



P146 Introduction to Spiritual Formation

3 credits. Prerequisites: none

Mississauga Campus Livestream Video on Demand

September 14–December 18

Semester A

Tuesdays, 10am–1pm ET

(8am–11am SK, 9am–12pm SK after Nov 1 time change)

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*I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints,
what is the breadth and length and height and depth
and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,
so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. —Ephesians 3:18–19*

Course Goals

Course Description

This course introduces students to the concept of Christian spiritual formation and developing a relationship with God. Through studying Scripture, historical practices, and engaging in various formational exercises, students will gain a deeper understanding of the importance of habits and their fruitful outcomes. The course also emphasizes creating a personal "Rule of Life," which serves as a framework to guide daily living. By the end of the course, students will be equipped to thoughtfully integrate spirituality into their everyday lives.

Relationship to Horizon and MCS's Missions

The preparation of a Spirit-empowered life lies at the core of our mission. Keeping in step with the Spirit is facilitated by the ongoing practice of spiritual disciplines. As these disciplines are studied, internalized, and enacted, they become conduits through which God's grace impacts the student's life, the results of which are an ever-deepening spiritual life and an ever-widening missional impact.

Core Competencies and Learning Outcomes



To demonstrate competency in *Spiritual Maturity*, students will

1. Practice and reflect on the value of specific spiritual disciplines.
 - *Assessment:* Holy Habits

2. Develop a Rule of Life as a framework to guide daily living and to support spiritual formation.
 - *Assessment:* Rule of Life
 3. Compare and contrast the truths of Scripture against the cultural presuppositions often propagated in culture that potentially hinder spiritual growth.
 - *Assessment:* Rule of Life
-  To demonstrate competency in *Contextual Awareness*, students will
4. Analyze the history and practices of diverse Christian spiritual traditions.
 - *Assessment:* Field Trip and Reflection; Historical Spirituality Notes
 5. Reflect on how Christians in a church context unlike your own participate in communal life with God.
 - *Assessment:* Field Trip and Reflection

Course Work

Required Readings

Comer, John Mark. *Practicing the Way: Be with Jesus, Become Like Him, Do as He Did*. Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook, 2024. ISBN: 978-0593193822.

[DTL](#)

Optional Textbook

Foster, Richard J. and James Bryan Smith, eds. *Devotional Classics: Selected Readings for Individuals & Groups*. Revised and expanded ed. New York: HarperOne, 2005.

[DTL](#)

This book includes 52 devotional works from Christians throughout history. Six required readings from this text are available on Populi. If the student chooses the “Spiritual Reading” discipline in the assignment “Holy Habits,” they are required to read more chapters from this book and may wish to consider purchasing their own copy.

****While students have the benefit of accessing many of their textbooks online through the [Digital Theological Library](#), they will not have access to the Digital Theological Library upon graduation. Therefore, we encourage students to purchase select textbooks to build their personal library.**

Course Assignments and Activities

1. Field Trip and Reflection (10%)

This assignment is designed to help you experience and reflect on communal life with God in a worship context that differs from your own.

a) Before the trip

- Choose a Christian tradition distinct from your own, such as Lutheran, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox, or another that practices communal life with God differently. Ideally, this will be a context that you have no prior experience with.

- Plan your party. If you live in proximity to other students in the course, it will be beneficial to attend the worship service with others so that you can discuss your experience together.
- b) During the trip
 - This should be an embodied experience. Plan to attend the worship service in person. If you live in a remote location where this is not practical, please talk to the professor to explore your options.
 - Plan your visit to align with a typical worship service, such as Sunday liturgy, vespers, or mass. If your church responsibilities do not allow you to be absent on a Sunday, choose a mid-week gathering instead.
 - Keep the reflection questions in mind during your visit.
- c) After the trip
 - Reflect on the following questions:
 1. **Worship Practices:** How do the liturgy, prayers, music, and rituals differ from your own tradition?
 2. **Communal Life:** How does the congregation interact with God and one another during worship?
 3. **Theological Emphasis:** What aspects of God, Jesus, or the Christian life are emphasized in this context?
 4. **Spiritual Experience:** What did you learn or experience that might enrich your understanding of communal life with God?
 5. **Ecumenical Reflection:** How does this experience influence your understanding of unity in diversity within the global Church?

