

Christian Post-Graduate School  
DMin cohort (three year program in spiritual  
direction/formation)  
one of four courses per year and  
2 courses per half year (@120-140 hrs per course)  
two months reading > residency > assignments

## **The Models and Ministry of Spiritual Formation 0902 (MMSF 0902)**

**Course Description** - This class is designed to be one of the first courses in a Doctor of Ministry program in spiritual formation or another similar specialization. It is designed to provide a survey of models of Christian spiritual formation along with a few practical exercises appropriate to the training of people who may find something of a niche, perhaps after some experience of ministry, in spiritual direction, member care or other similar relationships. This course, in keeping with many D.Min programs, assumes that the students (1) already have some experience in Christian ministry, (2) are actively--as part of the program--investing some time in spiritual care giving of some sort, and (3) that this care giving is at some point during the program subject to supervision. Consequently, MMSF 0902 does not need to address this element of the training of the practical ministry of spiritual formation. Rather, this class aims to explore how various Christians view spiritual formation and how the broad yet biblical approach of *A Guide to Christian Spiritual Formation* can serve as a helpful guide to both personal devotion and community growth in Christ.

**Learning Outcomes:** Upon completing this course the student should be able to

1. Demonstrate a sufficient familiarity with a few models of interpreting Christian spirituality and spiritual formation that you can reproduce the basic frameworks in your own words.
2. Express appreciation for context and diversity in the practice of spiritual formation.
3. Show comprehension of the stages and elements of Christian transformation and spiritual formation through using these categories in case examples of spiritual direction or other similar relationship.
4. Apply the basic principles of the task and ministry of spiritual formation to your own life and that of a significant personal sphere of influence with regard to prayer, life together, personal integrity, or mission.

**Policies:** (grading, late work, attendance, plagiarism and so on) - see school policy handbook

**Required Resources** (@1000 pages total):

Howard, Evan B. *A Guide to Christian Spiritual Formation: How Scripture, Spirit, Community, and Mission Shape Our Souls* (Baker, 2018), ISBN-13 978-0801097805. [280 pages] (=GCSF)

Theophan the Recluse, *The Path to Salvation: A Manual of Spiritual Transformation* (St. Pasius Abbey, Forestville, CA: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1996). [a Russian orthodox model] [250 pages read] (=PTS)

Alternate book -

either Jordan Aumann, *Spiritual Theology* (Sheed and Ward, 1980), ISBN 0 7220 8518 4 [Roman Catholic, 400 pages]; Paul Pettit, ed., *Foundations of Spiritual Formation: A Community Approach to Becoming Like Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI, Kregel Publications, 2008), ISBN 978-8254-3469-3 [conservative evangelical, 275 pages]; or Doug Pagitt, *Church Re-Imagined: The*

*Spiritual Formation of People in Communities of Faith* (Zondervan, 2005), ISBN 978-310269755 [emerging or "progressive" evangelical, 240 pages]. My choice of which book I would assign depends on the institution where I might be teaching and the needs of the student population.

Moon, W. Jay, *Intercultural Discipleship: Learning from Global Approaches to Spiritual Formation* (Baker Academic, 2017), ISBN 9780801098499.

**Assignments** (For details of the assignments, see the sample assignments associated with *A Guide to Christian Spiritual Formation*):

*Pre-Residency* (to be submitted one week prior to the residency) - The reading of all the required reading must be done before the class sessions in order to be prepared for profitable conversation. Each student should complete an 750-1000 word book review each for *Path to Salvation* and the Alternate book chosen prior to attending the residency. If you are unfamiliar with how to write an academic book review, please consult <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/book-reviews/> and <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/704/1/>. I am interested in seeing summary of content, analysis and critique, and some element of your own personal/spiritual response. With regard to *Intercultural Discipleship*, students are to answer at least two questions for each of the "Case Studies" where there are questions for "Reflection and Discussion" provided. With regard to *A Guide to Christian Spiritual Formation* students are to respond to one of the "Going Further" questions at the end of each chapter.

*During Residency, Class Participation* - This is a class where dialogue integrating the theoretical and the practical is vital. Students must come to class (whether in residence or in a distance education format) demonstrating both their grasp of the readings and their integration of the insights with their own life and ministry.

