

Mountain Theological Seminary
Graduate Course Syllabus
Jesus and Spiritual Formation
SF603/CT654/CM654

May 24-July 17, 2026

MTS

Arvada, CO 80004

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NOTE: This is an 8-week accelerated course. One full semester of work occurs within 8-weeks of study.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course teaches biblical principles of helping Christ be formed in each individual disciple by exploring the life of Jesus and the gospels. The course focuses on how Jesus practiced the spiritual disciplines and what Jesus taught about the spiritual disciplines.

COURSE RATIONALE

The goal of spiritual formation is to form Christ in the heart and life of every apprentice of Jesus. That being the case, the first place to begin a study of the classic spiritual disciplines that lead to spiritual formation should be the life of Jesus. How did Jesus practice the spiritual disciplines in his life and ministry? What can we, as students and disciples of Jesus, learn from his practice of the spiritual disciplines? This course will explore these matters.

MTS MISSION

The mission of Mountain Theological Seminary is to equip followers of Jesus around the world to be spiritual leaders and servants in Christ's church by providing them with a transformative biblical distance education.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Our approach will be:

First, to define spiritual formation.

Second, to identify the classic spiritual disciplines.

Third, to see how Jesus practiced each of the classic spiritual disciplines.

Fourth, to apply what we learn to our own practice of the spiritual disciplines.

As a result of this course, students should accomplish the following **objectives**:

1. The student should be able to evaluate the theological foundations, goals, and processes of spiritual formation, with particular attention to their grounding in the life and teachings of Jesus.

2. The student should be able to compare and assess the effectiveness and limitations of the classic spiritual disciplines in fostering spiritual formation across different contexts in Christian life and ministry.
3. The student should analyze and interpret key passages from the Gospels that demonstrate how Jesus practiced the classic spiritual disciplines in both his private devotion and public ministry.
4. The student should be able to synthesize lessons learned from Jesus' practice of the spiritual discipline and integrate those insights in his or her own life.

COURSE TEXTBOOKS

Required:

1. Foster, Richard. (1988). *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (Third Edition). San Francisco: Harper San Francisco. ISBN: 0060628391.
2. Dallas Willard. (1988). *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers. ISBN: 978-0061974908.
3. Henri Nouwen. (1979). *The Wounded Healer*. New York: Doubleday. ISBN: 385148038.
4. Ronald Rolheiser. (2009). *The Holy Longing*. New York: Image. ISBN: 038549419X.
5. Ronald Rolheiser. (2017). *Sacred Fire*. New York: Image. ISBN: 80413944X.

Suggested:

1. G. Steve Kinnard. 2006. *The Way of the Heart, Volume 1*. Illumination Publishers.
2. G. Steve Kinnard. 2015. *The Way of the Heart of Jesus*. Illumination Publishers.

For Writing papers please use *Turabian* style and format: The following link is available for reference:

http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Required Textbook Reading and Log (fulfills Course Objectives 1 thru 4 above):

See assigned reading listed in Course Schedule below. Students are to keep a reading log (which is to include textbook name, pages read, and dates read) for each week and e-mail it to the instructor (at stevekinnard@mac.com placing "Jesus and Spiritual Formation" in the subject line) by midnight on the last day of class. Total time = 30 hours. 15% of final grade.

Due on the last day of class: 7/17.

2. Discussion Assignments (fulfills Course Objectives 1 thru 4 above):

Students will be given discussion questions at the beginning of each week for which he or she is to post on Canvas totaling at least four double-spaced (unless single-spacing is requested) pages (approximately 1000 words using 12-point font with 1 inch margins, so 1 page of typed text equals about 250 words.) These will be due at midnight on Tuesday of that corresponding week. Total time = 30. 15% of final grade.

3. Discussion Responses (fulfills Course Objectives 1 thru 4 above):

Students are to briefly respond to, interact with, and constructively engage in dialog with one other student the same-week as the Tuesday discussion-question-postings on Canvas. The responses are to contribute ideas that help to inform and enrich the postings he or she interacts with. These will be due at midnight on Thursday of that same corresponding week and should be approximately 500 words in length. Total time = 21 hours. 10% of final grade.

4. Read the Response. (fulfills Course Objective 1 thru 4 above):

Students must read the responses given to their comments each week. They should respond to the responses. These can be short responses, but the student should demonstrate that he or she has read and is interacting with the other students' comments. These final responses are due at midnight on Friday of the corresponding week. Total time + 21 hours. 10% of final grade.

5. Research Paper (fulfills Course Objective 1 thru 4 above). Total time + 40 hours. 50% of final grade.

Due on the last day of class: 7/17.

USDE REQUIREMENTS

The United States Department of Education (USDE) requires a minimum of 135 hours of work for *any* 3-hour course, regardless of how long the course lasts. It does not have to be the *same work* as a traditional 15-week course, but it must be the *same amount* of work. Use the following formula for reading and writing workloads: an average adult student takes 1 hour to read and absorb 20 pages of graduate-level text and 1.5 hours to research and write and rewrite 1 page of graduate-level text. Our reading and writing guidelines require about 1,000 pages of reading per course and up to 50 pages of writing per course (including any online posts). Using the formula above, for example, reading 1,000 pages should take about 50 hours and writing 50 pages should take about 75 hours. That is a total of 125 hours, not including any in-class time for any onsite or offsite courses.

