



**SPFM 7190 Sacred Portals: Drawing Closer to Christ**

2023 Fall Semester, Online prework beginning August 28, 2023

Asynchronous online sessions, In person workshops September 12-13, 2023

1 credit hour

Syllabus

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

Rev. Kari Lindholm-Johnson, Adjunct Instructor and Guest lecturer  
(Main Instructor)

[Klindholm-johnson@northpark.edu](mailto:Klindholm-johnson@northpark.edu)

Cell (872) 232-1591 (for urgent matters)

Rev. Dr. Paul H. de Neui, Professor of Missiology and Intercultural Studies  
(Assisting in class)

[pdeneui@northpark.edu](mailto:pdeneui@northpark.edu)

Office (773) 244-6230

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will explore icons as a method of prayer. We will review personal, corporate, historical, intercultural, and current practices using icons. This will be achieved through reading, silence, private meditation, and the exercise of writing (painting) one's own icon. Artistic ability is not a requirement. The instructor will guide students through this spiritual pilgrimage in a group journey that students will then be able to share with others. Enrollment limited to 15.

Note: There will be an additional cost of \$50.00 (beyond tuition and books) for supplies necessary for successful completion of the icon.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of the class participants will:

- Recognize the historic and intercultural roles of icons in personal and corporate Christian mission and ministry through reading and reflection
- Observe existing imagery used in the students' sacred spaces of worship and ministry and as depicted on social media and websites related to the students' ministry
- Write (paint) an icon participating with God's interaction in life as a spiritual discipline
- Create a means in which the icon may be shared with others or used personally as a vehicle to deepening prayer.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

John of Damascus. *On the Divine Images: 3 Apologies Against Those Who Attack the Divine Images*. St Vladimirs Seminary Pr; 1997. ISBN 978-0913836620.

Martin, Linette. *Sacred Doorways: A Beginners Guide to Icons*. Paraclete Printing; 2002. ISBN 978-1557253071.

Malham, Joseph. *Drawing Closer to Christ: A Self-Guided Icon Retreat*. (2017) Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press. ISBN 978-1594717574.

### **ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING**

St. Theodore the Studite. *On the Holy Icons*. (2001) New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.

Translated by Catharine P. Roth.

*Canons of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (787 CE)*. Available online from many sites. Any translation acceptable.

Other learning materials will be provided in Canvas.

### **LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

- **Preparatory Reading/Discussion** – Students will read and reflect upon the assigned readings as described in Canvas, highlighting the historic and intercultural roles of icons in personal and corporate Christian mission and ministry. Students will write a 750 word analysis following the detailed instructions and grading rubric posted in Canvas. Initial post due online by midnight central time Sunday, September 3. Online response to two others in the class due online by midnight central time Friday, September 8. 25% of the course grade
- **Observation Exercise** – Using the rubric provided in Canvas, students will observe the existing imagery they find in the spaces where they presently worship and what is depicted on the social media and websites related to their worship location and/or ministry. Students will write a 750 word analysis following the detailed instructions and grading rubric posted in Canvas. Initial post due online by midnight central time Sunday, September 10. Online response to two others in the class due online by midnight central time Friday September 15. 25% of the course grade
- **Praxis/Prayer** - Building upon the insights found in the first two learning activities students will spend two days (Sept 12, 9 am to 5 pm and Sept 13, 8 am to 5 pm) together in the classroom writing (painting) an icon participating with God's interaction in life as a spiritual discipline. Praxis sessions will alternate between instructors' directions for both group and individual times for silence and private reflection, and the instructors expounding upon the meaning of each phase of this journey, as well as meaning of gesture, and color. Even though the icon may not be completed by the end of the last session, students will have sufficient time to complete the work by the end of the second day. This activity will be graded upon participation, not on artistic quality. 25% of the course grade
- **Creating the Means** - Following the completion of the icon, create a means in which the icon may be shared with others or used personally as a vehicle to deepening prayer. No longer solely yours, it is now meant to go forth into the world, not as an object unto itself but as a sign and symbol of Christ's abiding presence as a "portal" of prayer. This "means" (choose one) can be crafted as 1) a time of group prayer, 2) a tentative schedule for a personal retreat inviting the use of the icon as a means of prayer, or 3) a gathering conducted for a particular need, such as a service of healing, of liberation, of joy, lament, or comfort. Describe how it invites entrance into the mystery of God. Include personal reflections on the experience in your writing as well as the required

texts and other learning materials. This is to be approximately three pages in length (750 words minimum) and posted on Canvas with a picture of your final icon by midnight central time Friday, October 13, 2023. 25% of the course grade

**Spiritual Direction.** All NPTS spiritual formation courses require students to arrange a meeting with a spiritual director twice within the semester. Students are responsible for making this connection. To arrange scheduling contact Sue Braun at [sbraun@northpark.edu](mailto:sbraun@northpark.edu).

