



**NORTH PARK**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## **SPFM 5211 Intercultural Spirituality**

North Park Theological Seminary

Fall 2025 Semester

August 25 - December 12, 2025

Class meeting dates/times:

September 9, 10, 11, 8:00 am-5:00 pm

1 credit hour, pass/fail

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

Rev. Stephen Wong, PhD

Contact: [snwong@northpark.edu](mailto: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. Stages of intercultural development will be used as a lens for understanding the development of Christian ethics in the New Testament.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course students will:

- Be able to briefly describe the primary 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
- 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**

Foster, Richard J. Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith. New York: Harper Collins, 2001 (*read Introduction and chapter 1 prior to class sessions*)

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.

Richards, E. Randolph, and O'Brien, Brandon J. Misreading Scripture With Western Eyes. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013. (*required portions: Introduction, pp. 9-24; "Just words?" pp. 69-90; "Captain of my soul" pp. 94-111; "Have you no shame?" pp. 112-135; "Sand through the hourglass" pp. 136-152; Conclusion pp. 211-218. See Reading/Viewing Guide for more specific reading assignments*)

### **Excerpts available in Canvas as PDF files**

Armas, Kat. Abuelita Faith: What Women on the Margins Teach Us about Wisdom, Persistence, and Strength. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2021. (*chapter 4*)

Bailey, Kenneth E. Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2008. (*Chapter 7*)

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*)

Romero, Robert Chao. Brown Church: Five Centuries of Latina/o Social Justice, theology, and Identity. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020. (*Chapter 1*)

Taylor, Barbara Brown. Leaving Church: A Memoir of Faith. New York: HarperCollins, 2006. (*chapter 15*)

Wildman, Terry M. (editor). First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2021. (*Prologue*)

Yee, Russell. Worship On The Way: Exploring Asian North American Christian experience. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2012. (*Chapter 4*)

### **Covenant Resources**

[The Six Fold Test](#) (2019)

### **Required viewing/listening**

"Brick by Brick", episode 1 (25 minutes) "How I got over", AND Campaign (documentary series on the origins of historically black denominations), <https://andcampaign.org/how-i-got-over/>.

Dubner, Stephen J. "The Pros and Cons of America's (Extreme) Individualism." Freakonomics Radio, episode 470, July 21, 2021. <https://freakonomics.com/podcast/the-pros-and-cons-of-americas-extreme-individualism-ep-470-2/>

## **ASSESSMENTS AND GRADING SCALE**

### **Course assignments**

1. Read all "required texts" and view/listen to all "required viewing/listening" listed above. Completion of the assignment is to be submitted via Canvas "Assignments" by the end of the day on September 9.
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 December 5. (Contact Sue Braun for help in contacting a spiritual director.)



3. 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 December 5.
4. Attend all class sessions
5. Attend all 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. Completing these sessions by the end of October will allow for reflections from the discussions to be included in the paper due on December 6.

**Guidelines for paper: observation and analysis of an unfamiliar Christian worship service**

This paper is 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.

The intention of this experience is to get students out of their comfort zones by participating in person 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.
- Use several paragraphs to describe what you thought about the group prior to attending the worship service. This could have to do with the stream(s) of Christian spirituality that they embodied as well as your assumptions about their ethnic/cultural group. Why were you looking forward to (or not looking forward to) attending this worship service? What did you think would make you uncomfortable?
- 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? What surprised you? What was helpful or not for your own approach to God?
- Conclude with several paragraphs describing how your understanding of this stream(s) of Christian spirituality has changed and what you now see as benefits of regularly worshiping using the practices 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, the observation/analysis paper, attendance and participation in class, and attendance of exploration group sessions. 75 points is required to pass.

### **ADDITIONAL COURSE GUIDELINES**

Since this is an intensive course, students must attend all class sessions. All of the required reading/viewing/listening assignments must be completed prior to the class sessions in order to gain an initial familiarity with categories and nomenclature that will be used in class sessions. Late papers will not be accepted. Please see the Student Writing Handbook for help with the use of inclusive language.

In hyflex classrooms, our learning community combines in-person students and students joining the classroom by Zoom. Toward cultivating a respectful, accessible environment for mutual learning, we commit to the following:

- All students are expected to come prepared for active, informed participation.
- Students attending virtually: Think of your physical space as an extension of the classroom. Ensure that you are in a private, stable location that is free of visual and audio distractions. It's important that we all respect the integrity of classroom discussion. (For this same reason, please do not record class sessions or take screenshots without permission.) Please keep your camera and microphone on through the class session. Consider purchasing a microphone/headset to improve the quality of your sound. (Attendance in class assumes that you are present in this way.)
- Students attending in person: Remember that the class and classroom extend to colleagues attending virtually; it's important to remain visible as well. Please engage the full learning community. Registering for the campus section entails a commitment to joining the class in person. If you are too sick to come in person, or if you have an unavoidable scheduling conflict, please use one of your excused absences for the semester rather than joining by Zoom.

Attendance: Only two hours of class sessions can be missed without penalty to your final grade; five hours of absence will result in failure.

### **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.
5. Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.

For additional information, see the Seminary Academic Catalog.

## **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 & EQUITY**

In accordance with Title IX, North Park employees who become aware of any incident of discrimination, harassment or retaliation based on sex, gender, including pregnancy or related medical conditions, and other protected classes are required by law to notify North Park University's Title IX & Equity Team by submitting a report [here](#). The Title IX Coordinator will respond and manage concerns about students. The Senior Director of Human Resources and Deputy Title IX Coordinator will respond and manage concerns about employees. More information can be obtained here: [NPU's Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#).

## **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 coursework 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 the Seminary Academic Catalog.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Before Sept 9: Pre-class reading, arranging for spiritual direction**

- 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 December 6. 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 December 6.

**Sept 9 in-person classroom session 9:00 am - 5:00 pm**

Ways that people approach God: an introduction to Christian spiritualities

**Sept 9**

Report on completing the pre-class reading by midnight via Assignments.

**Sept 10 in-person classroom session 9:00 am - 5:00 pm**

Describing differences: an introduction to cultural differences

Three worldviews: another lens for viewing spirituality and culture

**Sept 11 in-person classroom session 9:00 am - 5:00 pm**

Responding to cultural differences

- An introduction to the developmental approach to intercultural encounters
- Understanding the Intercultural Development Continuum

Reflections on the intersection of development, culture and spirituality

- Biblical examples of intercultural development
- Questions re: unfamiliar worship service observation/analysis paper

**Sept 12-Oct 31**

The class will be divided into “exploration groups” of 4 members (no more than 5) for two one-hour sessions discussing each other’s cultural and spiritual development. These discussions will help students to process their own experiences in preparation for writing their unfamiliar worship service observation/analysis paper. These meetings are to take place by October 31 so that the students have a full month free to write their observation/analysis paper.

It is recommended that students have participated in a worship service of a group/tradition that is unfamiliar to them by October 31 so that there is time to reflect on the experience and write the observation/analysis paper that is due by December 6.

**Dec 6**

- Observation/analysis paper is due by midnight Central Time via Canvas.
- The reports on participating in the Exploration Group sessions, and on engaging in 2 sessions of spiritual direction are to be submitted by midnight Central Time via Canvas “Assignments”.