



COURSE SYLLABUS

**FL1001 Introduction to Spiritual and Personal Formation
Fall 2026
Mondays 5:45pm to 9:00pm Central Time
3 Credits**



Jacob's Ladder (1973)
Marc Chagall

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I will try to respond to emails within 24 hours, Monday-Friday.

Set up a conversation:

calendly.com/tmichaelrocks13

<https://calendar.app.google/Q7ZVmL4A4TYovKg58>

Connect over zoom:

<https://zoom.us/j/3777927516?pwd=WDZ2bGdYQlVXQ0x2ZE5NM0xGMlBaUT09>

Course Description

This course investigates the human person as a religious phenomenon and our process of becoming as a religious project. As such, students will interrogate their pre-understandings of the “self,” its relation to “the sacred”, and the diverse powers (bodily, psychological, social, and theological) that alternatively dignify and diminish us. Course readings represent a variety of religious, disciplinary, and social perspectives that illumine the multidimensional depths of personhood and offer resources for interpreting, evaluating, and shaping what it means to be human. Course assignments prompt students to articulate their emerging understanding of the self, the sacred, and the ambiguous powers pulsing between them for the sake of integrating these insights with their own spiritual and vocational self-understanding. Mindful that this course introduces students to theological study at United, special attention will be paid to the role of intellectual practices (reading, writing, conversation, contemplation) in the spiritual life. This, in turn, will provide a foundation for students in their practical courses at United by facilitating deep reflection on their personhood in relation to the callings of spiritual leadership.

Prerequisites

n/a

Eligible for DMin Credit

No.

Eligible for Auditing

Yes. See the Course Registration section of the *Student Handbook* for registration information.

Course Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate an articulate appreciation of the value of spiritual formation for human being and becoming with reference to the various powers that course through our existence
2. Be able to to evaluate one’s spiritual development in light of one’s own “sources of the self” and religious horizons
3. Be able to identify, transform, and/or create specific sources of spiritual power that resist human degradation and enhance human life

Course Assignments

Note: The professor may modify these assignments based on their ongoing assessment of student needs. The professor will notify students of any change to an assignment after the start of the term.

Formative Assignments

1. Weekly Reflective Journal Assignments (1)

In these weekly writing assignments, students will engage prompts that invite reflection about their emerging understanding of the self/sacred/power and their interrelations in response to their engagement with the course readings and classroom experiences.

These reflections will not be evaluated in terms of whether students provide the “right answer” because the very notion of a “right answer” is much too paltry to be of any use in thinking about questions of human being and becoming. Rather, they will be assessed in terms of how clearly (exhibiting complete, coherent grammar and syntax) and thoughtfully (exhibiting insightful comments and connections that draw from the readings, one’s own life, and class experience) the posts respond to the prompt.

Due: 24 hours before class begins

The following rubric will serve as a guide for assessment:

Grade	Explanation
Full Credit	Responds clearly and thoughtfully to the prompt and demonstrates a robust engagement with the readings.
Partial Credit	Responds to the prompt but remains unclear at points or is only tangentially related to the readings.
No Credit	Response largely ignores the prompt and shows no indication of serious engagement with the readings.

The **lowest two** reflective journal assignments of the semester **will be dropped** from students’ grades at the end of the term.

2. Classroom Participation (1, 3)

Given that the classroom is itself a site for personal and spiritual formation, it provides a forum for students to practice “sacred attunement” as well as the correlated virtues of curiosity, humility, and generativity in their interactions with

classmates and instructors. Given that so much of the coursework takes place in the classroom itself, regular and punctual attendance is a must. If a student misses more than two class periods, even for excused absences, their participation grade will drop a letter grade.

Early in the term, students will collectively compose a set of classroom ground rules to promote respectful and edifying interactions. Participation will be assessed on the basis of 1) attendance, 2) adherence to these ground rules, 3) skillful embodiment of curiosity, humility, and generativity in interactions with one's colleagues, and 4) demonstration of engagement with course readings. The following rubric will serve as a guide for assessment.

Grade	Explanation
Full Credit	Student arrives to class on time, exhibits care with regard to the classroom ground rules, skillfully embodies the virtues of curiosity, humility, and generativity, and demonstrates familiarity with the week's readings.
Partial Credit	Student is present in class but may have arrived late, exhibits some disregard for the classroom ground rules, lacks curiosity/humility/generativity, or seems unfamiliar with the week's readings.
No Credit	Student does not attend class (unless the absence is excused beforehand), exhibits flagrant disregard for the classroom ground rules or the virtues of curiosity/humility/generativity.