*Post-Residency: Personal and Ministry Formation Plan* (to be submitted one month following the end of the residency) - Each student must articulate, in @ 2500 words, both a personal and a ministry formation plan incorporating the elements of Christian spiritual formation as presented in *A Guide for Christian Spiritual Formation*. The personal plan may simply be a revised version of the student's current Rule of Life as adapted for the assignment. The ministry plan must express a strategy for nourishing the spiritual life of a community of faith with which the student is currently engaged. Special arrangements can be made if this is not possible.

*Post-Residency: Research Paper* (to be submitted @75 days after following the end of the residency) - The research paper provides an opportunity for the student to explore a topic that is both relevant to the course and is of interest to the life and/or ministry of the student. This 4000-6000 word paper should meet the standards of doctoral research and should further the trajectory of the students progress toward the completion of their doctoral project and ministry more generally, particularly with regard to this initial survey of spiritual formation.

*Post-Residency: Personal and Ministry Formation Plan Review* - (to be submitted @six months following the end of the residency) - Our personal and ministry plans improve through experiment and review. To support this kind of improvement, each student will submit a five-month review of their personal and ministry formation plans. This 2500-word review will assess the "success" of both plans, in dialogue with the elements of Christian spiritual formation, and will recommend changes as needed

for the foreseeable season of life. Students need not re-submit their plans, but only need to describe changes in sufficient detail so that the instructor can understand.

**Residency Schedule** (assuming eight, 3 1/2 hour sessions) - D. Min. residencies are conducted with a combination of lecture and seminar format.

### **Session One - Why Individuals and Communities Need Spiritual Formation**

*Lecture/InClass -*

- A few stories of formation indicating the need.
- Exercise in formation and "getting to know" the group (perhaps the first time this cohort has met) - making a modeling clay sculpture representing your self then sharing in small group
- lecture about the nature of formation (using clay metaphor)
- review of the class, texts and so on
- contemplative exercise in *Spirit-ual* formation. Attending to the Holy Spirit.

### **Session Two - The Big Story of Christian Spiritual Formation**

*Lecture/InClass -*

- Exercise - Summarize, in 25 words or less, the Gospel
- More detailed survey of the Scriptures, covering each basic section.
- Comparison of how different models interpret Scripture and identify the Gospel or the Big Story (draw from the various texts)
- Theology and Spiritual formation (how we understand God)
- The Mandates of Scripture and formation (all things new)
- dialogue - What was the gospel story you were raised within? How did it affect your Christian spiritual formation?

### **Session Three - Experience and Transformation**

*Lecture/InClass -*

- Ask: *What* is the object of formation? What is being influenced (what is the clay)?
- Human experience - explore how each model understands the human person
- The breadth of human experience and the richness of Christian spiritual formation
- Develop material from *The Brazos Introduction to Christian Spirituality* and the "Metaphysics of Power" essay here.
- Small groups - Reflection on a recent individual or community formational event. Consider what parts of human experience were involved
- Theologies of "sin" and "salvation" - compare models.
- The movement from our view of transformation to our view of formation
- Ask: Christian spiritual formation - How do we participate intentionally in our own salvation, formation, sanctification . . . whatever our model?
- Give initial overview of final research paper assignment so students can be thinking of the topic through the sessions.

### **Session Four - The Contexts, Agents, Tasks**

*Lecture/InClass -*

- Review "Christian growth" models in recent history
- Summarize the task of Christian spiritual formation presented in GCSF
- Together compare military boot camp, college campus education and monastic formation

- Communicate the importance of context - *the appropriate*, elicit examples from people's ministry experience
- Discussion on culture and diversity. Use the models presented in *Intercultural Discipleship* to discuss formation in the contexts of home, church, network, intentional community
- Identify the primary agents of formation in the different models for the course, and develop the theology of the Holy Spirit
- Others as agents - spiritual direction. Gather the experience of the students in receiving and/or giving direction. Discuss definitions, share positive and negative experiences. What does it mean for us to allow another "agency" in our spiritual formation?

