   c. Any resistance the student feels toward the spirituality of these traditions.
   d. Invitations for growth the student sensed within himself or herself in considering these spiritual traditions.
5. Write a spiritual autobiography (6-8 pages, submitted via email to jt.webber@att.net) in which the student explores the movements of his or her spiritual journey. (This assignment will follow a discussion of spiritual development at the January seminar.) Informal, first-person writing is acceptable, and excellence in grammar is expected. The autobiography may include:
   a. Awakenings that have led to new understandings of himself or herself, a new understanding of God, new ways of interacting with others, or a new stance toward the created world;
   b. Significant seasons or movements of growth, and what precipitated those seasons;
   c. Liminal spaces or thresholds that ushered in new seasons of life;
   d. Seasons of darkness or unknowing that led to unexpected pathways or unplanned directions;
   e. Attentiveness to growing edges at the present time in the student’s spiritual becoming.

Student Workload Expectations:
Class Time – 6 hours
Textbooks - (769 pages @ 20 pp/hr) = 38.5 hours
Papers – 48 hours
Personal Retreat – 3 hours

Total – 95.5 hours
Course Grading Scale: “A” represents excellent work in all categories (fulfillment of assignment, writing and formatting, and doctoral level content); “B” represents good work in all categories; anything below a “B-” is considered below doctoral level.

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Classroom-related Academic Policies

A. Work is expected on the due date. Late papers will receive no less than a one-letter grade reduction.

B. Turnitin.com
   1. Assignments may require submission to www.turnitin.com to check for originality and style. The assignments that are required for submission will be described in the syllabus.
   2. Students will create an account at www.turnitin.com. After doing so, the student will join the course page with the code and password supplied by the instructor. A list of assignments and due dates will be available on the course page.
   3. Students will submit assignments by the due date and time and will be required to submit the assignments in a hard copy format as well.

C. Electronic Equipment Usage in Classrooms
   It is expected that students will use technology (cell phones, laptop computers, iPads, etc.) during classes only for the purposes of class work. Therefore, students should turn off cell phones and refrain from texting and using laptop computers during classes except for the purposes of taking notes or doing research specifically authorized by the course instructor. Students who have emergency needs not covered by this policy must ask for an exception from the course instructor.

D. Review the Academic Catalog for requirements regarding Incompletes and Plagiarism issues. For more information on Library Services, please download the Library Handbook from the HGST website.

Doctor of Ministry Policies: (find the full listing of DMin Policies in the HGST Academic Catalog, pages 28ff)

A. Assignments
   Students in the DMin program will read, research, study, experience, and evaluate applied theology and personal spiritual concepts. This degree promotes research on vital issues affecting the quality of life in faith communities as well as the development of new approaches, strategies, and styles of ministry in a wide variety of institutional and cultural settings. The resulting learning process equips the student for critical evaluation in the context and practice of ministry and fosters an integration of theory and effective pastoral practice with a view toward transforming communities.

   Pre-seminar assignments are due no later than the course start date. Students are encouraged, however, to bring all written assignments the first day of the seminar week. Students, with missing pre-seminar assignments, may be dropped from those sections of the seminar, may not be permitted to attend those sections, and may receive a failing grade for those sections.

   Students should expect approximately 2,000 pages of reading each semester. It is expected that the books will be acquired and that the reading assignments will be completed in order that candidates may be exposed to the material prior to the seminar.

   Post-seminar written assignments are to be submitted within ninety days after the session ends, at prescribed deadlines. Assignments should be emailed directly to professors on or before the due date. Competence will be demonstrated through creative projects and papers, which apply
professional experience in connection with course content. These assignments will demonstrate an understanding of the writing skills required for the doctoral level and of the subject matter, bibliography, theory, and methodology covered in the seminar.

Written work will follow the prescribed HGST/Turabian style and should meet the deadlines required in each course syllabus. Grades will reflect the meeting of these criteria as well as the content.

Students are encouraged to email copies of completed assignments to the Director and to keep hard copies and external digital copies on file to protect work from being lost due to a computer malfunction. Graded papers are usually available for pick up at the following seminar unless they are returned via email.

Written assignments for Project and Practicum completion are described and delineated in the “Project and Practicum Manual,” which is available via the website. The Manual also includes deadlines for Project and Practicum Report completion and all pre-graduation deadlines.

B. Extensions and Incomplete Grade Policy

Seminar assignments are to be completed and mailed or emailed on or before the established due date. However, upon receiving a completed Extension Request Form and payment of $50 per professor, a thirty-day extension (one for each professor) may be granted by the DMin Office. The extension request should be received before the original due date. The professor shall reduce the grade by at least one-half letter grade. Work postmarked after the due date or the one-time thirty-day extension due date is subject to a minimum one letter grade reduction. No class work will be accepted after the close of the semester (except for previously granted 30-day extensions), a grade of “F” will be given, and the semester will have to be repeated for credit. The student will be placed on Academic Probation at that time until a cumulative GPA of no less than a B average is earned during the next semester.

