P146 Introduction to Spiritual Formation

3 credits. Prerequisites: *none*

Saskatoon Campus Livestream Video on Demand

January 11 – April 16, 2027
Winter Semester
Tuesday, 9am – 12pm SK (10:00am – 1:00pm ET*)
*Time changes mid-semester, Mar 14

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"But as for me, God's presence is my good. I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, so I can tell about all you do." (Psalm 73:28, CSB)

Please note that all on-campus students will visit a local church together on Tuesday, February 2, and will complete the field trip assignment as a group.

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. Assess their current spiritual life.
    - *Assessment*: Personal Introduction Video; Rule of Life

2. Practice prayer and reflection through the Psalms.
    - *Assessment*: Prayer Psalms Journal
3. Develop a Rule of Life as a framework to guide daily living and to support spiritual formation.
    - *Assessment:* Rule of Life
4. 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

5. Analyze the history and practices of diverse Christian spiritual traditions.
    - *Assessment*: Field Trip and Reflection; Historical Spirituality Notes
6. 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

Tyra, Gary. *Introduction to Spirituality (Foundations for Spirit-Filled Christianity): Cultivating a Lifestyle of Faithfulness*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2023. ISBN: 978-1493441792. DTL

**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. Personal Introduction Video – (5%)
This short video is how we begin: introduce yourself to me and tell me where you are right now in your spiritual life.

Whatever your program or background, this course asks you to pay attention to the spiritual dimension of your life. I want to hear, in your own words, why that matters to you, so I can get to know you and teach to where you actually are. There are no right or wrong answers, and I am not looking for what you think a professor wants to hear.

What to record
Record one video of 3-5 minutes, speaking directly to me. A phone is fine. Choose a quiet spot and speak naturally rather than reading a script.

Cover these four things:

1. **Who you are.** Your name, where you are from, what you study or do, and anything else you would like me to know.
2. **Your spiritual life now.** Where you are with God, faith, or spirituality at this point in your life, including any questions or doubts.
3. **Why it matters.** Your current thoughts on the importance of paying attention to the spiritual dimension of your life.
4. **Your hopes for the course.** What would you like to learn more about or grow in over the semester?

Upload your video to OneDrive (instructions here) and then submit the link to your professor on Populi. Do not upload a video file directly on Populi. There is no need to share this video publicly.

- Related learning outcomes: #1.
- **Assignment length**: 3-5 minutes.
- **Due date:** Sunday, January 17 by 8pm SK.

2. Field Trip and Reflection – (10%)

Please note that all on-campus students will visit a local church together on Tuesday, February 2, and will complete the field trip assignment as a group.

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 word count 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.

- Related learning outcomes: #5, 6.
- **Assignment length**: 500 to 750 words.
- **Due date:** Sunday, February 7 by 8pm SK.

3. Psalms Prayer Journal – (35%)
This assignment asks you to draw near to the Lord by praying the Psalms and noticing what they stir in you. The Psalms are the inspired prayers of God's people, and they show us how to talk to God in every season of our spiritual lives: praise, lament, confession, doubt, thanksgiving, and trust.

The aim is not to study the Psalms from a distance but to pray them and then write honestly about what surfaces. You are practising a discipline of prayer while paying attention to your own soul.

What you will do

Beginning the week of January 12, pray one psalm for 15 minutes a day, at least four days a week. After each time of prayer, write a journal entry about whatever the psalm evoked in you.

a) **Frequency:** a minimum of four prayer-and-journal sessions every week, in every week of the course.
b) **Time:** 15 minutes of prayer per session, before you write. Journaling is additional.
c) **Choice of psalm:** you choose which psalm to pray each day. Over the semester, include a range of types: lament, praise, thanksgiving, confession, trust, and wisdom.
d) **Journal:** one dated entry per session, handwritten or typed, naming the psalm you prayed.
e) **Honesty:** you may pray a psalm several times or stay with a difficult one for days. You are not required to feel anything in particular.

How to pray and journal

A simple rhythm for each session:

a) **Settle (2 minutes).** Be still, breathe, and ask the Holy Spirit to meet you in the psalm.
b) **Pray the psalm (10 minutes).** Read it slowly, aloud if you can. Make its words your own, pausing wherever something stirs.
c) **Respond (3 minutes).** Speak to God in your own words about what you have just prayed, then rest.
d) **Journal.** Immediately afterward, write about what the psalm evoked in you.

Your entry does not need to be polished or long. These prompts can help if you are stuck, and you do not need to answer all of them:

- Which word, image or line caught you, and what did it stir: a feeling, a memory, a person, a situation?
- Where did you resist the psalm, or find it hard to pray honestly?
- What did you say to God that you might not say aloud to others?
- What season of life or leadership does this psalm meet you in right now?
- What do you sense God inviting you toward?

This is not a Bible study or commentary exercise. Record your experience of praying, not research about the psalm.