3. Lead a Spiritual Practice (1, 3)

This assignment invites students to identify a source of spiritual power from their own tradition and to practice harnessing its power in an inter-religious environment - namely, our classroom. After giving a brief introduction, each student will guide their colleagues through a brief (less than 5 minute) iteration of the practice as a means of "attuning" us all to the holy in the midst of our classroom work.

Students who are not leading are always invited to participate in the practice chosen by their colleagues, but they are never required to do so. One of the reasons why students are asked to give a brief introduction to their chosen practice is to allow their colleagues the chance to "opt out" if they deem that participating would somehow infringe upon their integrity. While the right to opt out will be respected, a classmate's decision to opt out could be a legitimate topic for discussion after the practice has concluded.

The following rubric will serve as a guide for assessment.

Grade	Explanation
Full Credit	Student offers a fitting introduction to the practice, provides ample guidance for classmates, and exhibits curiosity/humility/generativity when reflecting on the practice with colleagues.
Partial Credit	Practice is conducted without sufficient introduction or guidance, or the student does not engage colleagues' reflections with curiosity, humility, and generativity.
No Credit	Student does not lead a practice or does so without taking the assignment seriously.

4. Chapter from a Spiritual Autobiography (1, 2)

This 5-page paper (double-spaced, 12-point font) invites to narrate a single “chapter” from their spiritual autobiography.

The point of this exercise is threefold. First, it offers students an opportunity to experiment with storytelling as a religious power. Second, by sharing these chapters with the class and exploring them together during class-time, we can explore the variety of ways (topics & genres) that humans narrate themselves as well as the variety of ways those narratives can be “religious,” “spiritual,” or “theological.” Finally, this helps students get to know something about the incredible human beings who are their classmates.

Students have great freedom when it comes to what and how they tell in their chapters. They might describe a profound experience, an influential mentor, a difficult relationship, a life-changing book, a pilgrimage to a sacred site, or a question that still feels unresolved in their life. They might describe moments of great suffering, ecstatic joy, or something in between. Students can choose from many different narrative genres - sacred quests, buddy stories, love stories, coming-of-age stories, trauma-resilience stories, comedies, tragedies, etc. And the question of what makes a story distinctly “religious/spiritual/theological” will, no doubt, be one that each of us answer differently.

The only requirements are: 1) the chapter must be true, 2) it must be in some way about you, and 3) it must be in some way religious, spiritual, or theological.

Students should post their chapters to Canvas 24-hours before class begins so that their colleagues have time to read and reflect upon them. We will spend time in-class (approximately 30 minutes) engaging the chapters as a group as we ask what they

reveal about being human and the spiritual life. We will talk more in class about how exactly we're going to engage these chapters. See also the "Spiritual Autobiography Chapter Reflection Guide" on Canvas..

Due: Students will sign up for slots for students to present chapters in class.

The following rubric will serve as a guide for assessment.

Grade	Explanation
Full Credit	Chapter earnestly explores aspects of spiritual life and personal formation as it appears in one's own existence. It is composed carefully and deliberately with the intention of communicating oneself effectively to one's classmates. During in-class discussion, the presenter engages their colleagues with integrity and in good-faith, demonstrating the virtues of curiosity, humility, and generativity. Of course, chapters must have appropriate syntax, grammar, and punctuation, and they must be submitted to Canvas at least 24 hours before class.
Partial Credit	A chapter will receive partial credit if it does not demonstrate a careful and deliberate attempt to explore aspects of spiritual life, or if the presenter does not engage their colleagues with integrity and good-faith. Chapters will also lose credit if they are not submitted at least 24 hours before class.
No Credit	Students who do not complete the assignment will receive no credit.

5. Sources of the Multidimensional Self (1,2)

This 3-4 page (900-1200 word) paper offers students the opportunity to synthesize their learning from Part I of the course ("The Multidimensional Depths of Being Human") and integrate it into their own religious self-understanding. The task is twofold. Students will 1) identify the most salient powers (at least two) that have contributed to their personal and spiritual formation and then 2) analyze the influence of these powers in terms of the various dimensions of human being in the world (bodily, psychological, social, theological, etc.). This paper will serve as the basis for Section A of the final integrative project.

