

Religious Studies Department, Santa Clara University
Fall 2009 M/W 2:15 – 4:00 Kenna 308
Instructor: Jean Molesky-Poz, Ph.D.
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TESP 176 Finding Your Own Spirituality (52168)

Rahner asserts that to speak of the human is to speak of the divine and vice versa. He describes God as the mystery of human experience. For him, then, God is the depth dimension in experiences such as solitude, friendship, community, death, hope and, as such, is the orientation towards the future. Rahner goes so far as to say that loneliness, disappointments and the ingratitude of others can be graced moments because they open us to the transcendent. The silence of God, the toughness of life and the darkness of death can be graced events. This mystery of grace discloses itself as a forgiving nearness, a hidden closeness, our real home, a love, which shares itself, something familiar which we can turn to from the alienation of our own empty and perilous lives. When we are in touch with ourselves authentically, we experience God.

Anne Callahan, RSCJ, *Traditions of Spiritual Guidance* (341)

*Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves . . .
. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some
distant day into the answer.*

Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*, 35.

Course Description: A personal and theological inquiry on one's desire for meaning, integration, and need for belonging, and in that search, the disclosure of the self and encounter with the Mystery of God. This course intends to give students the tools and processes to think theologically, access their personal lives, and to develop a practical spirituality, which attends to their experience in the ongoing relationship among and between the Absolute Mystery, the human community and the rest of creation. Through theological readings, spiritual praxis, dialogue and reflective writing, students will uncover the transformative and integrative experience of faith, identify and clarify the story and spirituality resonant in their lives. Fulfills Religious Studies (advanced) Core requirement.

Format: Lectures will be employed as a way of introducing (or revisiting) the central tenets of particular theological underpinnings and practices. However, in keeping with the course content and goals, class discussion of readings, reflective activities, dialogue groups, and one's own self-reflection will constitute the primary mode of inquiry. Class discussion will focus on understanding of authors' purposes and intentions as well as how the readings are relevant to, or enrich the individual's understanding of one's own search for meaning, purpose and direction.

Final Evaluation

Attendance, Class Participation & Dialogue Groups (15%)

Daily attendance, preparation and consistent, effective class participation are essential requirements of this class. If illness or circumstances necessitate absence, please notify the professor in advance or within a week of the missed class. Three unexcused absences is a drop in a letter grade. Three late attendances equal one absence. Daily roll is taken at the beginning of class.

It is important that each student assumes responsibility for developing the skills of careful listening and making meaningful contributions in a manner befitting collaborative scholarly inquiry. While each class will include lecture, there will be ample time for your informed oral questions and remarks and small-group work, and these too will factor into class participation. Occasional quizzes will be given at the start of class to make sure that you're keeping up with the reading.

During the second week of class, you will begin working in dialogue group of four students. You will work with this group regularly in in-class sessions. (15% of your grade: 10% for your individual contribution).

Midterms and Quizzes (35%)

There is one midterm (25%) scheduled for this course, as well as occasional announced and unannounced quizzes (10%).

Written Assignments (50%)

- **Spiritual Autobiography Tending to Absolute Mystery (25%)** Due Week Six.
What questions am I living through my life? Thematic exploration of spiritual experiences through childhood, adolescence, friendships, and a projection into the future. The aim is to tend to one's conscious and intentional movement, transformation, and integration through one's questions and spiritual journey through the lens of theological anthropology.
- **PR Ongoing Reflective Writing:** "For your eyes only" is a reflective writing of your responses to assignments, meditation, spiritual praxis, and conversations in a blank book. You may share what you feel comfortable sharing in your dialogue groups. You must honor one another's boundaries in sharing. This will be not collected, but you will be working out of this most every day; this will be the source of your material for your autobiography.
- **The Integral Life and Spiritual Praxis: Liturgical/Meditative Practice and Engaged Spirituality:** (25%) Due Week Ten. Guidelines TBA.

