To develop Christ-minded leaders who make a difference in the world.

**SF 521 Theology of Discernment**  
Hearing and Responding to the Voice of Jesus  
Winter, 2018

**INSTRUCTORS:** Len Thompson, MA  
Cory Seibel, PhD

**SCHEDULE:** Tuesdays (6:30 – 9:30 pm)

**CREDITS:** 3 [90 hours of work outside of class time]

**DESCRIPTION:**  
A survey of various spiritual formation models and an in-depth examination of the use of Scripture and prayer in spiritual formation. Time will be spent understanding and exercising the practice of being formed by Scripture and our response to God’s conversation with us through various modes of prayer. This course will provide a practical foundation and rationale for a structured approach to spiritual formation and offer the tools to evaluate historical and contemporary illustrations of spiritual formation models through the lens of training spiritually formed disciples of Jesus Christ.

**OBJECTIVES:**  
Upon completion of this course, the student should:

1. be able to understand spiritual formation models from biblical and practical perspectives.
2. be able to discern the voice of God from the voices of personal bias, psychological pressures, societal pressures and demonic voices on a daily basis.
3. identify the way of listening to God that matches the student’s temperament.
4. be able to pray using several forms that connect deeply with the student’s personality.
5. be able to lead groups in Spiritual Reading and at least three methods of group prayer.

**TEXTBOOK(S):**


The student should also have a copy of the *Guide for Research and Writing (SBL style).* This is available online on the seminary web site, as well on the Moodle site for the course.
REQUIREMENTS:

1. Class attendance and participation. Though there is no actual percentage attached to this requirement, this course has a major experiential component in which you must participate. Unexcused absences other than death and hospital admittance will need prior permission from your instructor or else they will adversely affect your grade.

2. Completion of all assignments and the learning covenant.

3. **Assignment 1**: Complete the online lecture on the Moodle Site, complete the quiz and submit in the drop box. This assignment should take about 3 hours and is worth 5% and is due at midnight of the day of the third class.

4. **Assignment 2**: Write a 1250-word position paper that articulates your biblical and theological criteria for discerning the voice of God and illustrates how you have used those criteria to obey God’s voice in a recent decision. This paper will comprise 15% of your final mark and should require about 5 hours of your time. This assignment is due at midnight of the day of the fifth class.

5. **Assignment 3**: Write a 1250-word reflection paper that articulates the method(s) of prayer you have found fits your temperament and illustrate how you have used this (these) methods of prayer during the semester to connect with God. This paper will comprise 15% of your final mark and should require about 5 hours of your time. This assignment is due at midnight of the day of the eighth class.

6. **Assignment 4**: Complete your learning covenant and submit the complete project to your instructor. See example at the end of the syllabus. This assignment is worth 30% of your mark and should take about 40 hours to complete. This assignment is due at midnight of the day of the last class.

7. **Assignment 5**: Participate in retreat offered by the instructor. You will need to participate in the retreat if at all possible. If you cannot participate then you will need to work out an alternate assignment with your instructor. This assignment will take 9 hours and is Pass/ Fail according to the level of your participation in the retreat. It is worth 5% of your mark.

8. **Assignment 6**: Using the assigned readings as sources, write a 3000 to 4000-word paper that constructs a theology and methodology of a devotional life (listening and responding to God) that is comprehensive, coherent and evocative. Be sure to consult the *Guide for Research and Writing (SBL style)* in writing and formatting your paper. This should take about 20 hours to complete. This paper is due midnight of the day of the twelfth class.

**TITLING YOUR ASSIGNMENT:** All your assignments are to be submitted through the drop box on the course moodle site. Hard copies will not be accepted. It is your responsibility to submit this on time. Please follow this template for naming assignment documents:

Discernment: Last name.Discernment (e.g. Jones.bibliography)
Prayer: Last name.prayer
Term Paper: Last name.Termpaper