Due: October 5, 2026 before the beginning of class (week 4)

The following rubric will serve as a guide for assessment:

Grade	Explanation
A, A-	Outstanding: Paper clearly, vividly, and insightfully analyzes at least two powers that have contributed to one's personal/spiritual formation. References may (but need not) be made to the readings - only if they are analytically helpful. Paper is carefully organized and spelling/punctuation/grammar is excellent. Word count is +/- 15% of stated limit.
B+, B, B-	Good: Paper identifies at least two formative powers but the analysis lacks clarity, vividness, and/or insight. Papers that are poorly organized or contain some spelling/punctuation/grammar issues will be, at maximum, in this range. Word count lies outside of +/- 15% of stated limit.
C+, C, C-	Fair: Paper identifies at least two formative powers but lacks much analysis and/or careful composition. Papers with many spelling/punctuation/grammar issues will be, at maximum, in this range. Word count significantly outside of +/- 15% of stated limit.
D+, D, D-	Inadequate: Paper does not identify at least two formative powers, its analysis is severely lacking, and/or exhibits significant organizational and spelling/punctuation/grammar issues.
F	Fail: Incomplete or not completed

6. Religious Horizons of the Self (1,2)

This 3-4 page paper (900-1200 word) offers students the opportunity to synthesize their learning from Part II of the class ("Vocabularies of Human Becoming") and integrate it into their own religious self-understanding. Whereas the first paper (Sources of the Multidimensional Self) focused on ***the human being that you currently are***, this second paper invites you to reflect on ***the human being that you might yet become***.

Students will articulate their current, provisional understanding of the highest human aspirations as informed by a particular religious, theological, or philosophical-ethical tradition. In other words, the assignment is to reflect on the very meaning of human life itself and to do so by thinking alongside others who one regards as having something profound to say about 1) what is sacred and 2) how the Sacred informs what human beings could or should become.

The assignment is thus threefold.

- 1) Students will select ***a tradition*** (religious, theological, philosophical-ethical) that they view as having something profound to say about the Sacred and the highest watermarks of human life.
- 2) Drawing from this tradition, students will articulate in their own words ***a working conception of the Sacred*** as well as the ***various practices*** (mystical, ethical, ritualistic, intellectual, political, etc.) ***that attune human beings to the Sacred.***
- 3) Finally, students should identify which ***vocabulary or vocabularies of human becoming*** (i.e., authenticity, virtue, vocation) they find most helpful for thinking about their religious goals and aspirations.

This paper will serve as the basis for Section B of the final integrative project.

Due: November 16, 2026 before the beginning of class (week 9)

The following rubric will serve as a guide for assessment:

Grade	Explanation
A, A-	Outstanding: Paper clearly, vividly, and insightfully identifies the student's own religious ends/horizons with reference to the theological conviction(s) and/or symbol(s), drawn from their own religious tradition, that undergird them. Paper includes a working conception of the sacred and articulates how human beings interact with its power. Reference is made to the particular vocabulary or vocabularies of human becoming (authenticity, virtue, vocation) that the student finds most adequate within their own religious/theological framework. Paper is carefully organized and spelling/punctuation/grammar is excellent. Word count is +/- 15% of stated limit.
B+, B, B-	Good: Paper identifies the student's own religious ends/horizons with reference to the theological conviction(s) and/or symbol(s) that undergird them, but the analysis lacks the clarity, vividness, and/or insight of an A-paper. These papers also include a working conception of the sacred and articulates how human beings interact with its power. Papers that are poorly organized or contain some spelling/punctuation/grammar issues will be, at maximum, in this range. Word count lies outside of +/- 15% of stated limit.
C+, C, C-	Fair: Paper identifies student's religious ends/horizons and the powers that course between the sacred and the self, but lacks much analysis, integration, and/or careful composition. Papers with many spelling/punctuation/grammar issues will be, at

	maximum, in this range. Word count significantly outside of +/- 15% of stated limit.
D+, D, D-	Inadequate: Paper does not identify student's religious ends/horizons, does not provide a working conception of the sacred, or lacks any articulation about how religious power interacts with human beings. Papers in this range might also exhibit significant organizational and spelling/punctuation/grammar issues.
F	Fail: Incomplete or not completed

7. Thick Description of an Intercultural Religious Practice (1, 3)

This assignment challenges students to become ethnographers of religion with intercultural competency. They will select a religious practice embedded in a cultural context different from their own and engage that practice as participant-observers. On the basis of the ethnographic field notes taken during and shortly after the event, students will compose a "thick description" that describes "what's going on" in the self/sacred/power nexus at various registers (bodily, psychological, socio-cultural, and theological). Papers should be **3-4 pages (1000 word max) in length (double-spaced, 12-point font)**.