This assignment will enable students to increase their competency in contextual awareness by experientially engaging in and reflecting on an unfamiliar form of communal Christian worship. For this assignment to be considered complete, the following points must be observed:

- Although students are encouraged to attend a worship service together, each student must compose their own reflection.
 - The reflection questions should be answered on the template provided in Populi.
 - No additional research is required for this assignment. However, if students choose to use additional sources, they must be footnoted properly and included in a bibliography as specified in the [Horizon & MCS Format Guide](#).
 - The required wordcount for each question is 100–150 words (500–750 words total).
 - Students should be prepared to discuss their experience in class following the due date.
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- Related learning outcomes: #4, 5.
 - **Assignment length:** 500–750 words.
 - **Due date:** Friday, October 2.

2. *Holy Habits.* (35%)

Students will choose and practice two of the following spiritual disciplines for three weeks each. Disciplines should be practiced daily (minimum five days per week except for fasting). When possible, students should choose at least one discipline that can be practiced with other people. Students will maintain a journal where they reflect on their experience with God throughout the

journey and consider the overall value of this discipline for their spiritual formation. The list of potential disciplines include:

- a) *Solitude*. Students will spend a minimum of 20 minutes alone, developing an awareness of their presence with God. All technology (e.g., phones, smart watches, laptops) must be set aside during this time, including background music. Students are welcome to sit in silence or go for a walk.
- b) *Scripture Memorization*. Students will spend a minimum of 20 minutes daily memorizing an extended passage of scripture of the student's choice. This time of memorization will naturally turn into prayer as scripture is internalized. There will be no evaluation of whether or not the student was able to successfully memorize their passage.
- c) *Musical Worship*. Students will spend a minimum of 20 minutes daily singing or playing an instrument in praise and worship. This discipline may be practiced alone, or better, with others.
- d) *Daily Office*. Students will begin and end each day by praying the Daily Office, a cycle of prayers and scripture readings developed by the Church of England. For this discipline, students may use a free app such as "[Time to Pray](#)" or [Lectio 365](#). If a technology-free version is preferred, students should consider *The Divine Hours* by Phyllis Tickle or *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* by Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro. For this assignment, both the "day" and night" prayers must be followed each day. This discipline may be practiced alone, or better, with others.
- e) *Spiritual Reading*. Students will choose daily readings from the optional textbook, *Devotional Classics*, which are *not* listed in the Course Outline & Reading Schedule. Each short reading includes a biographical sketch of the author, an excerpt from their work, a relevant passage of scripture, and reflection questions. Students may choose to use the reflection questions to prompt their journal entry. Spiritual reading is not a race, so students are not expected read a new chapter each day. 1–2 readings per week should be enough to support a 20-minute daily session.
- f) *Intercessory Prayer*. Students will create a list of people they wish to pray for. The list should include friends, family, and acquaintances, as well as people and situations around the world. This list may grow and change during the exercise. Students will spend a minimum of 20 minutes daily praying for the needs of others.
- g) *Confession*. Every evening, students will use the five-step Ignatian [prayer of examen](#) before going to bed. A prayer card with the five steps is available in Populi. Additionally, students will confess their sins *weekly* to a trusted Christian friend, following the instruction of James 5:16.
- h) *Fasting*. Students will fast food (not water!) one day a week for three weeks. Students may choose to fast the entire day or just until sundown. Mealtimes during a fast day should include moments of prayer. Please note that students with special dietary needs or who live with eating disorders should *not* choose this option. This discipline may be practiced alone, or better, with others.
- i) *Arts*. Students will spend 20 minutes daily engaging with a biblical passage through both careful reading and artistic expressions. Artistic expressions can include drawing/painting, colouring, writing poetry, digital art, collaging, dance, etc.

