



SPFM 5211 Intercultural Spirituality

2023 Fall (August 28-December 14)

Class meeting dates/times:

Sept 20-21, Wed-Thurs: 6:30-9:00 pm PT (Mission Springs)

Sept 30, Saturday: 9:00-4:00 pm PT (Zoom)

Oct 27, Friday: 4:00-6:00 pm PT (Zoom)

Dec 8: All assignments due by 10:00 pm PT

1 credit hour, pass/fail

INSTRUCTOR

Rev. Stephen Wong, PhD

Contact: snwong@northpark.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This spiritual formation course is designed to help students better understand their own spiritual development in the context of their personal cultural context and worldview, thus equipping them to better serve a diversifying society. Spiritual formation and intercultural engagement will be viewed through the lens of stage developmental theory. Categories of culture, spirituality and worldview will be explored to give students a greater appreciation for the cultural context of spiritual practices that are different from their own and to give them a greater ability to grow spiritually from these interactions. The use of the Lord's Prayer in various Christian traditions and cultural contexts will be explored as a case study.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course students will:

- Be able to briefly describe the great traditions of Christian spirituality
- Have a framework for evaluating underlying values of cultural expression in society at large and in expressions of Christian spirituality
- Be able to describe stages of intercultural and spiritual development
- Have an understanding of the Lord's Prayer in its original cultural context
- Be able to evaluate corporate worship practices (e.g., the use of the Lord's Prayer) for cultural context and in light of traditions of Christian spirituality
- Have language to name their own cultural biases in prayer and worship
- Articulate personal goals for intercultural and spiritual growth
- This course contributes toward the learning outcomes for all of North Park Theological Seminary's Master's degrees (MDiv, MACM, MACF, MATS), engaging diversity and exhibiting growth towards intercultural competence for ministry reflective of God's global redemptive work.



REQUIRED TEXTS

Books to be purchased

- Breckinridge, James and Lillian. What Color is Your God?: Multicultural Education in the Church. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995. (*Read chapters 7-11*)
- Georges, Jayson. The 3D Gospel: Ministry in Guilt, Shame and Fear Cultures. Timē Press, 2017.
- Lanier, Sarah. Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot- and Cold-climate Cultures. Hagerstown: McDougal Publishing, 2000.

Excerpts available in Canvas as PDF files

- Bailey, Kenneth E. Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels. Downer's Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. (*Chapter 7*)
- Foster, Richard J. Streams of Living Water: Essential Practices from the Six Great Traditions of Christian Faith. New York: HarperCollins, 1998. (*Chapter 1*)
- Law, Eric. The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993. (*Introduction, chapters 1-3*)
- Peck, M. Scott. The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987. (*Chapter IX*)
- Yee, Russell. Worship On The Way: Exploring Asian North American Christian experience. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2012. (*Chapter 4*)

ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING SCALE

Course assignments

1. Read all "required texts" listed above. Completion of the assignment is to be submitted via Canvas "Assignments" by Dec 8.
2. Participate in 2 sessions of spiritual direction. Completion of the assignment is to be submitted via Canvas "Assignments" by giving the dates of the spiritual direction sessions and the spiritual director's name. Due Dec 8. (Contact Sue Braun for help in contacting a spiritual director.)
3. Submit a reflection paper on the student's own cultural and spiritual autobiography. See below for further guidelines and submission instructions. Due Dec 8.
4. Participate in a Christian worship service of a group/tradition unfamiliar to the student and submit an observation and analysis paper reflecting on the experience. See below for further guidelines and submission instructions. Due Dec 8.
5. Attend all class sessions and online group discussions. The class will be divided into "exploration groups" of 4 students (no more than 5) for two one-hour group discussion sessions.
 - a. In the first discussion session students will explore their own cultural backgrounds. Use Lanier's dimensions (e.g., relationship v task orientation) to describe if they're more hot- or cold-climate. A person may be more hot-climate in some dimensions, more cold-climate in others. In the discussion, consider the influence of early childhood experiences, the social environment in one's family, neighborhood, school and/or church. How much influence might be attributed to personality or temperament?
 - b. In the second discussion session students will explore their own spiritual traditions. Use Foster's 6 streams to describe and rank each person's top 3 streams. Consider the influence of childhood caregivers on spiritual formation: what was each person taught in childhood about how to approach God? Have each person share likes and dislikes about



their childhood faith tradition and religious experiences. What has each person kept or rejected from their childhood traditions? Why?

Attendance is to be recorded via Canvas "Assignments" by giving the date and time of the group discussion session. Material from these discussions will help students place their own cultural and faith tradition into a broader context as they write their reflection papers.

Guidelines for reflection papers

Papers are to be 4.5-5 pages in length, 12 point font, 1 inch margins, single-spaced. Submissions are to be made via Canvas "Assignments", as a Word document or PDF.