Due: To give students maximal freedom to schedule their participant-observations, these thick descriptions **can be submitted at any point during the semester**, albeit **no later than December 7, 2026 (week 11)**

The following rubric will serve as a guide for assessment:

Grade	Explanation
A, A-	Outstanding: Thoughtful, perceptive, and insightful description of what's going on in an intercultural religious practice. Paper attends carefully to the sacred/self/power nexus and analyzes it with reference to at least 3 registers, including the theological. Paper is carefully organized and spelling/punctuation/grammar is excellent. Word count is +/- 15% of stated limit.
B+, B, B-	Good: Decent description of what's going on in an intercultural religious practice, but lacks the thoughtfulness, perceptivity, and/or insight of an A-paper. Paper attends carefully to the sacred/self/power nexus and analyzes it with reference to at least 3 registers, including the theological. Papers that are poorly organized or contain some spelling/punctuation/grammar issues

	will be, at maximum, in this range. Word count lies outside of +/- 15% of stated limit.
C+, C, C-	Fair: Paper responds adequately to the assignment, but lacks much analysis, integration, and/or careful composition. Papers with many spelling/punctuation/grammar issues will be, at maximum, in this range. Word count significantly outside of +/- 15% of stated limit.
D+, D, D-	Inadequate: Paper does not exhibit careful reflection on an intercultural religious practice and/or lacks a description of what's going on with reference to at least 3 registers, including the theological. Papers in this range might also exhibit significant organizational and spelling/punctuation/grammar issues.
F	Fail: Incomplete or not completed

Summative Assignment

1. Integrative Project: Theological Study and the Spiritual Life (1, 2, 3)

This summative assignment challenges students to integrate their learning from the course and provide orientation to their future studies at United by responding to the question: what are you *really* doing at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities? It consists of five parts:

Part A: Multidimensional Sources of the Self (3-4 pages)

Part B: Religious Horizons of the Self (3-4 pages)

Part C: Theological Study and the Spiritual Life (3-5 pages)

Part D: Provisional Development Plan (3-5 pages)

Part E: Orienting Questions of Ultimate Concern (1-2 pages)

Parts A & B offer students an opportunity to revise, sharpen, or re-affirm their earlier writings in the class. See full descriptions in Assignment: Multidimensional Sources of the Self and Assignment: Religious Horizons of the Self.

Part C asks students to either compose an essay that clarifies the kind of formation they seek by attending seminary and that illuminates the power of theological study (intellectual, practical, and otherwise) as a formative practice in light of their own sources of the self and religious horizons. Essays should respond to the following questions:

- A. How do you understand *the power of theological study*? That is, what does all the stuff we do in seminary (reading, writing, conversation, practical learning, artistic experience and expression, etc.) do to and for the human beings who engage in it? Or, to put it slightly differently, how those of us who study theology different than we would be without it?
- B. How, in your view, is theological study a *religious* power? That is, drawing on your Religious Horizons of the Self paper, describe how the changes brought about by theological study attune you to what you understand to be Sacred?
- C. Finally, how do you envision theological study at United being religiously powerful *for you, the particular human being that you are*? That is, drawing on your Sources of the Self paper, describe your hope for how your theologies studies might link up with, deepen, resist, or transform the powers that have already formed you and the person you have become.

Part D invites students to construct a provisional development plan that outlines the concrete steps (i.e., coursework, theses, CPE, denominational accreditation processes, spiritual practices, physical exercise, counseling/therapy, healing, etc.) needed to render their time at United most fruitful. In other words, Part D challenges you to move from *how you think about* your own personal/spiritual formation in seminary to *how you will actually practice* personal/spiritual formation in seminary. Students may format this section in any way they find helpful. But a good outline might be:

- A. Coursework Plan - Outline your official course of study at United by semester and required/elective classes.
- B. Accreditation Process Plan - Outline the timeline for any accreditation, ordination, or certification processes you plan to pursue.
- C. Formation Plan for a Multidimensional Self
 - a. Bodily Dimension
What forms of bodily self-care, healing, exercise, and fitness will help form you as a religious leader in seminary?
 - b. Psychological Dimension
What forms of psychological/psychiatric care and therapy could help form you as a mature religious leader in seminary?
 - c. Socio-Emotional Dimension
How might you become a more emotionally intelligent, self-aware, and socially fluent religious leader in seminary?
 - d. Intellectual Dimension
What sources of intellectual stimulation do you need to become a

more curious, wonder-filled religious leader in seminary?

e. Ethical-Political Dimension

What kinds of moral formation or political activism might help you become a more ethically engaged religious leader in seminary?

f. Spiritual-Religious Dimension

What kinds of spiritual practices, religious community participation, liturgical formation, or mystical encounters might form you to be a more humble, grounded, and joyful religious leader in seminary?