This assignment will enable students to increase their competency in spiritual formation through the practice of spiritual disciplines and as well as intentional reflection on how God used those disciplines in the students' lives. For this assignment to be considered complete, the following points must be observed:

- Students must choose two disciplines from the list above. Any alternative disciplines must be discussed with the professor ahead of time.
- Students should journal their experience using the template available on Populi. The template includes all appropriate details such as dates and times practiced, reflection on the practice, and one overall reflection at the end of the three-week period.
- Students should be prepared to discuss their experience in class following the due date.
- Related learning outcome: #1.
- **Assignment length:** Completed journal.
- **Due dates:**
 - Holy Habit #1: Monday, October 19
(You must begin this habit by Monday, September 28 to finish on time)
 - Holy Habit #2: Monday, December 7.
(You must begin this habit by Monday, November 16 to finish on time)

3. *Historical Spirituality Notes (25%)*

Students will prepare a series of notes that explore the spiritual practices associated with a major historic Christian movement. This lesson will introduce the movement and its key spiritual practices, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the movement, and suggest ways that the movement's practices could be used today. Possible movements include:

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| ● Desert Fathers | ● Word of Faith |
| ● Benedictine Monastics | ● Wesleyanism |
| ● Jesuits | ● Classical Pentecostalism |
| ● Greek Orthodox | ● Quakerism |
| ● Anglican | ● Puritanism |
| ● Anabaptist | ● Latter Rain |

This assignment will enable students to increase their competency in contextual awareness by exploring and evaluating one type of historical spirituality in depth with consideration to how the resources of that movement may be drawn upon today. For this assignment to be considered complete, the following points must be observed:

- Students may should choose from the list of movements above or select their own. If students wish to choose a movement not on the list, they should confirm that choice with the professor.
- Students should use the template provided on Populi to organize their notes.
- Notes should be in point form as indicated on the template.
- Students should use a minimum of three academic sources specific to the movement.
- Proper footnotes and a bibliography should be included, formatted according to the [Horizon & MCS Format Guide](#).

- The notes should be submitted to Populi by the date specified as a Word Document (docx or rtf).
- Students should be prepared to discuss their notes in class following the due date.
- Related learning outcome: #4.
- **Assignment length:** 3–4 pages, single-spaced.
- **Date due:** Friday, November 20.

4. *Rule of Life* (30%)

Students will create a rule of life based on Comer's *Practicing the Way*. This assignment should be completed in the following steps:

Step 1: Complete the [Spiritual Health Reflection](#) from *Practicing the Way*. Note that a free account is required to access this online assessment. When the reflection is complete, you will be given the option to download the results for your personal records. This report does not have to be submitted but will provide important reflective material for your rule of life.

Step 2: Read *Practicing the Way*. This book is very easy to read, but the implications are challenging! Students are encouraged not to binge but to read it in multiple sessions starting on Reading Week.

Step 3: Discuss your Spiritual Health Reflection with a Christian friend who knows you well. This could be someone in class, a long-term friend, a pastor, or even a parent. The purpose of this step is twofold. First, this develops self-awareness since others know us in ways that we don't know ourselves. Second, this pushes back against the individualistic Christian narrative of our culture.

Step 4: Write a reflection on each of the nine areas of spiritual formation in the Spiritual Health Reflection and textbook (see ch. "How? A Rule of Life"; pp. 181–190). For each of the nine areas, students should indicate their current experience with this practice and suggest practical next steps for growth.

Step 5: Design your Rule of Life. Consider what spiritual practices you wish to incorporate into your life on a daily, weekly, and monthly/seasonal basis. Be specific and realistic. Based on your reflection, how could you best design your Rule of Life to facilitate your spiritual formation?

This assignment will enable students to increase their competency in spiritual maturity by encouraging structure self-reflection and planning for the future. For this assignment to be considered complete, the following points must be observed:

- Students should use the template provided on Populi for this reflection. The template includes all the details required to complete the assignment including a rule of life chart.
- This critical reflection should follow the [Horizon & MCS Format Guide](#) and should be submitted to Populi by the date specified as a Word Document (docx or rtf).
- Students should be prepared to discuss their key takeaways from the book in class following the due date.