In sum, final grades will be based on the following criteria:

Class participation (15%)

Attendance (5%)

Participation & dialogue groups (10%)

Midterm and quizzes (35%)

Midterm 25%

Quizzes 10%

Written Assignments (50%)

Spiritual autobiography, through lens of theological anthropology (25%)

Living the Integral Life and Engaged Spirituality (25%)

Due: 12/9, Wednesday, 1:30PM - 4:30PM

Incompletes, Plagiarism and Cheating. Late papers, make-up exams, or incompletes are not acceptable except under unusual circumstances and with prior permission. Please speak with me in anticipation of a problem. In accordance with the Student Handbook, plagiarism and cheating of any kind are a serious breach of morality and can lead to expulsion.

Texts Required

* Kiechle, Stefan. 2005. *The Art of Discernment: Making Good Decisions*. Ave

* Parachin, Janet. 1999. *Engaged Spirituality*. St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press.

* Rahner, *Spiritual Writings*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004.

* Shannon, Maggy 2001. *The Way We Pray*. Berkeley, CA; Conari Press. 1-57324-571-2

E-Res password: bestill

(Please bring a copy of all articles from E-RES, as we will be doing close reading and discussion of the texts).

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Week One (Sept 21-23) **At What Horizon Do We Stand?**

M Orientation, Student Inventory, Introductions.

We begin by examining our (humanity's and our personal) place in the cosmos. We ask: At what horizon do we stand? This context will help us begin to question. What is the human experience of consciousness, inquiry and dialogic activity in the world? We are the questioners. Where are we in history? How do we experience Absolute Mystery? Introduction to: Bernard Lonergan: Transcendental Method of Inquiry.

Video: *A Still, Small Voice* #2355 (first 10 minutes)
Alain de boton: A Kinder, gentler philosophy of success
http://www.ted.com/talks/alain_de_botton_a_kinder_gentler_philosophy_of_success.html

Unit One: The Human Person in Relation to the Absolute Mystery

W Human Experience is the Starting Point

The Human Person as Subject and Person, as Inquirer in Search of Meaning

Theological anthropology asks the question: Who is the human person in relation to the Absolute Mystery, and more specifically, who is the human person in the field of spirituality. The two mentors for today are Karl Rahner and Viktor Frankl. Karl Rahner, a Catholic theologian, writes that, "We are historical in the concrete sense of a human history. We are transcendental in the sense that we are oriented beyond oneself toward Absolute Mystery at the source, sustainer, and final perfection of one's existence." Viktor Frankl, Jewish and founder of logotherapy, focused on what he felt was most fundamental in human persons: "the will to meaning."

Erismann, "Viktor Frankl Meets Karl Rahner: Two Similar Anthropologies," 25-33. E-RES

Who are Karl Rahner and Viktor Frankl? That is, it is always critical to understand the social location of the writer. What is each writer's concern about the modern person and our difficulties? How are Rahner and Frankl's contributions on the humanity as person and subject, as transcendent being, and as responsible and free similar? How are they different? I suggest you outline the article, so you can compare and contrast the contributions of Rahner and Frankl. (Please take careful and thorough attention to Rahner and Frankl as they are the foundation for scaffolding of our future work). Identify a line, a paragraph, or an idea that you want to explore within the context of today's class.

Shannon, Foreword, xi-xiii; Introduction xv-xviii. Body Prayer, 21-25; Meditation and Breathing Exercises, 114-118.

Week Two (Sept 28-30) Human Experience and the Presence of Mystery

M Theological Anthropology:

The person is spirit insofar as he or she is conscious of himself or herself as one who lives in the presence of God and whose whole being is oriented toward God. The person is matter insofar as she or he is an individual whose concreteness as an individual is experienced as something inescapably given. Apart from matter, a person cannot even experience the spiritual reality that is present in ourselves and in others. Thus, there is a fundamental reciprocity between matter and spirit. Here we examine the lives of two persons as we investigate their sense of selves as spirit and as matter. PPT: Inquiry into the Sacred: How to Think about the Divine

Parachin, Introduction, pgs. 1-3, Chapter 1 Howard Thurman, and Chapter 3. Simone Weil

1) How does the author define "engaged spirituality?" What are its two conscious and intentional engagements?