Part E asks students to identify and elaborate upon 3 single-sentence questions that i) have something to do with what they understand as the Sacred, ii) concern some issue/problem that they've identified in their anticipated vocational field, and iii) might provide some orientation as they pursue their studies at United.

Due: December 14, 2026 at the beginning of class (week 12)

The following rubric will serve as a guide for assessment:

Criterion	Excellent (25-24)	Good (23-20)	Fair (19-14)	Poor (14-0)
Part C	Responds with exceptional insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Responds with good insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Responds with adequate insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Does not adequately respond to the prompt.
Part D	Responds with exceptional insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Responds with good insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Responds with adequate insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Does not adequately respond to the prompt.
Part E	Responds with exceptional insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Responds with good insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Responds with adequate insight, clarity, and thoroughness.	Does not adequately respond to the prompt.
Clearly convey theological ideas.	The essays are clearly written with no spelling / grammatical errors. Word count is +/- 15% of stated limit.	The essays are clearly written with minimal (<5) spelling / grammatical errors. Word count lies	The essays are written with sufficient clarity but contain too many (>5) spelling / grammatical	The essays are unclear and need to be revised.

		outside of +/- 15% of stated limit.	errors. Word count significantly outside of +/- 15% of stated limit.	
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Grading Policy

Each student's final course grade will be determined based only on the evaluation of work submitted by the last day of the academic term, unless the professor approves an extension of time for the student to complete coursework beyond the end of the term. An extension will only be approved under extraordinary circumstances and must be agreed to by the professor prior to the end of the term. See the Extensions section of the *Student Handbook* for more information.

Assignment	Percentage
Weekly Journal Reflections	10%
Classroom Participation	10%
Lead a Spiritual Practice	5%
Chapter of a Spiritual Autobiography	10%
Sources of the Multidimensional Self	20%
Religious Horizons of the Self	20%
Thick Description Paper	10%
Integrative Project: Theological Study and the Spiritual Life	25%

Course Grading Scale

Late work may be accepted but may be deducted by up to 1/3 of a grade per day late. This policy applies regardless of the reason for which the work is submitted late.

AH*	Superior with Honors		C+	Pass
A	Superior		C	
A-			C-	

B+	High Pass		D+	No Pass
B			D	
B-			F	Failure

* The AH grade is reserved for the highest mastery of course content as well as outstanding engagement with content and peers; class participation; ability to apply learning to real-world contexts; timely completion of assignments; and demonstration of United's values of curiosity, creativity, community, and intersectional justice.

Course Texts

Please purchase or acquire all required texts prior to the start of the term. Many United course texts are accessible to students online at no cost through the [Spencer Library Catalog](#) or the [Digital Theological Library 2 \(DTL2\)](#).

Required Books:

1. James Baldwin. *The Fire Next Time*. New York: Vintage, 1992. ISBN: 978-0679744726. (\$10.59)
2. Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0226251721. (\$32.00) Available on DTL2
3. Edwin H. Friedman. *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix*. Revised Edition. New York: Seabury Books, 2017. ISBN: 978-1596272798. (\$29.95) Available on DTL2
4. Audre Lorde. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Penguin Vitae). New York: Penguin Books, 2020. ISBN: 978-0143134442. (\$15.99) Available on DTL2
5. Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass (eds). *Leading Lives that Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-8028-7714-7. (\$28.72) Available on DTL2
6. Christian Wiman. *My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2014. ISBN: 978-0374534370. (\$12.99) Available on DTL2

Required Articles (PDFs available on Canvas):

1. Sarah Coakley, "Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology," in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass, eds. *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002. 78-93.

2. Jia Tolentino, "Always Be Optimizing," in *Trick Mirror: Reflections on Self-Delusion*. New York: Random House, 2020. 63-94.
3. Michael Welker, "Flesh – Body – Heart – Soul – Spirit: Paul's Anthropology as Interdisciplinary Bridge Theory," in Michael Welker, ed. *The Depth of the Human Person: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014. 45-57.

