

Ignatian Discernment

SP 2612
Spring 2012
Wednesday, 7:10-9:40 pm
JST

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores to the theory and practice of Christian discernment grounded in the writings of Ignatius of Loyola. Students investigate the personal and ministerial applications of Ignatian discernment through commentaries, case studies, discussions, short papers, and a final project. This course meets the requirements of an elective praxis course for 2nd and 3rd year JSTB M.Div. curriculum.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- ❖ To introduce students to Ignatian discernment of spirits.
- ❖ To explore personal and ministerial applications of these teachings through commentaries, case studies, classroom discussions, and private reflection.

EVALUATION AND GRADING

40% Occasional Short Papers & Original Case Studies
40% Final Paper
20% Class Participation

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Brackley, Dean, *The Call to Discernment in Troubled Times: New Perspectives on the Transformative Wisdom of Ignatius of Loyola* (New York: Crossroad, 2004).
- Gallagher, Timothy M., *The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living* (New York: Crossroad, 2005).
- _____. *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today* (New York: Crossroad, 2006).
- _____. *Spiritual Consolation: An Ignatian Guide for the Greater Discernment of Spirits* (New York: Crossroad, 2007).
- Ganss, George E. ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*. The Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. Bernard McGinn. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1991.
- Lonsdale, David. *Eyes to Hear, Ears to Hear: An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality*. Traditions of Christian Spirituality, ed. Philip Sheldrake. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Toner, Jules J. *Spirit of Light or Darkness?: A Casebook for Studying Discernment of Spirits* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Attend and actively participate in all class sessions.
- Collaborate in small groups to discuss and compose case studies.
- **Short Papers:**
 - During the first part of the semester, students will write occasional reflection papers. Once we begin doing case studies, students will collaborate with 2-3 other students to compose two original discernment case studies (along the lines of Toner). Each case study has two sections: (1) the case narrative and (2) your detailed examination of the case read through the lens of Ignatius' rules for discernment. Cases must be grounded in "real life" circumstances and include an appropriate level of complexity. The class will read and discuss some of these original case studies.
- **Final Papers:**
 - **Students in pastoral degree programs** (MDiv., STB, ThM, MTS projects), in consultation with the professor, write a 5-7 page paper on the topic of Ignatian Discernment. Students have the option of writing a research paper (see below). Some other possibilities (you are welcome to offer other suggestions):
 - ❖ Compose a Sunday homily that employs Ignatius' rules for discernment in the interpretation of a biblical text of your choice. For purposes of this homily, you may presume that your congregation knows Ignatian spirituality.
 - ❖ You have been asked to present a lecture on Ignatian discernment to a parish/church group. Choose your audience: -- church elders, ecumenical clergy group, women's club, youth group, university students, prison chaplains, or the like – and compose a talk appropriate to your intended audience. In addition to the rules, use plenty of accessible examples, especially if your listeners are new to the idea of spiritual discernment.
 - ❖ If you enjoy composing case studies, write one of your own along the lines of the small-group cases, that is, both case narrative and detailed examination.
 - **Students in academic degree programs:** In consultation with the professor, write a research paper on a topic in Ignatian discernment (MA and STL @ ten pages, PhD students @ 15-20 pages – inclusive of all notes and bibliography. For example, a paper entitled "Good and Evil Spirits in Ignatian Discernment: A Nigerian Cultural Perspective" or "Desolation in Ignatian Spirituality: Bridging the Divide between Toner and Buckley." During the last two weeks of the classes, these students will offer brief oral summaries of their research.

COURSE TOPICS

- Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality
- Ignatius' *Autobiography* and other writings
- The Examen Prayer
- Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: First Week
- Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: Second Week
- Ignatian Spirituality for Solidarity
- Student presentations on original case studies and research projects.