### **Session Five - The Means of Christian Spiritual Formation**

#### *Lecture/InClass -*

- Group reflection on personal (and corporate) stories of means
- Review means and models: which means for which models and why?
- Exercise - brief liturgy. Then discuss how liturgy and "worship services" (however charismatic or liturgical) act as means for formation.
- Review disciplines, community, Spirit, and trials, clarifying how they interrelate in practice
- Discuss: Legalisms and Quietisms I have known
- Teach the positive psychology of habit change
- Teach the positive psychology of grit and the idea of becoming "antifragile" in trials.
- Exercise - alone and then discuss in small groups: brainstorm in your own context the design of an appropriate ascetical regimen.

### **Week Six - Life of Prayer, Life Together**

#### *Lecture/InClass -*

- Love God, Love Neighbor - important to all models of formation
- Discuss together our experiences of prayer and those we see in our ministries
- Background of Christian spiritual formation and history of the development of Christian thought about perfection and prayer in post-16th century Roman Catholicism (and think about our models)
- Is Christian spiritual formation really all about our development in prayer?
- Review key elements of prayer (speaking, listening, space), types and ways.
- Synthesize aspects of prayer from the different models into a single, more comprehensive view of ongoing relationship with God.
- If there is a volunteer, perhaps you can facilitate some kind of class "fishbowl" experience where one student can share a prayer issue and couple of others can, through a brief spiritual direction-ish conversation, move toward an appropriate next step. Then debrief this experience in class.
- Review changes in "family," "church," and "countermovement" in postmodern culture. What does this mean for a minister serving households, loose communities, networks and the like? What models are especially oriented toward one or another community context?
- Develop and discuss further case studies in applying the task of spiritual formation (considering contexts, agents, means and so on), perhaps case studies suggested by the students [have them think about it the day before the session and come prepared to offer one]

### **Session Seven - A Life of Integrity and Mission**

#### *Lecture/InClass -*

- Discussion - How do "who we are" and "what we are about" intersect (in culture, in Christianity)?
- The connection of thought and character and purpose in the history of philosophy. Comparison of our models of formation.
- Scripture on doctrine, ethics and mission
- Conclusion - mission as formation, formation into mission
- Critique of errors of religion and the development of "true religion." Implications for the task of formation. How do we recognize when (or where) religion is not "true" and how do we address it?
- When (and how) do healing, deliverance, recovery, etc. fit in? How do we combine coaching, spiritual direction, ordinary pastoral oversight . . . ?
- Discussion of the current missional consensus and implications for the task of formation as ministers with people today (let the class tweak the *St. Cuthbert's* case study)
- Move to brainstorming strategies for forming missional communities (and individuals) of faith.
- Discuss the nature of the personal and ministry formation plan assignment

Consider the following alone and bring to class (perhaps review this the night before this session):

### **Working Notes toward a Group "missional plan"**

1. What is the Mission of God? Compare models
2. How do the specifics of our own circumstances/context intersect with that mission?
3. What might we become/do in order to best cooperate with that mission in the midst of our own real context?
4. What formation is needed in order to step into that "best cooperation"?
5. What kinds of formation might emerge from our missional engagement?

Use the above to devise an experimental project of missional formation and formative mission to explore their relationship in the midst of the concrete practice of an individual or community.

- duration - weeks, months
- aim of experiment - what are you trying to explore
- elements of experiment - variables and procedures (environment, acts, resources . . .)
- evaluation - assessors, review process, implementation, revision . . .

## **Session Eight - A Life of Discernment, A Ministry of Formation**

*Lecture/InClass* -

- Review class so far
- The importance of *the appropriate* has pushed us all along toward the question of discernment - How do we identify the appropriate: that which is more likely of God?
- Love Wisdom: definition, skills (pay attention, ask questions, put into practice)
- Errors of discernment and the ministry of formation (authority, abdication, manual . . .) - Discuss together "Errors of discernment I have seen"
- Present the process of discernment as sketched in *Guide* and developed more fully in *The Brazos Introduction*.
- Apply the process to case studies suggested by the class (another fishbowl?).
- Summarize again the ministry of Christian spiritual formation and the need
- Discuss challenges
- Give opportunity for last Q and A
- Final review of post-residency assignments

- Closing ritual?