Preparatory Reading/Discussion	25% of course grade
Observation Exercise	25% of course grade
Praxis/Prayer	25% of course grade
Creating a Means	25% of course grade
Total	100% of course grade

Sacred Portals is a Pass/No pass course. A grade of Pass includes student completion of all of the above as well as attendance at each session. No absences in the two days of praxis allowed.

### **ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES**

#### **CANVAS**

For any questions or concerns about Canvas please open an online Helpdesk ticket.

#### **WRITING FORMAT**

Use the Turabian style for references in your writing. Here is a link to writing handbook for NPTS. Refer to it for your questions regarding formatting: <https://assets.northpark.edu/wp-content/uploads/20200717101927/Writing-Handbook-2020-2021.pdf>

#### **NETIQUETTE**

Use proper online “netiquette” when posting online. Use your best academic writing skills and avoid sarcasm, emoticons, abbreviations or writing in CAPITAL LETTERS.

#### **INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE**

Course participants are encouraged to follow the Statement of Inclusive Language from the Board of Publication Policy of the Evangelical Covenant Church which states, “We are committed to being inclusive in language and imagery in an effort to eliminate prejudice, whether gender, racial, ethnic, national, religious, denominational, cultural, or physical. This way of proceeding in no manner seeks to deny personal identity; rather, it guards against any use of word or phrase that tends to exclude people.” Consider how you can best incorporate inclusive language into all of your communication (written and oral) during the course particularly in your references to God and to humanity.

#### **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](#).

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY AND PLAGIARISM**

The community at North Park University promotes a commitment to integrity in all areas of life. In the case of breaches of academic honesty such as plagiarism or cheating on examinations, the matter will be reported to the Dean of Faculty/Academic Dean. Students should be advised that normally in cases of academic dishonesty or plagiarism the penalty can range from receiving a failing grade for the assignment to expulsion from the seminary. For the full policy, please see the seminary academic catalog.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

North Park is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. If you anticipate or experience any barriers to learning in this class related to a disability, contact the Center for Student Engagement by email [ada@northpark.edu](mailto:ada@northpark.edu) or phone at 773-244-5737 to schedule an appointment with the Learning Specialist. You can also stop by The Center for Student Engagement, located on the first floor of the Johnson Center.

### **HARASSMENT POLICY AND TITLE IX**

Students who believe they have been harassed, discriminated against, or involved in sexual violence should contact the Dean of Students (773-244-6222) or Director of Human Resources (773-244-5601) for information about campus resources and support services, including confidential counseling 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 are legally obligated to share information with the University’s Title IX coordinator in certain situations to help ensure that the student’s safety and welfare is being addressed, consistent with the requirements of the law. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of sexual assault, relational/domestic violence, and stalking. Please refer to North Park’s Safe Community site (<http://www.northpark.edu/Campus-Life-and-Services/Safe-Community>) for contact information and further details.



**COURSE SCHEDULE**

<b>Starting Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assessments and due dates</b>
August 28 Online	<b>Preparatory Reading/Discussion</b>	Students will write a 750 word analysis following the detailed instructions and grading rubric posted in Canvas. Initial post due online by midnight central time Sunday September 3. Online response to two others in the class due online by midnight central time Friday September 8.
September 2 Online	<b>Observation Exercise</b> (Start observing Sundays August 27, Sept 3 and 10)	Students will write a 750 word analysis following the detailed instructions and grading rubric posted in Canvas. Initial post due online by midnight central time Sunday September 10. Online response to two others in the class due online by midnight central time Friday September 15.
September 12 9 am to 5 pm Main Campus	<b>Praxis/Prayer</b> – Classroom workshop Day 1, writing (painting) the icon combined with discussion of theological points of the creation process.	Be prepared to share the experience of each day. This activity will be graded upon participation, not on artistic quality.
September 13 8 am to 5 pm Main Campus	<b>Praxis/Prayer</b> – Classroom workshop Day 2, writing (painting) the icon combined with discussion of theological points of the creation process.	Be prepared to share the experience of each day. This activity will be graded upon participation, not on artistic quality.
September 14 Online	<b>Creating a Means</b> See description above	Describe the proposed means in 750 words minimum and post in Canvas with a picture of your final icon by midnight central time Friday October 13, 2023. Responding to others in class is optional.