The student will be given one opportunity to make up a failed seminar section, either the next time it is offered or through make-up work, to receive an acceptable grade and raise the overall GPA to an acceptable score. In order for the GPA to move to an acceptable score, the Academic Office may replace the “F” with an “NCF” so that the make-up work will count appropriately. If the student does not make up the section during the timeframe noted above, the grade will remain an “F,” the failing grade will appear on his or her transcript, Academic Stop will go into effect, and the student’s file will be sent to the DMin Oversight Committee with recommended action.

Notes for Writing Assignments: All “formal, academic” writing assignments must conform to Kate Turabian, A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations, 8th Edition. This includes matters of style and format. Certain assignments may be less formal, and students will follow the professor’s instructions for those assignments.

For formal, academic writing, the instructor requires the use of footnotes for documentation when more than one resource is cited. The student should number pages. According to Turabian, page numbers should be in the upper right hand corner, except on pages with major headings (titles). Margins should be one inch on all four sides, except where major headings (titles) require a two-inch top margin. All students should utilize 12-point Times New Roman font throughout. The instructor prefers that the student not use presentation or report binders or folders. He prefers submission of papers with staples or binder clips.

Critical, or formal, writing differs from colloquial writing or spoken English at several points. The student should note the following guidelines for critical writing. The instructor expects students to follow these guidelines strictly for academic-style assignments. Failure to do so will be penalized.

- Avoid 1st or 2nd person references (“I,” “we,” or “you”). Keep the written projects objective and professional. Remember that imperative forms are second person.
- Never use contractions.
Avoid passive voice construction (i.e., The student should write “God chose Joshua” rather than “Joshua was chosen by God.”). Some exceptions are necessary, but limiting the use of passive voice is a good policy.

Be sure that number and tense always agree (i.e., Do not write in one place that “Brueggemann argues . . .” and at another place “Brueggemann argued . . .”). Subject-verb agreement is imperative.

Spellcheck! Spellcheck! Spellcheck! Grammar check works as well!

Pronouns should have clear antecedents. Avoiding “it is” and “there is” in the paper removes much of the ambiguity of pronoun usage.

Sentence fragments are unacceptable. Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate.
APPENDIX I
Pre-Seminar Reflection and Interaction
Interact with these statements from Kirvan’s book in a reflective and responsive style. Engage them as you might in a journal, finding invitations and challenges in the words. Notice in your own experience where you find congruence with Kirvan’s words. The reflections may be written in first person (I language), but should reflect a high quality of grammar.

1. “However reluctantly, we are forced to admit that we have inherited a spirituality cut from the same cloth as the ‘modern’ world – a spirituality that presumes a knowable, controllable, and predictable existence. It comes, often as not, with a presumption and a promise that the spiritual world is timeless and unchanging, that in fact spirituality is our protection against change and time. In that spiritual world we know – we think – what God is like and what God expects. Where God can be found and where he is not. And when we go in search of God, we know who and what we are looking for. And where to look.” (21-22)

2. “Spirituality is not about contentment but about living with our discontent, living with a restless longing for something better, for something more, living between the cloud of forgetting and the cloud of unknowing.” (40-41)

3. “We can’t – most of us – escape a feeling that because we are not doing something, nothing is happening. We feel a need to measure our lives. Without any benchmarks to measure our progress, we are at a loss. But something is happening, even when we are doing nothing. It’s just happening in the dark.” (86)

4. “Nothing is more humbling than recognizing and accepting the fact that we are loved without question, loved as we are, loved without cause, loved without merit.” (90)

5. “We are called upon to detach ourselves from creation without demonizing it. We are asked to detach ourselves from even the good things of creation not by denying they are good, not because they are evil, but simply because they are not enough.” (94)

6. “What is far less easy for us is that in responding to God’s invitation, in choosing such a life, our basic urge to understand, a cornerstone of our humanity, will no longer be a source of pride and energy but a ‘powerful stumbling block to our attempts to reach God in simple love.’ We are being asked for the sake of union with God to leave behind – to forget – what we have spent a lifetime cultivating. We are being asked to overcome our need to make sense, to set aside our perpetual pursuit of meaning, to overcome the driving character of our humanity, our intense need to understand.” (96-97)

7. “We stand in our own way. We block our own passage because we are still at the center of our existence. We keep getting in our own way. Ironically, in many bookstores spirituality finds itself relegated to the section marked ‘self-help.’ The irony is not just that spirituality takes us where we can’t help ourselves, where we are in fact most profoundly helpless, but that in the valley of desire we come to know and accept that this emphasis on self scuttles our very journey. However frightened we might be, we come to accept that the self is not our helper or something to be helped or strengthened. Rather it is something to be left behind.” (106)

8. “What is difficult for us – almost impossible – is to choose darkness, to accept that darkness is the heart of the matter, that our journey will end in darkness, that our goal is not to break through the darkness to light, but to go deeper and deeper into the darkness. We are being asked to let go of a
world where we think we know how to live, and live in a world where we celebrate our unknowing.” (111)