**PENALTIES:** 20% per day that the assignment is late.

**DUE DATES:** To be determined by the instructor each year.
EVALUATION:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 1 Quiz</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 2 Discernment</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment 3 Prayer</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 4 Learning Covenant</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 5 Quiz 2</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assignment 6</td>
<td>30%</td>
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LECTURES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 23</td>
<td>Introduction to Spirituality and a survey of various models of Spiritual Formatio...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 30</td>
<td>Scripture is our Script – online on Moodle site – no class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>February 6</td>
<td>Lectio Divina as a model for finding our script and discerning the voice of Jesus Lectio – Reading with the senses/ Entering the story – Ignatian method Medatio – Reading with the mind/Exegesis and study – Thomistic method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>February 13</td>
<td>Lectio Divina - continued Oratio – Reading with emotion and prayer/ Response – Franciscan method Contemplio – Reading with intuition/ Application – Augustinian method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>February 20</td>
<td>Sacred Pathways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>February 27</td>
<td>Disciplines related to each Pathway: Solitude, Simplicity, Confession, Fasting, Service, Submission, Worship, Prayer, and Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>March 6</td>
<td>Prayer as Response to Scripture – Praying the Psalms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>March 13</td>
<td>Pray Like Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Pray Like Paul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 27</td>
<td>March Break—No Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>April 3</td>
<td>Pray Like the Church Fathers/Mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Retreat held by Cory allowing for application of solitude, simplicity, fasting as well as times of individual and group prayer.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Some class time will be given to discussion, demonstration, and group lectio divina since some of the lectures are available online.

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Excessive, unexcused absences and lack of participation may adversely affect your grade. More than three unexcused absences may result in failure for the course.
FINAL REMARKS:

Moodle.
Taylor Seminary’s Moodle platform has been migrated to our sister seminary in South Dakota, Sioux Falls Seminary (SFS). Bookmark this site on your computer for easy, regular access: https://moodle.sfseminary.edu

Moodle log-in is your first initial of your first name and your last name all in lowercase, with no spaces. For example, if your name is John Calvin, you would log in as jcalvin

Your assigned password is: TaylorSem123$
You will be forced to change it to a personal password the first time you log-in. Your new password should include at least one capital letter, a numeric symbol and a non-numeric symbol.

Once you are logged into the platform, you will need to enrol yourself in the courses.

- Click on ‘Taylor Seminary’ for Taylor’s online courses and “Sioux Falls Seminary” for SFS’s online courses. The course subjects will be listed.
- Click on the appropriate course subject and the courses will be listed.
- Select the course in which you wish to enrol.
- The default enrolment key is the course code (with no uppercase and no spaces). The course code consists of the course prefix followed by the course number. For example, Old Testament Introduction’s key is: ot417.

If you are having trouble logging into Moodle or self-enroling, please email teresa.seibel@taylor-edu.ca

Formatting.
All studies and papers should be typed and formatted according to the Society of Biblical Literature writing style as outlined in the Seminary’s Guidelines for Research Writing in Religion & Theology (SBL). For the full stylesheet, please refer to Patrick H. Alexander, et al., ed., The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014) which is in Reading Room.

Research Language.
You should employ acceptable research language for your paper which is not too informal yet reads inclusively. Avoid the use of gender specific language (e.g., Do not refer to “man” generically or to “mankind,” “men,” “he”; rather use “humankind,” “humanity,” “person,” etc.)

Plagiarism.
Academic honesty and integrity is essential to the academic enterprise and the Seminary community. All written work submitted must be your own. Guidelines for Research Writing defines plagiarism as the failure to give credit where credit is due: “To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written something original which in fact you have borrowed from another without acknowledging that other person's work” (Guide for Research and Writing, 2016, p. 11-13). If you borrow ideas or distinctive phrases, or include direct quotations in your written assignments, you must acknowledge your source(s) properly by in-text citation or footnote. It is also wrong to copy another person’s work or to submit an assignment previously handed in for credit in another course. Students guilty of plagiarism may receive a grade of zero for the assignment and may be brought to the attention of the Seminary’s Academic Committee.
Course Withdrawal Policy
After the period for which tuition refunds are available, a “W” will be placed on the transcript of a student who withdraws from any course. Beyond those dates, an “F” will be recorded on the student’s transcript.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:
__________. "Spiritual Disciplines." Themelios 36, no. 3 (n.d.).


SF 521 Theology of Discernment Syllabus | Page 7
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Tvedten, Benet. How to be a monastic and not leave your day job: an invitation to live an oblate life.
Vanhoozer, Paul J. Is There Meaning in This Text? The Bible. The Reader and the Morality of Literary
—. The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology. Louisville:
NavPress, 2002.
Wynkoop, Christine Valters Paintner and Lucy. Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and
Appendix A

Instructions for Personal Goals

Purpose
Spiritual formation courses at Taylor are designed to assist each participant to deepen [his/her] basic knowledge of spiritual formation, spiritual integrity and ministry skills. The development of your own Learning Covenant provides a framework for you and Instructor (you also can share this covenant with your Spiritual Director) to work toward this end. This learning covenant is to be completed and approved by your instructor by the beginning of the second class.