2) Read the biographies of Howard Thurman, 9-15; and of Simone Weil, 22-31. For Thurman and Weil, identify each historical context, and any specific events in which s/he experienced the Something Other. Show how s/he, in a specific event of his/her life, processed their experiences through the transcendental method. How did s/he engage his spirituality? What were the effects on his/her life on others?

Building on the scaffolding of Rahner and Frankl's ideas of humanity as person/subject,

as transcendent, and as responsible and free, how do Thurman and Weil exemplify these three aspects in their life stories?

3) Read their words/writings: Thurman, 15-19; Weil 27-31. What are some ways their writings connect to their life stories? Choose one writing from either Weil or Thurman and be prepared to give a reflection on its meaning to the class.

Please bring to class a copy of Bacik, *The Experience of Mystery*. 20-38, from E-RES.

Read for class only Section IV Characteristics of Religious Experience, 36-38. Understand so that you can explain/question the 7 points Bacik makes regarding religion experience, raise specific words and questions (Bloom's taxonomy) as "windows into the text."

W

**The human as open and transcendent: Recognizing Spirit in the World
Experiencing and Recognizing the Sacred: Coming To Our Senses**

Bacik, James. "The Experience of Mystery," *Apologetics and the Eclipse of Mystery*, Notre Dame, University of Notre Dame Press, 1980, 20-36, E-RES.

PR: Write up an experience, when you felt a brush with Something Other, perhaps with the Mystery of God, in your life.

Week Three (Oct 5-7) **Faith as an attitude, stance, and dynamic activity in human lives.**

M

What is faith's relation to spirituality? To religion? To meaning?

Here we investigate the sense of "faith" - and distinguish it from spirituality, religion, and theology. We consider its power and motion in personal lives.

Parks, *Meaning and Faith*, E-Res. DL
Parachin, Chapter 3, Elie Wiesel.

Shannán, *Sacred Scriptures*, 164-168.

How does Parks distinguish between faith, religion, spirituality, belief, etc.? What forms of faith does she identify? What is helpful to you? How does Parks develop faith as a way of describing the deep process by which we become at home in the universe? Identify what is particularly compelling for you. What does she help you see differently? How is her sense of Faith as "power and motion" helpful to you?

How does Elie Wiesel's faith response resonate with Parks' writing on faith betrayed, as suffering, as shipwreck, gladness and amazement? Identify his historical context, and any specific events in which he experienced the Something Other. Show how he, in a specific event of his life, processed his experiences through the transcendental method. How did he engage his spirituality? What were the effects on his life, on others?

W

How do people experience and respond to Absolute Mystery?

"We are historical in the concrete sense of a human history." Rahner's Theological anthropology asks the question: Who is the human person in relation to God, and more specifically, who is the human person in the field of spirituality?. Development of the notion of the person.

Rahner, "Why We Need to Pray," 31-2. Rahner stresses the human person's potential for contact with the Mystery of God in prayer. Why does he say we must pray? What does he say happens when one prays? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

In class film: *Doubt and Faith* after 9/11

Week Four (Oct 12-14) In for the Long Haul: Spirituality as Journey, Process, Development
M Naming, Imaging and Conceptualizing the Absolute Mystery of God
What is the right way to speak about God?

Speech to and about the mystery that surrounds human lives and the universe itself is the key activity of a community of faith. Here we investigate various notions of the image of God and their cultural/historical context. For our times, special focus will be given to ways cosmological, emergent biological, and feminist discourse is shaping our understanding of God and of God's activity in the world. Developing the contemplative consciousness, and to see consciousness as the root of identity. Examining our inner landscapes: Where Am I? How am I? Who am I? PPT: Human Experience of the Sacred

Rahner. God of my Daily Drudge, 45-50; on "Spiritual Discourse, 50-53.