- Related learning outcome: #2, 3.
- **Assignment length:** 1,800 words (200 words for each area of spiritual formation) plus the rule of life (acceptable range = 1,620–1,980 words).
- **Date Due:** Friday, December 4.

Video-on-Demand (VOD) Student Requirements

As indicated on the course schedule, this class is offered by VOD. Students taking the course through VOD are required to indicate this during their course registration. While VOD recordings are available for any student who may be absent from class, non-VOD students are expected to attend class live following the class attendance policy.

- For this course, VOD students have **the same** assignment due dates as in-class students.
- By Saturday at 11:59PM each week, VOD students are required to watch and engage with all lecture content and in-class activities from the previous week's class. VOD students will submit a 2–3-minute video report that 1) affirms you have watched the required recording, 2) summarizes one thing you learned that will help you reach the course learning outcomes, and 3) explains at least one question you had after watching the class recording.

Video report Submission Due Dates:

- Students will watch the lectures according to the following schedule:
 - Week 1 Lectures and Report due September 19
 - Week 2 Lectures and Report due September 26
 - Week 3 Lectures and Report due October 3
 - Week 4 Lectures and Report due October 10
 - Week 5 Lectures and Report due October 17
 - Week 6 Lectures and Report due October 24
 - Week 7 Lectures and Report due November 14
 - Week 8 Lectures and Report due November 21
 - Week 9 Lectures and Report due November 28
 - Week 10 Lectures and Report due December 5
 - Week 11 Lectures and Report due December 12
- Students registered to attend by VOD will fulfill the course attendance requirements through their video report submissions. They must submit their VOD reports on time to be registered as present for class.

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

Readings	4 hrs		Assignment Weighting
Classroom time	33 hrs		
1. Field Trip & Reflection	6 hrs	Oct 2	10%
2. Holy Habits			35%
a) Habit 1	8 hrs	Oct 19	
b) Habit 2	8 hrs	Dec 7	
3. Historic Spirituality Notes	10 hrs	Nov 20	25%
4. Rule of Life	26 hrs	Dec 4	30%
Total =		95 hrs	

All assignments are due at 8pm **ET**, unless otherwise indicated.

Assessment Rubrics

Assignment rubrics can be found on Populi. Click on the name of the assignment to access each rubric.

Course Outline & Reading Schedule

Unit	Class	Topic	Readings
Unit 1: Formation Process	Class 1: Sept 15	- A word from Ephesus - Syllabus review - The frustration of earning	
	Class 2: Sept 22	- Spiritual reading - Devotional Classics discussion - A better anthropology - Everything is spiritual: cultural liturgies	Contemplative: Thomas Merton – <i>Ways of Meditation</i>
	Class 3: Sept 29	- WWJD? - Willard's golden triangle - Devotional Classics discussion - Holy Habits as Medicine	Holiness: Thomas à Kempis – “Dealing with Temptation”
	Class 4: Oct 6	- The daily office - Gnostic or earthy spirituality - Field trip discussion - Habit formation	
	Class 5: Oct 13	- Devotional Classics discussion - Components of individualism - Individualism v. collectivism	Charismatic: Isaac Penington – “Waiting for the Breathings from His Spirit”
Unit 2: Historical Formation	Class 6: Oct 20	- Contemplative and Holiness Streams - Holy habit discussion - Charismatic stream	
	No Class for Reading Week: Oct 27, 2026		
	No Class for Module Week: Nov 3, 2026		
	Class 7: Nov 10	<i>Devotional Classics</i> discussion - Social justice stream - Evangelical and incarnational stream	Social Justice: Elizabeth O'Connor – “Dealing with Money”
Unit 3: Spiritual Disciplines	Class 8: Nov 17	<i>Devotional Classics</i> discussion - Introduction to the disciplines - Prayer	Evangelical: Madame Guyon – “Praying the Scripture”
	Class 9: Nov 24	- Lectio divina - Spiritual Traditions discussion - Fasting	
	Class 10: Dec 1	- The church year <i>Devotional Classics</i> discussion	Sacramental: Annie Dillard – “To

		• Meditation	See Clearly”
	Class 11: Dec 8	• Rule of life discussion • Confession • Course evaluations • Service • Conclusions	
Revision Week: December 14-18			

- Revision week is December 14–18. Students are encouraged to submit revised assignments soon after they receive their marked assignments.
- No assignments will be accepted after the course end date: *December 18*.