Use the following formula for determining total student work hours:

of hours in class (including online, in person, and video) + (X pages /20) hours of reading + (Y pages of writing and research x 1.5) hours of writing \geq 135 hours. Note that the total number of hours in a course may be more than 135, but it cannot be less.

1 hour in the classroom = 1 hour of course work

20 pages of reading = 1 hour of course work

1 page (300 words) of research and writing = 1.5 hours of course work

1 hour of field research = 1 hour of course work

1 page of online posting (200+ words) = 1 hour of course work.

COURSE GRADING

Below is the MTS grading scale for this class:

A	Excellent	94–100	4.00
A-		90–93	3.67
B+		87–89	3.33
B	Good	83-86	3.00
B-		80-82	2.67
C+		77-79	2.33
C	Average	73-76	2.00
C-		70-72	1.67
D+		67-69	1.33
D	Passing	63-66	1.00
D-		60-62	0.67
F*	Failing	0–59	0.00

Guidelines for the Research Paper:

Topic: The Teaching and Practice of (pick one spiritual discipline and insert here) in the Life and Ministry of Jesus.

Example: The Teaching and Practice of Fasting in the Life and Ministry of Jesus.

I. Define and Delineate the Spiritual Discipline.

A. Research sources not used in class to define and describe the spiritual discipline you are researching. Begin the paper by defining your topic.

B. Research the whole of the Bible to see how this discipline was taught and practiced throughout the Bible. Give a short overview of what you have learned.

II. Research the Gospels to understand how Jesus practiced this Spiritual Discipline in his life and ministry.

A. Survey the whole of the Gospel accounts to get a comprehensive view of how this spiritual discipline was used in the ministry of Jesus.

B. When you find particular passages that speak directly to the use or teaching of this spiritual discipline in the life and ministry of Jesus, dive deeper into that passage and exegete the passage to harvest meaning from the text.

(1) When you focus in on a particular passage, research outside sources to learn understand what scholars say about the passage. Read at least 3 scholarly Bible commentaries and 2 scholarly journals on

the passage and glean from them any important information you discover for use in your paper. Note these sources in your bibliography and, if used in your paper, footnote (or endnote) them appropriately.

(2) Include your view of the passage and what you understand the passage to communicate concerning this particular spiritual discipline.

III. Write according to the following:

A. Write the paper, paying attention to spelling, grammar, and style according to Turabian.

B. Begin with an introductory paragraph or two in which you introduce the topic. In this introduction state the thesis of your paper (i.e. the main point of the paper) in one or two sentences and include the conclusions you have come to and will explain in the body of the paper.

C. The body of the paper should include the following:

(1) Introduction.

(2) Definition of the spiritual discipline.

(3) Overview of the use of this spiritual discipline throughout the Bible.

(4) The use and teaching of the spiritual discipline in the ministry of Jesus.

(5) Special focus on any particular passages in the Gospels that highlight the spiritual discipline.

(6) Conclusions from your study.

(7) How has this study influenced your practice of this spiritual discipline. Include a final section in your paper in which you spell out the passage's significance for (1) your thinking about the issue or about your faith in general, (2) what change you may need to make in your personal life as a result of your study, (3) how it applies to your church, and (4) how this passage can be applied as a guide or an evangelistic tool for society and the world today.

IV. Include a bibliography of all the sources (not just the ones used) you consulted for the paper. Total Time = 22 hours or approximately 3 hours per week.

Paper Grading Rubric:

1. Minimum pages: 20% of Exegesis Paper Grade 100pts

2. Cogency of paper: 20% of Exegesis Paper Grade 100pt

3. Cogency of Contemporary Application: 20% of Exegesis Paper Grade 100pts

4. Citations and usage of Scholarly Sources: 20% of Exegesis Paper Grade 100pts

5. Grammar and Neatness: 10% of Exegesis Paper Grade 50pts

6. Bibliography: 10% of Exegesis Paper Grade 50pts

COURSE SCHEDULE

Schedule

Week 1: 5/24-5/30

Week 2: 5/31-6/6

Week 3: 6/7-6/13

Week 4: 6/14-6/20

Week 5: 6/21-6/27

Week 6: 6/28-7/4

Week 7: 7/4-7/11

Week 8: 7/12-7/17

Weekly Schedule:

Sunday-Tuesday.

Read assigned material.
Watch video.

Tuesday by midnight.

Answer discussion questions.

Wednesday by midnight.

Read answers to the discussion questions.
Respond to the students' answers. Respond to at least two students.

Thursday-Friday.

Read responses from the other students to your answers.
Work on your paper. Research and writing.
Friday by midnight.
Respond to the student responses to your answers.