Read Rahner several times if you have to. Be able to explain what Rahner is saying, and your response to specifics in the text, so you can teach it in your group.

W Starting Points: Journeys; Reflection on How Adult Faith Is Formed
Spirituality is the ongoing transformation, which occurs in involved Relationality with the UnConditional. Cohesive mapping of spiritual development (Fowler). Pilgrimages, labyrinths, journeys as practices. Personal life charts. Spiritual Autobiographies assigned.
PPT: the Human Experience of the Sacred: Rahner and Movement

Shannon, Labyrinths and Prayer-Walking, 101-105
Rahner, on Movement, 53-56; on Love, 56-61; Opening the Heart, 75-81
After reading each section of Rahner, identify what Rahner is saying, and your response to specifics in the text.

Parachin, on Joanna Macy, 113-129. Identify her historical context, and any specific events in which she experienced the Something Other. Show how she, in specific events of her life, processed her experiences through the transcendental method. How did she engaged/transformed her spirituality? What were the effects on her life, on others?

Week Five (Oct 19-21)

M Rooted in the East: Taoism/Buddhism as Ways

The interconnectedness, transcendence and fluidity of all things. Mindfulness, awakening, compassion. Video: on Thich Nhat Hanh, GTU

Shannon, Food Meditations, 60; Prayer Beads, 126; Prayer Bowls, 131; Prayer Flags, 142; Prayer Wheels, 149-152.

Parachin, Thich Nhat Hanh, 63-75.
Video: on Thich Nhat Hanh

Walk labyrinth: garden of Center for Spiritual Enlightenment, University and Alameda, Santa Clara.
Journal your experience.

Before reading Kornfield's Spiritual Maturity, what did you understand about Buddhist practices? How did it help you think about a mature spirituality? How does it concur with Rahner's last paragraphs on pg. 33?

Identify Thich Nhat Hanh's historical context, and any specific events in which he experienced the Something Other. Show how he, in specific events of his life, processed his experiences through the

transcendental method. How did he engaged/transformed his spirituality/way of living? What were the effects on his life, on others?

PR #6 Reflective narrative on Where am I? How am I? Who am I?

W Stepping Back, reviewing the landscape

First Midterm

Unit Two: Exploring Spiritual Praxis

Week Six (Oct 26-28) Reading and Understanding Clues to One's Life.

M Discovering and Naming your Gifts.

On the False Self/ Authentic Self

PPT: Spiritual Autobiographies: Answerability, Transformation, Responsibility

Shannon, Centering Prayer, 26-28.

Neafsey, A Sacred Voice is Calling, Chap. 4, Authenticity; 51-70, Passion & Compassion; 71-88. E-RES

After Chapter 4, be able to identify aspects of the false self, of the true self. Where does he say the false self develops? Why? And how does one move toward the true self, toward wholeness and holiness? In chapters 5 & 6 identify a passage, an insight, a quote which you want to introduce for further discussion in your dialogue group.

PR After reaching Chapter 4, write up one incident where you felt most clearly, authentically who you are. What was the context? What made it an experience of authenticity?

W Nature As Encounter with the Sacred/ Ritual as Sacred Time/Space/Movement

Why do we seek solace in creation? How have various people experienced creation as an encounter with the Sacred? How do various faith traditions find in creation a source of life? In what traditions has nature been marginalized/ What are the effects on a people's spirituality? PPT. Nature, Cosmology and Spiritual Praxis

Shannon, Elements, 42-45; Guides, 81-84; Sweat Lodges, 187-190; Vision Quests, 215.

Optional: Brussat on Nature, 125-163, E.Res

PR Nature as teacher, guardian, source of wisdom

Week Seven (Nov 2-4) Spiritual Praxis: The Art of Discernment

M The Work of Integration: Making good personal decisions and choices.