Course Schedule

The final 12-week schedule of readings, topics, activities, and assignments due will be available when the Canvas course opens to students on September 8. Master's students should expect an average of approximately 10–12 hours of coursework per week, including class meetings. This schedule is subject to change without notice until the start of the term. Additionally, the professor may modify the schedule during the term based on their ongoing assessment of student needs. The professor will notify students of any change to the schedule after the start of the term.

Be aware that the academic term begins the Saturday prior to the first class meeting. Please complete assigned Week 1 coursework prior to the first class.

Week 1: September 14

Welcome and Introduction: Persons, Spirits, and the Process of Becoming

Reading:

Baldwin	<i>The Fire Next Time</i> , 15-46
Fishbane	Preface to <i>Sacred Attunement</i> , p. ix-xiv
Wiman	"My Bright Abyss" (Chapter 1 in <i>My Bright Abyss</i> , p. 3-15)

Due:

- **Five Introductory Paragraphs Assignment** (Due Friday of Week 1)

SECTION I: THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL DEPTHS OF BEING HUMAN

Week 2: September 21

Bodies, Desire, and Religion

Reading:

Asma & Gabriel	"The Affective Roots of Culture and Cognition" (PDF on Canvas)
Lorde	"Uses of the Erotic," in <i>Sister Outsider</i> , 41-48
Tolentino	"Always Be Optimizing" (PDF on Canvas)
Adichie	"The Danger of a Single Story" (TED Talk on Youtube)

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal

Week 3: September 28

Sources of the Self

Reading:

Fishbane	Chapter 1, 1-45
Friedman	Introduction in <i>Failure of Nerve</i> , 1-28 Chapter 2 in <i>Failure of Nerve</i> , 51-94
Wiman	"Hive of Nerves" in <i>My Bright Abyss</i> , 85-102

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- Spiritual Practices 1 & 2

Week 4: October 5

Selves, Systems, and Emotional Triangles

Reading:

Friedman	Chapter 4, 132-157 Chapter 5, 158-186 Chapter 7, 204-226
Morrison	"Recitatif" in Schwehn and Bass, 353-370
Wells	"Rethinking Service" in Schwehn and Bass, 374-387

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- Spiritual Practices 3 & 4
- **Spiritual Autobiography Chapters**

Week 5: October 12

Multiplicity and Integrity

Reading:

Baldwin	<i>The Fire Next Time</i> , 47-106
Lindner	"The Perils and Possibilities of Multiplicity" (PDF on Canvas)
Welker	"Flesh – Body – Heart – Soul – Spirit" (PDF on Canvas)

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- Spiritual Practices 5 & 6
- Spiritual Autobiography Chapters
- **Sources of the Multidimensional Self Essay (Due by start of class)**

SECTION II:
VOCABULARIES OF HUMAN BECOMING

Week 6: October 19

Vocabularies of Becoming I: Authenticity

Reading:

Schwehn and Bass	"Vocabularies," in Schwehn and Bass, 43-58
Taylor	"The Ethics of Authenticity," in Schwehn and Bass, 59-64
Palmer	"Explorations in True Self," in Schwehn and Bass, 65-71
Cady Stanton	"Solitude of Self," in Schwehn and Bass, 72-75
Bhikkhu	"No-Self or Not Self?," in Schwehn and Bass, 76-78
Karunadhammo	"This Is Who I Am," in Schwehn and Bass, 79-80

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- Spiritual Practices 7 & 8
- Spiritual Autobiography Chapters

Symposium Week: October 26-31

No classes this week; no coursework assigned or due

Week 7: November 2

Vocabularies of Becoming II: Virtue

Reading:

Aristotle	"Nicomachean Ethics," in Schwehn and Bass, 83-85
DeYoung	"Glittering Vices," in Schwehn and Bass, 86-91
Pieper	"On Love," in Schwehn and Bass, 92-96
Ginzburg	"The Little Virtues," in Schwehn and Bass, 97-101
Brooks	"The Moral Bucket List," in Schwehn and Bass, 102-107
Mencius	"Sayings," in Schwehn and Bass, 108-109
Hsun Tzu	"Improving Yourself," in Schwehn and Bass, 110-113
Edith Jones	"Patience," in Schwehn and Bass, 114-115

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- Spiritual Practices 9 & 10
- Spiritual Autobiography Chapters

Week 8: November 9

Vocabularies of Becoming III: Vocation and Responsibility

Reading:

