337-01C Franciscan Spirituality

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Description: This course will foster a deep understanding of Franciscan spirituality through exploration of the socio-historical milieu of Francis and Clare, readings of their works, hagiographical accounts, and discussion of their theological and spiritual legacy. After gaining a historical appreciation of the Franciscan tradition, we will consider particular themes in Franciscan spirituality in order to understand the challenges of the Franciscan way of life and what it has to offer us today. We will consider these themes in light of Xavier’s Jesuit tradition and place them in conversation with the recent papal encyclical “The Joy of the Gospel” in order to consider how the “Revolution of Tenderness,” begun with the ministry of Jesus and revivified by Francis and Clare, now invites us, in the 21st century, to embody the presence of the “loving God who reigns in our world.” (Joy of the Gospel, par. 179)

Student Learning Outcomes: Upon completion of the course students will be able to…

1. Describe the socio-historical context of the late twelfth/early thirteen-century that gave rise to the Franciscan movement and articulate how urban life influenced the rise of Christian ideals of poverty and solidarity.
2. Narrate the pivotal moments of change and growth in the lives of Francis and Clare of Assisi and show the progression of their spiritual lives as their relationship with God deepened.
3. Articulate key elements of Franciscan Spirituality and the distinctively Franciscan sense of practices like apostolic engagement, poverty, misericordia, and reverence for creation.
4. Articulate what Franciscan spirituality has to offer us today, in our socio-historical circumstances, in the service of faith and the promotion of justice.

Course Texts: E-reserves password = francis

Primary Texts:

2. Clare of Assisi, Letters to Agnes of Prague and Testament and Canonization testimonials for Clare of Assisi; all in Clare of Assisi: The Lady (ISBN: 1-56548-221-2)
3. Bonaventure, Life of St. Francis in Boanventure, The Soul’s Journey into God, The Tree of Life, and The Life of St. Francis (0-8091-2121-2)
Secondary Texts:

1. Lester Little, Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe (chapter on e-reserve)
2. Joan Mueller, The Privilege of Poverty: Clare of Assisi, Agnes of Prague, and the Struggle for a Franciscan Rule for Women (excerpts on e-reserve)
5. Other Readings given out in class

Class Format: This course will combine group lecture with discussions informed by reading and personal reflection. You are expected to contribute to the experience of learning in this course by making perceptive comments, asking pertinent questions, and engaging in discussion of the texts studied. You are encouraged to come to class with key passages in your readings highlighted and with questions that have emerged for you as you have prepared the readings.

The class is an accelerated, eight-week course consisting of four modules:

Module 1: Social and Religious Context of Francis and Clare  assignment due January 21
Module 2: Significant Moments in the Lives of Francis and Clare  assignment due February 11
Module 3: Collaboration and the Unfolding Partnership with God  assignment due February 18
Module 4: A Way of Life for Today: Solidarity and Communio  assignment due February 25
Final Reflection due by Tuesday, March 4 at 9:00 p.m.
Schedule of Lecture/Discussion Topics and Readings to be Prepared for Class

January 14   Introduction, “Reluctant Saint”

MODULE 1  Social and Religious Context of Francis and Clare

January 21   Discussion of Urban and Religious Life at the Turn of the 13th Century
(Read Lester K. Little chapter on Blackboard)

MODULE 2  The Lives of Francis and Clare: Conversion to God in the Marginalized

January 28   The Leper Colony, Working with the Poor, Life outside the City Walls
(Maria Maddalena, San Damiano, Rivo Torto)

We will discuss the narrative tradition around Francis and Clare, including:

Thomas of Celano, The Life of St. Francis, book 1, chapters 1-7; Bonaventure, The Life of St. Francis, chapters 1-2; A. Fortini, Francis of Assisi, chapters 3, 4, 6, and 7; Joan Mueller, The Privilege of Poverty Clare of Assisi, Agnes of Prague, and the Struggle for a Franciscan Rule for Women, pp. 1-12; and Francis’ Testament, verses 1-3, 14-17 and Francis, “The Prayer before the Crucifix”

February 4   The Evangelical Way: “Preach the Gospel at all times; use words when necessary”

We will discuss Francis’ writings and Clare’s canonization records; Francis’ Testament, verses 14-41, Francis’ Early Rule and A Letter to the Entire Order, Joan Mueller, The Privilege of Poverty, pp. 12-52 and Ilia Delio, Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love, pp. xi-xxiv

February 11  Incarnational Theology

Discuss: Clare’s letters to Agnes of Prague; Joan Mueller, The Privilege of Poverty, pp. 53-72; Ilia Delio, Clare of Assisi, pp. 1-8, 26-39, 54-78, 96-118

February 18   Collaboration and the Unfolding Partnership with God

Discuss: previous readings plus course reading packet

February 25   The Joy of the Gospel

Discuss: The Joy of the Gospel; please bring in previous readings for an intertextual discussion

March 4    Final essay due
**Grading:** Your grade will be based upon your four reflection papers, and one reflection paper (8 pages), divided as follows:

- Module 1 Assignment: 20%
- Module 2 Assignment: 20%
- Module 3 Assignment: 20%
- Module 4 Assignment: 20%
- Final Essay: 20%

The Theology Department employs the following grading standards in keeping with Xavier University policy. Grades are indicative of student academic performance, not student effort.

- **A** = Exceptional performance, evidenced by uncommonly high academic achievement and mastery of the subject, critical analysis, effective communication and creativity.
- **B** = Good academic performance, evidenced by high quality academic achievement and demonstrated by above average skills in analysis, communication and expression.
- **C** = Satisfactory academic achievement, evidenced by standard or average competency.
- **D** = Minimal academic performance
- **F** = Failure

The above grades reflect a spectrum of performances and may be tempered with a + or −.

The Theology Department uses an eight-point grading scale, such that A = 92-100; B = 84-91, C = 76-83, D = 68-75, and F = 67 or below.

**Course Expectations:** Students must participate in and complete all on-line course modules, attend all class meetings, including one session before departure and all meetings and discussions during the on-site intensive. Students must complete all pre-departure assignments, submitted electronically by the date listed on each assignment. Students must come prepared for discussion, reflection, engagement, listening, and observation. Students will be graded on the quality (not merely the frequency) of their reflective contributions.