Academic Policies

General Assignment Guidelines

Please see the [Horizon](#) & [MCS](#) Format Guide for assignment submission, grammar, and formatting guidelines. The length of papers should fall within +/- 10% of the stated length. Papers that fall outside the length guidelines may not be graded. Assignments should be submitted via Populi under *Submissions* (not *Comments*). The resource at this [link](#) explains how to submit assignments on Populi.

Extensions

To submit extension requests, students must submit the *Request Extension Form* on the [MCS](#) or [Horizon](#) website and *before the due date*. Professors reserve the right to deny extensions. Generally, the sooner that a student asks for an extension, the more willing faculty tend to be in granting extensions. Furthermore, no extensions will be granted beyond the final day of a term or semester unless approval is granted by the Associate Academic Dean (MCS) or Assistant Academic Dean (Horizon).

Late Assignments

Students are expected to submit work by the assigned or extended due dates, as part of their development of the Leadership and Administration competency. A late penalty will be assessed for all overdue assignments: 1-3 calendar days late, penalty of 10%; 4-6 calendar days late, penalty of 20%; after 6 calendar days late, an assignment receives a grade of 0 and no opportunity for revision. Any late penalty incurred on a first submission will be applied regardless of if the student chooses to continue learning through the revision process.

Assignment Completion

Professors usually will not accept assignments that have not been completed according to the instructions given in the syllabus. If a professor informs a student that a submitted assignment is incomplete, the student will be given the opportunity to complete and resubmit the assignment quickly. If this is not possible, the assignment will be regarded as submitted late.

Competency Assignment Revisions

After each assignment has been marked, students have the opportunity to continue learning in response to feedback they receive on assignments. Students can submit one revision for each assignment, although a professor may accept more revisions if the professor determines the student is addressing all of the professor's instructions and making significant progress toward demonstrating competency. Revised assignments may be submitted up to the course end date, although students are encouraged to submit them soon after they receive their marked assignments. Assignments submitted later than one week before the course end date are ineligible for revisions.

Horizon and MCS's College Assessment of Student Work

The goal of courses is to help students develop their competency, rather than solely earn letter grades. Assignments are the means by which instructors evaluate development of competency by assessing learning outcomes as outlined in the syllabus and each assignment. Once a student's assignment has met all assignment completion requirements, the professor will assign a grade for that assignment. The opportunity for revisions exists according to the "Assignment Revisions" policy.

Horizon and MCS Competency Scale		Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point	U of S Equivalency
E	Exceeding expectations	Student demonstrated exceptional achievement of the learning outcomes.	A+	4.0	90-100
		Student demonstrated excellent achievement of the learning outcomes.	A	4.0	85-89
			A-	3.7	80-84
M	Meeting expectations	Student demonstrated good achievement of the learning outcomes.	B+	3.3	77-79
			B	3.0	73-76
			B-	2.7	70-72
BTM	Beginning to meet expectations	Student demonstrated satisfactory progress in achieving the learning outcomes.	C+	2.3	67-69
			C	2.0	63-66
			C-	1.7	60-62
		Student demonstrated minimal progress in achieving the learning outcomes.	D+	1.3	57-59
			D	1.0	53-56
			D-	0.7	50-52
NYM	Not yet meeting expectations	Student made insufficient progress toward meeting learning outcomes.	F	0.0	0-49

Academic Integrity

Students learn best when practicing academic integrity. A lack of integrity is displayed in acts such as deception, abuse of confidentiality, cheating, inappropriate collaboration, or plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the words or ideas of another person or an artificial intelligence (AI) tool in such a way as to give others the impression that it is their own words or ideas. In academic writing, there should be no doubt which words or ideas are the student's and which are drawn from other sources or AI. Students are expected to submit their own original work and give due recognition to sources from which all substantial phrases, sentences, or even ideas are drawn. Note also that you may not submit work done in one course to satisfy the requirements of another course (unless both instructors agree beforehand to accept such work). See [here](#) for examples of plagiarism and further guidelines in the Student Handbook.