Levertov	"Annunciation," in Schwehn and Bass, 149-152
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Hardy	"Work, Life, and Vocational Choice," in Schwehn and Bass, 153-163
Badcock	"Choosing," in Schwehn and Bass, 164-170
Lewis	"Learning in War-Time," in Schwehn and Bass, 171-175
Bonhoeffer	"The Place of Responsibility," in Schwehn and Bass, 176-179
Buechner	"Vocation," in Schwehn and Bass, 180-181
Campbell	"Vocation as Grace," in Schwehn and Bass, 182-183
Chang Tzu	"Mastering Life," in Schwehn and Bass, 184-185

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- Spiritual Practices 11 & 12
- Spiritual Autobiography Chapters

SECTION III: POWERS OF HUMAN BECOMING

Week 9: November 16

Powers of Becoming I: Contemplation, Study, and Prayer

Reading:

Driver	"Ritualizing: The Animals Do it and So Do We" (PDF on Canvas)
Fishbane	Chapter 2, 46-107
Wiman	"Varieties of Quiet" in <i>My Bright Abyss</i> , 117-144

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- Spiritual Practices 13 & 14
- Spiritual Autobiography Chapters
- **Religious Horizons of the Self Essay (Due by the start of class)**

Week 10: November 30

Powers of Becoming II: Ritual Practice

Reading:

Coakley	"Deepening Practices" (PDF on Canvas)
Driver	"Ritual's Social Gifts" (PDF on Canvas)
Fishbane	Chapter 3, 108-155

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal

Week 11: December 7

Powers of Becoming III: Poetry, Presence, and Prayer

Reading:

Lorde "Poetry is not a Luxury," in *Sister Outsider*, 24-27
"The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action", in *Sister Outsider*, 28-32

Wiman "Preface," in *My Bright Abyss*, ix-x
"Sorrow's Flower," 15-32
"Tender Interiors," 33-39
"God's Truth is Life," 39-63
"O Thou Mastering Light," 63-81
"Dear Oblivion," 81-85
"God is Not Beyond," 103-116

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- **Last Day for Thick Description Paper Due**

Week 12: December 14

Powers of Becoming IV: Responses to Suffering and Death

Reading:

Lorde "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism,"
in *Sister Outsider*, 115-125
"Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger," 138-169

Tolstoy "The Death of Ivan Ilych" in Schwehn and Bass, 570-618

Wiman "Mortify Our Wolves," in *My Bright Abyss*, 145-162
"A Million Little Oblivions," 163-178

Due:

- Weekly Reflective Journal
- **Integrative Projects** (Due by the start of class)

Selected Seminary Policies:

United's Statement on Interreligious Engagement

United is a progressive Christian seminary rooted in the United Church of Christ, grounded in the liberal Protestant tradition, and committed to interreligious engagement, welcoming students of all faiths and religious traditions (and of none) into its community.

Although United does not have the resources or theological training among its faculty to provide an equal experience for persons of every religious tradition, all of the faculty and staff are committed to providing safe and welcoming space for non-Christian students, staff

and faculty and are also committed in our education to co-learning with and from our non-Christian students and faculty, humbly seeking knowledge and insight and growth in our relationships with religious others.

United's complete Statement on Interreligious Engagement is in the Seminary-Wide Policies document, available on the Student resources webpage.

Required Technology

All United students are expected to have knowledge of and access to a minimum level of technology in order to participate in online activities and submit required course materials online. This technology includes a PC or Mac computer with an Internet connection, a working webcam, microphone, and speakers, as well as the Zoom videoconferencing tool installed. See the "Student Technology Requirements" section of the *Student Handbook* for a complete list of technology expectations.

Remote Zoom Use

Please follow the instructions linked below on joining a class session using Zoom. Be sure to test your audio and video in Zoom before the first class session and read the expected behaviors for participating remotely:

https://unitedseminary.instructure.com/courses/35/pages/zoom-tutorials#join_zoom

If you are enrolled in the on-campus section of a course, you are normally not permitted to attend any class sessions via Zoom. A student enrolled in the on-campus section of a course may, in very rare and exceptional circumstances, attend a single class meeting via Zoom with prior approval of the instructor. The student's attendance will be marked as an approved absence for that session.

Zoom Behavior Expectations

Students participating in a classroom session via Zoom are expected to observe the same respectful behavior as they would if they were physically present in the classroom. These behaviors include dressing appropriately for class; setting aside a quiet room to join the class without foreseeable potential distractions; being punctual in joining the class and returning from breaks; remaining within view of the class by webcam (except during breaks); only eating during breaks; and no driving or social media. See the "Student Technology Requirements" section of the *Student Handbook* for a more complete list of expectations.