Structure
There are two components of the Personal Learning Covenant.
I. Personal Goals for incorporating spiritual disciplines into your life. Develop your own unique aspirations around the following areas:
   1. Spiritual Reading
   2. Methods of Prayer
   For each area, specify
   (a) goals, (b) means, and (c) record of activity. A brief sample is given below for illustration only.
II. Ministry Skills for leading groups in practicing corporate spiritual disciplines. Develop your own unique aspirations around the following areas:
   1. Spiritual Reading
   2. Corporate Prayer
   For each area, specify
   (a) goals, (b) means, and (c) record of activity. A brief sample is given below for illustration only.

SAMPLE

Personal Goals

Goal #1: I will to establish a consistent Bible reading schedule.

Means: Lectio: I want to focus on a book of the Bible (I’m leaning towards the Gospel of John) each morning this coming Semester, taking at least two weeks to go through each chapter. I will practice lectio on a pericope each Monday followed by medatio on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. On Thursdays I will write one of the Psalms in my own words, followed by writing a prayer that is a response to my study through the week as my oratio. On Saturday and Sunday I will work on putting a 2012 application to the pericope I have worked on for the week as my contemplatio. This will then act as my script to live out in the following week while I learn the script for the next week.

Record: I will keep an electronic or handwritten journal that lists the daily reading, reflections from reading and the script for my life that God is revealing for me to live. Dates:

Goal #2: I will develop a varied prayer life that incorporates new methods of prayer.

Means: Prayer: At some point during each week day I will spend 20 minutes in one of the following kinds of prayer: Prayer Modeled on the Lord’s Prayer, Prayer to the Father, Prayer to the Son, Prayer to the Spirit, Prayer using Liturgy, Music, Icons or Art, Prayer in Nature, Centering Prayer, Prayer of Quiet (Apophatic), Labyrinth Prayer, or Communal Prayer and if God opens up new avenues, I will incorporate those kinds of prayer as well.

Record: I will keep a record of the various types of prayer that I have experienced and a short reflection on what benefit I gain from that method of prayer, if any. Dates:
Ministry Goals

Goal #1: I will learn to lead a small group in the practice of group lectio divina.
Means: This will be accomplished through observing group lectio divina during our weekend retreat and reading Richard Peace’s Group Study Guide on Group Contemplative Bible Reading. I will lead the Taylor group once and my church small group in this exercise at least three times during the semester.

Record: The instructor will evaluate my leadership of lectio in the Taylor group and I will record the passages I chose for each of the lectio sessions with my small group and write my own evaluation on each of the sessions.

Dates:

Goal #2: I will learn to lead a group in one method of prayer that they currently are not familiar with.
Means: This will be accomplished through observing group prayer during our weekend retreat and reading Richard Peace’s Meditative Prayer Group Study Guide. I will lead the Taylor group once and my church small group in this exercise at least three times during the semester.

Record: The instructor will evaluate my leadership of group meditative prayer in the Taylor group and I write an evaluation of each of the meditative sessions with my small group. Dates:
Approval Form - Learning Covenant

Note to participant — When you complete the Learning Covenant (written out on separate pages) and your Instructor has signed this approval form, (1) make copies for your own file, and (2) forward an electronic copy to the Instructor.

Participant Name:

Instructor:

I covenant to apply myself to each of the attached goals for the duration of this course and will meet with my instructor periodically to review my progress towards these goals. I will accept help from my instructor to help me achieve these goals as he or she covenants to help me accomplish these goals through regular discussion and instruction.

Participant’s Signature _______________________________ Date________________

Instructor’s Signature _______________________________ Approval Date____________
A style guide or manual of style is a set of standards for the writing, formatting and design of documents. It is often called a style sheet, although that term may have other meanings. These standards can be applied either for general use, or be required usage for an individual publication, a particular organization, or a specific field. A style guide establishes standard style requirements to improve communication by ensuring consistency both within a document, and across multiple documents. Because you will also have an annotated bibliography that will guide you through the writing process. In Unit 4, you will develop your argument and create a detailed outline for your research paper. You should also have the opportunity to complete much of the preliminary research for your final paper and to identify any information gaps that may require further investigation. Completing this unit should take you approximately 17 hours. Unit 3: Reviewing and Analyzing Your Sources. By the time you have finished the work in this unit, you should have a command of the materials and techniques you will need to complete a well-developed academic paper. As a by-product, your final research paper for this course will probably be nearly finished.