

## CONTEMPLATION IN ACTION (RGT3322/6322S)

### Spring 2012

Professor: Jack Costello SJ, Regis College  
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Hours: Thursdays, 11:15am to 2:00pm or by appointment.  
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### AIMS OF THE COURSE

1. **To explore and develop a theology of contemplation as a constitutive dimension of genuine action in the world:** [What is the relationship of contemplation and action? Can they flourish at once in our relationship with God, persons, culture and the wider world?].
2. **To grow in our appreciation of the place of contemplation in “life in the spirit” and Christian action in the world.**
3. **To deepen this “felt understanding” of contemplation in action** through the writings and living of people who can fairly be described as “contemplatives in action.”

### READINGS

**Required readings** are in the form of photocopied handouts provided by the professor or indicated materials on the reserve shelf or online which you will be expected to copy or print out on your own.

(It is ideal if you have a version of the readings that can be marked as you study them. Not a library book!)

**Optional readings** on reserve shelf or online are recommended but not required. Ask professor to suggest items according to your interests..

### REQUIREMENTS & GRADING SCHEMA

1. Clear evidence in class discussion, presentations, etc. of having **read and engaged the required readings. (10%)**
2. **Summary** of main reading assigned for **two** designated classes—one page & single-spaced. **(10%)**
3. **Mid-term 5 pp. essay** reflecting personal learning in terms of course themes studied thus far in the course. **(30%)**
4. **Final essay.** 10-12 pp for BD students, 20-23pp for AD students **(50%)**

### NOTES

**The final 10-page essay for BD students is due on Wed. April 11<sup>th</sup> at 4:30pm [extensions by way of exception only].**

**AD students have until Fri, April 27<sup>th</sup> to submit their 20 pp essay.**

Theme & development of this final essay to be discussed with the professor between March 22 and April 5, and prior to starting to write. Student must take the initiative to make an appointment.

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**JANUARY 12: INTRODUCTION**

- a. Introductions
- b. Situating contemplation in action as a problematic in Christian spiritual theology.

**Part I. Philosophical and Theological Foundations**

**JANUARY 19: WHAT DOES LIVING “SPIRITUALLY” MEAN?**

***Required readings for this class:***

Ron Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, Parts I & II. pp. 3-70.

***Optional, background reading:*** Rolheiser’s article ‘Hope & Concern: the Millennium’

*First hour:* Reflections on the readings... RR’s meaning of a “spiritual” life... *Second hour:* Intro to Macmurray’s integrated/integrating view of reason and the world.

**JANUARY 26: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED/INTEGRATING VIEW OF REASON**

*Readings for this class:*

1. “Introduction” to *Reason and Emotion* (RE) by John Macmurray.
2. RE, chapters 1 & 3. “Reason in the Emotional Life I” & “III”

**FEBRUARY 2: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED/INTEGRATING VIEW OF PERSONS**

*Readings for this class:*

1. “The Personal Life,” RE, John Macmurray, pp. 53-67.
2. “Reason and Religion,” RE, John Macmurray pp.117-128.

**Optional:** J. Macmurray, RE, ch.4, “Education of the Emotions” and ch.5, “The Early Discipline of Personality” [some essential elements for living spiritually discussed here].

Discussion: Macmurray’s view of ‘functional’ vs. ‘personal’ living & examining the Macmurray proposal that fully positive personal relating is, in fact, living religiously.

**FEBRUARY 9: PERSONS IN COMMUNION: THE HEART OF RELIGIOUS ACTION**

*Readings for this class:*

1. “Religious Reality,” from RE, pp.129-139
2. “The Trinity and Human Rights,” from *The Fullness of Faith* by Michael Himes & Kenneth Himes, pp.55-73

***Optional:***

First hour: Contemplation in Macmurray’s view of living ‘community’ and religiously, and Himes’ view of God-as-community and the imperative to become “community.”

**Optional reading:** John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, Intro & chap. I. pp. 15-67.

## **FEB 16: JESUS: COMPASSION AND SPIRIT IN CHRISTIAN CONTEMPLATION**

*Readings for this class:*

John Haughey, *The Conspiracy of God*, Chap. 1, "Jesus of Nazareth and the Spirit of God.."

*First hour:* two students will present key issues of this reading (20 min), and open it up for discussion. Contemplation modelling itself on living as Jesus lived.

*Second hour:* Introduction to Thomas Merton as contemporary contemplative

## **FEBRUARY 23: READING WEEK—NO CLASS. Essay due at class on March 1<sup>st</sup>.**

**Assignment:** Prepare a 5-page, double-spaced essay focussing on some major theme from our authors that has added to your appreciation of the meaning of 'contemplation in action.' Say something on 'how' and perhaps 'why'.

## **Part II: The Witness of Contemplatives**

### **MARCH 1: FALSE SELF, TRUE SELF: THOMAS MERTON. Part I**

*Readings for this class:*

1. James Finley, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere*, pp.10-85

**first part of class:** Exploring Merton's notions of false self and true self.

### **MARCH 8: FALSE SELF, TRUE SELF: THOMAS MERTON. Part 2**

*Readings for this class:*

1. James Finley, *Merton's Palace of Nowhere*, pp.86-145.

**Note:** Thomas Merton develops his reflections on contemplation in many different writings, including his journals. Any reading of Merton's own work will be important.

### **MARCH 15: THE IGNATIAN TRADITION Part I: THE PRIMACY OF LOVE**

*Readings for this class:*

1. "Something that Happened to Me at Manresa," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* by Charles J. Jackson SJ, 38/2. pp.1-40.
2. Principle and Foundation, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, Michael Ivens. 22-32.
3. Witness's "decision," in Alan Paton's novel *Cry the Beloved Country*. (One page).

*first part of class:* the Ignatian mystical vision as ground of contemplation in action.

*Second part:* The centrality of Jesus: love & freedom in Ignatian contemplation/action.

### **MARCH 22: THE IGNATIAN TRADITION II: PARTICIPATION AND DISCERNMENT**

*Readings for this class:*

1. "Contemplation for Divine Love", M. Ivens, pp.169-178.
2. The Examen as faith-reflection on personal/communal self-knowledge and action.

**Recommended:** Reading the whole of *Cry the Beloved Country* by Alan Paton, and *The Gaze of Love: Meditations on Art & Spiritual Transformation* by Sr Wendy Beckett.

### **Part III: Contemplation, Discernment and Action**

#### **MARCH 29: SOCIALLY STRUCTURED VALUES: DISCERNING AND ACTING***Reading for this class:*

Wendell Berry, Chapter on "Sex, Economy, Freedom and Society," in Berry's book by this title. [The waters we fish swim in: The culture's influence on our seeing, feeling, knowing & acting].

*First hour:* drawing out cultural dimensions of shadow & light in life-based contemplation.

*Second hour:* Contemplation: being true at once to the facts and the vision of the Kingdom.

#### **APRIL 5: MARKING THE JOURNEY TO & IN THE REIGN OF GOD**

*Reading for this class:* Part III of the book *We Drink from Our Own Wells* by Gustavo Gutierrez, and isolated poems and prayers..

How GG views freedom, love, solidarity with the poor, ongoing conversion, gratuitousness and gratitude, spiritual childhood and commitment, persons as sacraments. How he sees joy as victory over suffering, and community—all markers of authentic Christian living.

**What are OUR forms of contemplation and living, language, and forms of celebrating the Kingdom-- alive in, among and around us?**