Horizon and MCS have a subscription to software that ensures the originality of academic writing, verifies the proper citation of all sources, and detects AI-generated content. When you submit an assignment, you will automatically receive a summary on Populi that includes your submitted files along with an originality score (a high originality score is positive).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage

In keeping with the Academic Integrity policy above, students must disclose on the title page of all assignments whether or not they have used AI and how they have used it. If the assignment has no title page, the student must disclose this to the instructor by some other means, such as in a comment on Populi. Students are expected to follow the policy for acceptable use of AI that is published in the [Horizon](#) and [MCS](#) Student Handbooks.

Accessible Learning Services Information

Horizon and MCS are committed to provide safe and inclusive learning environments which equalize the opportunity for students with disabilities to meet the requirements of the institutions, programs, and courses. The application for Academic Accommodations begins with a student disclosing a medical diagnosis or professionally documented learning disability during the application process. Enrolled students may contact Accessibility services personnel (at MCS, the Director of Academic Success, Wendy Holmes at wendy.holmes@mcs.edu; at Horizon, the Academic Accommodations Coordinator, Richelle Bekkattla at rbekkattla@horizon.edu). All Academic Accommodations will adhere to the Guiding Principles listed in the Student Handbooks. Students with documented accommodations on file pertaining to accessing course readings in alternate formats are encouraged to contact the librarian for assistance with as much advanced notice as possible.

Class Attendance

Students should attend all classes in order to facilitate competency development. Students are expected to be present through the delivery method that they registered for. Students registered to attend on-campus or via livestream must be present for the full duration of a class period to be marked as present for the class. Students registered to attend by VOD must submit their VOD reports on time to be marked as present for class. In the case of illness or other unforeseen circumstances, students may miss up to twenty percent of the total class time (e.g., one day of a module course, two 3-hour classes, etc.) without academic penalty. Students who are absent for more than this will automatically fail the course. Students wishing to be exempted from this policy due to extenuating circumstances may make an academic appeal, where they will need to document and verify those circumstances. Students who miss a class are responsible to get missed notes or handouts from another student, rather than from the professor.

Livestreaming Etiquette

Students taking the course through livestreaming are required to indicate this during their course registration. While livestreaming access is available for on-campus students who are unable to attend class due to illness, on-campus students are expected to attend class in person following the class attendance policy.

If attending class online via livestream, in order to be marked present for class, you must keep your camera on and stay present and attentive throughout the class session, extending the gift of engagement. Access your class with a computer (preferably) or tablet, not a cell phone. Arrive to class on time, and dress as you would if you were attending class on campus. Join the class from a quiet space with minimal background noise and mute your microphone until you wish to speak to the class.

Use of Technology

Horizon and MCS encourage the use of electronic devices in the classroom to enhance learning. Careful consideration must be given to privacy issues, copyrighted materials, and the general care and concern for others. Please respect the following classroom policies:

- Please use online access for course learning only. This is a matter of respect for the instructor's teaching, your own learning, and fellow students who may be distracted by other uses.
- Students should secure permission from the instructor to record any teaching material. This includes PowerPoint slides, white board illustrations, notes, and any form of audio or video.
- Student feedback is a valuable input for course improvements. Please resolve any classroom grievance about the instructor or course with the instructor personally, through the grievance procedures, or the Populi-based course evaluations. It is inappropriate to air classroom grievances on a social media platform.
- When instructors use recording mechanisms in the classroom, recorded materials will be used for the sole purpose of instruction (potentially including future online video courses) and cannot be released to any social media outlet without the written consent of the students whose images have been recorded.
- In general, it is not acceptable to share photographs or videos of students in the classroom setting without permission from those whose images appear in such media.

Library Support and Research Assistance

Library staff are available to meet with students (online or in person) who need assistance with

- citing sources and identifying credible resources;
- developing research and information literacy skills;
- searching DTL and other library resources.

Bibliography

* Titles with hyperlinks point to a short review of the book on the professor's website.

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