Cultural and spiritual autobiography

This paper is an exercise in reflecting on the origins of one's own culture and faith tradition. The paper should follow this general format:

- What racial, ethnic or national identity labels did you grow up with? Who reinforced these categories and how?
- How old were you when you realized that you were of a particular race, ethnicity or nationality? What were the circumstances of this realization?
- What racial, ethnic or national identity labels do you prefer to use now? How did this preference develop?
- Would you describe yourself as more hot-climate or cold-climate? Why? Use the dimensions of culture described by Lanier as a framework for your description. How do you think you became this way?
- Using Foster's "six streams", rank the top three Christian spiritualities (approaches to God) that are most comfortable for you. How did this come about? What people or events were formative in shaping your spirituality?
- Describe your current faith community. What is its name? Where is it located? Give a brief description of its history. Describe the variety of members of the faith community and your own role in the community.
- What about your current faith community appeals to you? What would you like to change?
- Reflect on how your race, ethnicity or nationality has influenced your choice of faith community. Compare or contrast your current faith community with your cultural roots and your cultural preferences.

Observation and analysis of an unfamiliar Christian worship service

The intention of this experience is to get students out of their comfort zones by participating in the Christian worship of a cultural group and/or Christian spiritual tradition that is unfamiliar. The paper should follow this general format:

- Give the name and address of the church you attended and the date and time of the worship service.
- Describe the nationalities, ethnicities and/or socioeconomic groups represented at the worship service.
- Describe the type of worship service, first using the nomenclature of the group, then offering your own "translation" of the nomenclature, i.e., your understanding of the terms used.
- Give a brief summary of the order of worship and the rituals performed.



- Describe what felt familiar to you and what it signified to those who were present.
- Describe what made you uncomfortable and why. Consider cultural differences (hot-climate v cold-climate). Contrast how you are used to doing things with how things were done by the group you visited. Why did this group do things differently from what you are used to?
- Consider which streams of Christian spirituality are familiar to you and which are unfamiliar. Contrast the familiar practices of your stream(s) of Christian spirituality with what you experienced. What did this group emphasize in their approach to God that was different from the approach you are used to?
- Conclude by describing possible benefits of regularly worshiping in the way of the group that you observed.

Grading scale

This course is pass/fail. Each of the above “course assignments” is worth 20 points: completing the reading, completing 2 spiritual direction sessions, two reflection papers, attendance and participation in class and discussion group sessions. 75 points is required to pass.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.

For additional information, see the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#), pp. 25–26.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

TITLE IX



Students who believe they may have experienced sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking should contact the Title IX Coordinator (773) 244-5664 or TitleIX@northpark.edu to learn more about reporting options, resources, and support services.

As members of the North Park faculty, we are concerned about the well-being and development of our students and are available to discuss any concerns. Faculty members are private resources meaning we are legally obligated to share information about the behavior reported above with the University's Title IX coordinator. If you are unsure whether you want your concerns disclosed to the Title IX Coordinator, we encourage you to contact Counseling Support Services at (773) 244-4897 or counseling@northpark.edu.

Please refer to North Park's [Safe Community](#) site for reporting, contact information, and further details.

INCOMPLETE GRADES

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as "I" until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of "I" will automatically be changed to "F." For the full policy, see page 15 of the [Seminary Academic Catalog](#).

COURSE SCHEDULE

August 28-Sept 19

- Completing the assigned reading before the class sessions begin will give the student a basic familiarity with terminology and concepts that will aid in processing the material to be covered during the class sessions.
- Each student is to participate in two sessions of spiritual direction by Dec 8. If the student does not have a spiritual director prior to the start of the term the seminary can help identify potential directors. It is up to the student to arrange with a director for two sessions of spiritual direction that will be completed by Dec 8.

Sept 20 in-person classroom session 6:00 - 9:00 pm

Introduction to spiritual direction

Ways that people approach God: an introduction to Christian spiritualities

Sept 21 in-person classroom session 6:00 - 9:00 pm PT

Describing differences: an introduction to cultural differences

Sept 30 online synchronous classroom session 9:00 am - 4:00 pm PT

Responding to cultural differences

- An introduction to the developmental approach to intercultural encounters

- Understanding the Intercultural Development Continuum

Oct 1 - Oct 27

The class will be divided into “exploration groups” of 4 (no more than 5) for two one-hour sessions discussing each other’s 1) cultural and 2) spiritual contexts. These discussions will help students to process their own experiences in preparation for writing their “cultural and spiritual autobiography” reflection papers. It is recommended that these meetings take place by Oct 29 so that the students have a full free month to write their reflection papers.

It is recommended that students have participated in a worship service of a group/tradition that is unfamiliar to them by Oct 27 so that there is time to reflect on the experience and write the observation/analysis paper that is due by Dec 8.

Oct 27 online synchronous final class session 4:00 - 6:00 pm PT

- Biblical examples of intercultural development
- Questions re: reflection papers

Dec 8

- Both reflection papers are due by midnight Central Time (10:00 pm PT) via Canvas.
- The reports on completing the reading assignments, attending the Exploration Group sessions, and the report on the sessions of spiritual direction are to be submitted by midnight Central Time (10:00 pm PT) via Canvas “Assignments”.