Saturday.

Read the responses to your response.
Work on your paper. Research and writing.

To Be Clear:

I should be receiving material from you three times a week.

By Tuesday Midnight: Answer all the discussion questions.

By Wednesday Midnight: Respond to at least two students' answers.

By Friday Midnight: Respond to at least two students' responses to your responses.

This is a very important part of the course. This is where students interact with other students.

POLICIES

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend every class session. In the event that a student misses one class session, he/she must work with the instructor to determine what is needed to make up what was missed. If the student does not make up the work in a satisfactory manner, the student's final grade will be lowered one letter grade at the end of the course. If the student misses two class sessions, the student's final grade will be lowered one letter grade provided that he/she makes up work for both class sessions. If that make up work is not completed, then the final grade will be lowered by two letter grades. If the student misses three class sessions, he/she will be given an F for his/her final grade and not be allowed to finish the course.

At times students have legitimate extenuating circumstances for their absences from class. If this occurs and the student is doing well in class up to that point, the student can contact the professor of the class and the Dean of the appropriate MTS School and ask for a 30-day extension beyond the end of class to complete the work in the class. This request however must be made at least 2 weeks before the final class session. If a 30-day extension is approved beyond the end of class and the student fails to finish all the requirements of the class by the end of those 30 days, the student will be assigned an F for his/her final grade for that class. Appeals can be made to the MTS President.

LATE WORK POLICY

All work is due when listed in the course syllabus, unless otherwise stipulated by the instructor. Grading of any late work on any assignment during the semester will be done at the discretion of the Instructor. (Note that instructors are not under obligation to accept any assignment that is late but may do so and grade it if they wish according to their discretion). No work may be accepted later than one week after the course concludes, since ***final grades for all classes are due two weeks after the last class session***. The only exception to this policy is for students who request and are granted an official course extension as noted in the above paragraph. All such extensions are granted only for extreme circumstances (extended illness, death in family, etc.), and the extension may not exceed 30 days from

the last day of class. Only the appropriate MTS Dean may grant such requests, which must be made in writing at least 2 weeks before the last class session. Otherwise, the grade earned at the end of the class is the one granted.

ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL DISCIPLINSHIP INTEGRITY POLICY

It is the policy of MTS that its students and faculty exhibit a high standard of honesty and integrity and a commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Students are expected to be committed to a living standard depicted in the Bible both academically and relationally both inside and outside of school. Incidents of lack of integrity, including such things as plagiarism, cheating, treating others with lack of respect will be taken seriously and offenders held accountable up to and including probation, suspension and/or removal from their academic program and MTS. All infractions should be reported to the appropriate Dean of MTS.

INSTRUCTOR/STUDENT COVENANT

As instructor of this course, I covenant with each student that I will model Christ-like behavior, value and respect each student as a fellow disciple/learner, be prepared for each class session, make appropriate assignments, grade all assignments fairly, return all graded assignments promptly, and be available for consultation outside of class. In return, I expect each student to model Christ-like behavior, value and respect fellow students and me as the instructor, be prepared for each class session, and complete assignments in ways that demonstrate your integrity.

ONLINE ETIQUETTE

Most of the online or hybrid courses in the graduate programs require students to interact with each other and with the instructor on a regular basis (per syllabus instructions). Most of that interaction is done through online comments posted on Canvas. Due to the constraints and unique nature of online communication, students should be aware of the tone or insinuations of any comments they post. Comments can often be misinterpreted when non-verbal cues such as facial expression and voice intonation are not present. Excessive punctuation, such as repeated exclamation points, could be construed as overly emotional or angry. Students need to consider how remarks might be interpreted by someone who does not know them personally and can only take their words at face value. Students should compose their comments per instructions under the syllabus assignments, paying careful attention to proper grammar and spelling.

LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

While MTS does not have an official Physical library onsite. However, we do have an online library for all students. Students can access this library with the link and User ID and Password noted below:

MTS Library link and access codes:

<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?authtype=ip,uid&custid=s9813984&profile=ehost&defaultdb=aph>

Username: rmsmt2016

Password: ICOC!YYYY (YYYY = Current Year)

There are also many theological school libraries which are available in the Denver area for students to use with the schools' permission. These include:

The Denver Seminary Library
6399 South Santa Fe Drive
Littleton, Colorado 80120

Colorado Christian University
8787 W. Alameda Ave.
Lakewood, CO 80226

Iliff School of Theology
2323 E. Iliff Ave.
Denver, CO 80021

In addition, there are several State University libraries in the Denver area which can be visited for research including the University of Colorado in Boulder, Regis University, University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, Colorado College in Colorado Springs, Naropa University in Boulder. The best search engine for biblical article research is EBSCO ATLA Religion with Serials data base which can be found at all of the above libraries.

Please also visit any theological or university library in your area of the world to see if they have access to ATLAS Religion data base or other religious/counseling search engines. In Colorado, you may also check with local libraries for the availability of EBSCO *Academic Search Premier* data base. It searches many well respected academic religious journals.