



Spirituality Core Questions

Comprehensive Examinations evaluate a student's synthesis of a particular topic, not a particular class taught by a specific professor. There are two questions submitted by the faculty for each core topic.

You will be given a choice of six questions from which you must answer three.

1. The Pontifical Biblical Commission's document, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church" (1994), describes several approaches to the study of scripture besides the standard historical-critical method. Describe the implications of these approaches (synchronic, canonical, narrative, liberation, feminist, psychological, anthropological) for the interpretation of themes in scripture and study of biblical spirituality.
2. How are the themes of covenant, sin, and conversion expressed in scripture? Choosing two of the three themes, develop the exposition with one specific example drawn from each of the following categories of scriptural genre and forms: narrative or biographic (myth, history, gospel, call narrative form), ritual (psalms, hymns), ethical (law code, sermon, epistle, prophetic oracle or vision report), and pedagogical (proverb, dialogue, parable, apothegm). Conclude with a consideration of literary form as a human creation inspired and transformed by divine grace.
3. Using the general definition of Christian Spirituality as the lived experience of Christian belief, compare and contrast both the experience and the concrete expression of the experience of two major spiritualities studied in the course on the History of Western Spirituality. These can be general (i.e., apophatic and kataphatic spirituality, Dominican and Franciscan spirituality) or particular (i.e., Julian of Norwich and *The Cloud of Unknowing*, Ignatius of Loyola and John of the Cross, etc.) Highlight what you regard as enriching for contemporary spirituality.
4. Write an essay presenting and analyzing what you regard as the contribution of both feminist spirituality and the spirituality of liberation. Relate these to the broad tradition and major figures of western Christian Spirituality.
5. What is the meaning of "discernment of spirits" and how can this process help you in making decisions in accordance with "God's will"? Be as concrete and specific as possible in your answers.
6. Discuss the psychological and spiritual components of the process of discernment of the presence and movement of God within your life?
7. What is the basic structure and meaning of Ignatius' rules for discernment? Do these rules for discernment help you? Explain why or why not. What relevance do these rules have in our contemporary world?
8. How do you understand the relationship between spirituality and psychology? What criteria would you use to assess psychological and spiritual maturity? What are some of the hallmarks of mature religious experience?
9. How would you respond to the critique leveled by Freud and others that religion is only infantile wish-fulfillment and projection of the parental relationship? What criteria would you use to assess the healthiness of religious experience? What are some of the pitfalls of religious practice?
10. How is the Church's social teaching (Catholic social doctrine) related to scripture and to an understanding of spirituality?

11. How is action for justice a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel and an essential rather than a peripheral element of an authentic Christian spirituality?
12. Discuss the ways in which ministry and spirituality are related.
13. What is the nature and role of theological method in spirituality?