Instructors have the right to refuse the participation of Zoom-in students who fail to observe these behavior expectations and ask that the student rejoin when they are able to comply. Students who are unable to rejoin a class session due to noncompliance with behavior expectations may be marked absent.

Student Teaching Assistants

Some courses have a student teaching assistant to carry out some course functions as defined by the instructor including helping develop lesson plans, making or assisting in class presentations, facilitating discussion groups, engaging in individual consultations with students about course issues, keeping records of attendance and participation, consulting with students about papers and exams, and evaluating student group processes. Student assistants are prohibited from grading exams, papers, projects, etc. and leading class sessions in absence of the instructor, except in emergency situations.

United's full policy on student teaching assistants is located in the Student Assistant Directed Study section of the Student Handbook, available on the Student resources webpage.

Course Attendance

Excessive absences or tardiness, even for legitimate reasons, may jeopardize a student's course grade or course completion. Absences that exceed 1/3 of the total class meetings (e.g., 4 absences in a 12-week academic term) will normally result in a failing grade for a course. At the professor's discretion, excessive tardiness will count as absences. A more restrictive attendance policy stated in an individual course's syllabus supersedes the general attendance policy described here. See the *Student Handbook* for the full Course Attendance policy.

Email Communications

To be in compliance with FERPA regulations, email communications from United faculty and staff will be sent only to students' United email accounts. Assistance setting up forward or redirection of messages to another email account is available by contacting computersupport@unitedseminary.edu.

Live Streaming and Recorded Class Sessions

Some United seminary classes are offered for online or distance students via live streaming or recording for later viewing. In addition, some of your classes may be recorded for use by other current or future students. You indicate your agreement to be recorded by taking the class. If you object to being recorded for seminary use outside of this course, either as a whole or in a particular class session, please notify the instructor of your course at the beginning of the term or particular class so that alternate arrangements can be made.

Course Extensions

The instructor shall evaluate each student's performance in a course on the basis of the work submitted by the last day of the academic term, unless the instructor approves an extension of time for the student to complete coursework beyond the end of the term. The

instructor shall approve an extension only under extraordinary circumstances. The instructor must agree to the extension by the last day of the academic term. In the case that the student is unable to contact the instructor in time due to critical health issues, the student must obtain the instructor's agreement as soon as possible after the end of the term. See the *Student Handbook* for the complete policy.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism and cheating are each serious acts of academic dishonesty and violations of the seminary's Academic Integrity policy. Ignorance concerning the proper citation of sources or the unauthorized use of external assistance in a student's work does not exempt the student from the consequences of academic dishonesty. If plagiarism or cheating are detected, consequences may include an "F" for the assignment in question, or an "F" for the course. Repeated offenses may be grounds for dismissal from the student's program. See the *Student Handbook* for more information.

Use of Generative AI in Coursework

Unless otherwise noted, students may use generative AI (such as ChatCPT, DEET-E, etc.) to assist in the development of assignments and other coursework. Examples include the development of outlines, proofreading, and the creation of illustrations. Students may not submit an assignment entirely generated by AI, unless explicit permission to do so is given by the instructor. Students should be aware of the potential for inaccuracies and biases in AI generated content; students are responsible for the content of assignments submitted.

All use of AI, including in the development process, must be acknowledged and cited. Information on citation, including examples, can be found on the Chicago Manual of Style website. It is a violation of United's academic integrity policies to use generative AI tools if a) the instructor explicitly bans their use and b) the use of generative AI is not disclosed and cited appropriately.

Student Misconduct

United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities strives for an educational environment in which the greatest academic potential of its students and professional potential of its faculty and staff may be realized. The Seminary therefore prohibits student behavior that disrupts Seminary activities or brings harm to its participants. Any student found to have violated the Student Misconduct Policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the Seminary.

See the *Student Handbook* for the complete Student Misconduct Policy, including behaviors that constitute a violation of the seminary's student conduct standards, the procedure the Seminary follows to determine a violation of these standards, and the steps for recourse when a violation has been committed.

Other Seminary Policies

For further information and details regarding all other academic policies and procedures, including those listed below, please see the following documents available on the Canvas Student Resources page.

Student Handbook

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities
Tuition Charge Reductions for Dropped Courses
Counseling

Seminary-Wide Policies

Closing Procedure for Inclement Weather
Copyright Law
Inclusive Language
Freedom of Inquiry and Expression
Notice of Nondiscrimination
Confidentiality and Disclosure within Small Group Settings
Boundaries Between Faculty and Students
Sexual Harassment
Reporting Sexual Offenses