Kieche, Chapters One and Two, 9-46.

Shannon, Shadow Work, 178-181.

Spiritual Autobiographies due.

W Spiritual Praxis: Discernment: The Art of Choosing Well

Discernment is about seeing - as in understanding - the essential things that are invisible to our eyes and ears. Yet with careful, discerning attention, we can learn to recognize signs, which lead us to living in the Mystery, with peace, authenticity, and integrity.

Shannon, Examen of Conscience, 46-49.

Kieche Chapters 3-5, 47-102.

Silf. Consolation and Desolation: How to Recognize Them, E-Res.

How do ideas in Kieche's chapters resonate with Lonergan's, Bakhtin's, Rahner's, or Frankl's theological anthropologies?

Week Eight (Nov 9-10)

M

Spiritual Praxis: What is prayer?

Deep calls to deep. What happens when we pray? Contemplative practices from East and West. Looking at modes of prayer. What is the role of ritual, of sacred place, of sacred time? So what happens when we pray? Neuroscience and meditation. Praying the Psalms
PPT: On Prayer

Shannon, Chants, 33-36; Formal Prayers, 68-74; Ritual, 158-162; Taize prayer, 191-194
Chodron. Training the Puppy: Mindfulness of Breath, E-Res
Rahner, Colloquy with God, 84-91.

Before reading Rahner, write a paragraph on your understanding of prayer. Then, after reading Rahner, write a one-page reflection on your understanding of what he is saying. Do his ideas complement yours or do they expand your understanding? How do Chodron's ideas concur or contest Rahner's idea? Why does Chodron say that meditation is like "training a puppy?" How do the three authors differ in their interpretations of prayer?

W **On Creativity, Beauty, Ritual and Aesthetic Work: Why Liturgy?**

Shannon, Icons, 89-92; Ikebana, The Way of the Flower, 93-96; Mandalas, 106-109;
Tea Ceremony, 199-203; Visual Arts, 221-224
Parachen, Rabindranath Tagore, 129-142.

For Tagore, identify his historical context, and any specific events in which he experienced the Something Other. Show how he, in a specific event of his life, processed his experiences through the transcendental method. How did he engage his spirituality? What were the effects on his life, on others?

Week Nine (Nov 16-17)

M

Community Service, Loving Kindness and Spirituality

A person's life becomes holy as it surrenders ever more deeply to the lure of the immeasurable Mystery by rendering ever deeper surrenders of self to others". Rahner.

Shannon, Fasting, 50-54; Feasting, 55-59; Prayer with others, 153-157, Service, 173-177.

Chodron. Tanglen, from Places that Scare You. E-Res

Parachin, Dorothy Day, 145-160. Identify her historical context, and any specific events in which she experienced the Something Other. Show how she, in specific events of her life, processed her experiences through the transcendental method. How did she engaged/transformed her spirituality? What were the effects on her life, on others?

W **On the Spirituality of Suffering, of Dying and of Death.**

Rohr speaks of suffering being one of the paths of transformation. Suffering has the potential to deepen and mature humanity, but also we can become numb, bitter, angry or self-absorbed. Is there meaning in suffering? Where is the Mystery of God?

Neafsey, Chapter 7 Suffering, 109-130.E-Res
Shannon, Prayer with Others, 153;

Parachin, Rigoberta Menchu, 79-92. Identify her historical context, and any specific events in which

she experienced the Something Other. Show how she, in specific events of her life, processed her experiences through the transcendental method. How did she engaged/transformed her spirituality? What were the effects on her life, on others?

Week Ten (Nov 30-Dec 2) **Celebrating the Long View: The Compass and the Roadmap**
M **Living an Aligned Life.**

Kieche, chapter 6, 103-121.
Rahner, On Patience, 187-204

Outside praxis reflections due.

W **The Integrated Life**

Kornfield, Spiritual Maturity, E-RES,
Rahner, Thanking God When There is so Much Pain. 196-204.