

McGill University

Faculty of Religious Studies

RELG 399 Christian Spirituality Fall 2020

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<https://www.mcgill.ca/philosophy/gaelle-fiasse>
<https://www.mcgill.ca/religiousstudies/gaelle-fiasse>

Course online

We will meet at the time of the regular schedule on ZOOM:

When? Monday and Wednesday from 1h05 to 2h25.

The first part of the session will be a lecture, the second part will be based on class discussion.

You will be able to connect yourself to zoom via MyCourses

<https://mycourses2.mcgill.ca/d2l/home#>

Then click on Zoom

I will make recordings available to students from within myCourses (the first part of the lecture (55'), not the class discussion (30')). However for the students who cannot attend the class because they are in another time zone or don't have an appropriate internet connection, they will have the possibility to post their reactions to the texts and to the group discussions on Mycourses.

Contacting me

Email: write to me at gaelle.fiasse@mcgill.ca: please write "RELG 399" in the subject. I will not use « MyCourses » for emails.

Office hours : ideally on Thursday, from 9:00 to 11:00 or at a convenient time. Send me an email and we will meet on zoom at a precise time.

Topic

Christian Spirituality covers a huge number of authors and texts. For this course, we will specifically focus on the interpretations of the Beatitudes (Mt 5 1:12), and the *Song of Songs* by some Christian authors. We will therefore pay attention to the quest for happiness and mystic union with God in specific texts in the Franciscan tradition (Clare of Assisi, Francis of Assisi), and in the Carmelite tradition (Thérèse of Avila, John of the Cross, Thérèse of Lisieux, Elizabeth of the Trinity). We will also analyze the

understanding of Beatitudes in Augustine and Aquinas, and then analyze the views of contemporary authors who linked the Beatitudes and union with God to specific actions. First, Christian de Chergé and Pierre Claverie in their dialogues with Muslims during the difficult years of Algeria. Second, Martin Luther King and non-violent action. For the latter, we will also pay a close attention to the discussions about the contrast (common points and differences) between Martin Luther King and *#BlackLivesMatter*.

General Aims

- historical:

To study and discuss together some major authors who have had an important influence on Christian Spirituality and to analyze the challenges they continue to raise.

To develop a cultural, philosophical and Christian background about spirituality.

- analytical:

To understand and compare the different authors' premises and methods.

To see how different authors in a particular tradition consider the same topic.

- practical:

To be able to work from selected sources in Christianity on the same topic by making use of different authors.

Required textbooks:

Two books and articles posted on MyCourses. See Bibliography

Methodology and Evaluation

No prerequisite is required, neither in Philosophy nor Religious studies. One major advantage of the class will be the continuous evaluation during the semester, which gives room for improvements to be made in the assignments and to become more comfortable during class discussions. See the schedule below.

Books to purchase (Available at McGill Bookstore)

– John of the Cross, *Living Flame of Love*. Transl., ed. and with an introduction by E. Allison Peers from the critical edition of P. Silverio de Santa Teresa (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing: 2014).

– Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, *Story of A Soul. The Autobiography*. Transl. from the Original Manuscripts by John Clarke. Third Edition (Washington D.C.: ICS Publications, 2017).

Articles online (See Mycourses)

Evaluation:

Active In-class Participation or Group Discussions	10%	Attendance, discussion on ZOOM, role of representative
5 Short Assignments	30%	3 pages - double-spaced
7 Posts about the readings	20%	Answers to a question (half of a page)
Take-Home	40%	Open-book test

1. Active In-Class Participation (synchronously or asynchronously)

Regular attendance and participation is crucial in order to keep up to date with the readings and the course material. However, given that the classes will be taught on zoom, it might not be possible for everyone to be present synchronously, even though students are highly encouraged to attend the lectures at the scheduled time.

So, here is the organization of the course. We will have class twice a week, that is, every Monday and Wednesday for 1h25 on zoom. You will find the zoom invitation on Mycourses. During the first 55 minutes, I will lecture on the texts, and this part will be recorded and posted on Mycourses. Most of the time, the last half an hour of the session will be dedicated to class discussion. The class discussion will not be recorded in order to make sure that students feel totally free to express their views orally. For the class discussion, I will usually use the breakout room on zoom and give students a question to discuss in small groups. You will have 10 minutes to answer it by group. Each group will have to appoint a representative of the discussion. After the 10 minutes, this representative will have to share with all members of the course the main points and answers of the discussion. After the session, the representative will also post the answers on Mycourses in the section "group discussions". Students must alternate the role of the representative.

If you are unable to attend the course synchronously, you will have the possibility to listen to the recorded part of the lecture and then to post your own answer to the group discussions on Mycourses before the next class.

2. Assignments

You will have to write a short paper that answers a question five times during the semester. The format is three-page, typed, double-spaced. It must be posted on MyCourses in the folder "Assignments". The five assignments are mandatory and are due on time. At the end of the term, I will count the four best assignments over five, with the condition that each assignment was written with proper care. The goal is to foster excellence, not laziness. (Even for A's there is a difference between 85, 87 or 90 %)

3. Posts about the readings on Mycourses

Seven times during the semester, you will have to answer a question on the texts on Mycourses. This post will help you to keep up with the readings, and to participate in class. It is thus an easy way to be organized and to win grades.

They must be posted before the class.

When? on Friday 10 AM for Monday classes.

The question will be either a very specific question on the text or a more individual question such as : Which passage struck you the most, why? Or what was your main difficulty with this text? It must be half of a page. The lowest two posts won't count towards your final grade –with the condition that each assignment was written with proper care – but the seven posts are mandatory. Again, use this opportunity wisely in order to excel in the course.

4. Take-Home Exam

I will give you several questions to answer in the take-home. It will test your understanding of the texts and your ability to think critically about them. A take-home is an open-book exam to write at home but as a written exam, no late submission is possible. You will receive the questions the last day of classes. You will have to submit an electronic version (on MyCourses) on the date of the exam during the exam period.

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/students/> for more information).

All the lectures, even the recording of the lectures on Mycourses, are the propriety of McGill University. It is thus strictly prohibited to post them on the internet.

Plagiarism

Not mentioning your sources, published or unpublished, constitutes an act of plagiarism. For instance, if you use a website without due reference in the text and in the bibliography; if you use a paper written by another (ideas or words of someone else), without making any reference to the author; if you quote a book or a paper as a reference of your own, without having read it; if you use your own work submitted for another class.

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<http://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/plagiarism>

Students with Disabilities

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

Language of Submission

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. However, for group discussions, the post must be in English, since obviously not everyone in the classroom will know French.