- Related learning outcome: #2.
- **Assignment length:** Completed journal, plus 1–2-page final reflection.
- **Due dates:**
    - Midpoint check-in: Sunday, February 14 by 8pm SK.
        - A log of your dates and psalms so far, plus three entries of your choosing.
    - Final submission: Sunday, March 21 by 8pm SK.
        - Your complete journal, **plus** a 1–2-page reflection on what you noticed across the semester, including how praying the Psalms shaped your prayer and your honesty with God.

4. Historic Spirituality Notes (20%)
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
- Benedictine Monastics
- Jesuits
- Greek Orthodox
- Anglican

- Anabaptist
- Word of Faith
- Wesleyanism
- Classical Pentecostalism
- Quakerism
- Puritanism
- 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).

- Related learning outcome: #5.
- **Assignment length:** 2-3 pages, single-spaced.
- **Date due:** Sunday, March 28 by 8pm SK.

5. 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, to develop 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: #1, 3, 4.
- **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:** Sunday, April 4 by 8pm SK.

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. All class videos will be posted to the Video Centre according to the dates outlined in the VOD Lesson on Populi.

- For this course, VOD students have the *same* assignment due dates as in-class students.
- By Saturday at 11:59 PM 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.
    - Class 1 Lecture and Padlet Report due – January 16 by 11:59pm
    - Class 2 Lecture and Padlet Report due – January 23 by 11:59pm
    - Class 3 Lecture and Padlet Report due – January 30 by 11:59pm
    - Class 4 Lecture and Padlet Report due – February 6 by 11:59pm
    - Class 5 Lecture and Padlet Report due – February 13 by 11:59pm
    - Class 6 Lecture and Padlet Report due – February 20 by 11:59pm
    - Class 7 Lecture and Padlet Report due – March 13 by 11:59pm

  - Class 8 Lecture and Padlet Report due – March 20 by 11:59pm
  - Class 9 Lecture and Padlet Report due – March 27 by 11:59pm
  - Class 10 Lecture and Padlet Report due – April 3 by 11:59pm
  - Class 11 Lecture and Padlet Report due – April 10 by 11:59pm
- 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 *(both books)*	25 hrs	N/A	**Assignment**
Classroom time	30 hrs	N/A	**Weighting**
1. *Personal Introduction Video*	1 hrs	Jan 17	5%
2. *Field Trip & Reflection*	6 hrs	Feb 7	10%
3. *Psalms Prayer Journal*	16 hrs	Feb 14 & Mar 21	30%
4. *Historic Spirituality*	10 hrs	Mar 28	20%
5. *Rule of Life*	12 hrs	Apr 4	30%
Total =	100 hrs		

All assignments are due at **8pm *SK time***, 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
A topic outline will be provided on or before the first week of class in a separate Word Document.

Class & Reading Schedule
Both books must be finished by Sunday, March 21. Use the suggested schedule below to stay on track, and adjust it to fit your schedule as needed.:

Practicing the Way (John Mark Comer) by section from Jan 12 to Feb 15.
An Introduction to Spirituality (Gary Tyra) by part from Feb 16 to Mar 21.
**Each week runs Tuesday to Monday.

Week	Dates	Date of Class	Book	Reading
1	Tues Jan 12 – Mon Jan 18	Tues Jan 12	*Practicing the Way*	Apprentice to Jesus
2	Tues Jan 19 – Mon Jan 25	Tues Jan 19	*Practicing the Way*	Goal #1: Be with Jesus
3	Tues Jan 26 – Mon Feb 1	Tues Jan 26	*Practicing the Way*	Goal #2: Become Like Him
4	Tues Feb 2 – Mon Feb 8	Tues Feb 2	*Practicing the Way*	Goal #3: Do as He Did
5	Tues Feb 9 – Mon Feb 15	Tues Feb 9	*Practicing the Way*	How? A Rule of Life; Take Up Your Cross (10 pages); Extras
6	Tues Feb 16 – Mon Feb 22	Tues Feb 16	*An Introduction to Spirituality*	Introduction through the end of Part 1 (to p. 50, about 50 pages)

Week	Dates	Date of Class	Book	Reading
7	Tues Feb 23 – Mon Mar 1	***No Class***	*An Introduction to Spirituality*	Part 2 (pp. 51–85, 35 pages)
8	Tues Mar 2 – Mon Mar 8	***No Class***	*An Introduction to Spirituality*	Part 3, first half (pp. 103–131, 29 pages)
9	Tues Mar 9 – Mon Mar 15	Tues Mar 9	*An Introduction to Spirituality*	Part 3, second half (pp. 132–159, 28 pages)
10	Tues Mar 16 – Sun Mar 21	Tues Mar 16	*An Introduction to Spirituality*	Conclusion (pp. 173–175, 3 pages) plus catch-up
11	Tues Mar 22 – Mon Mar 30	Tues Mar 22	***No Reading***	
12	Tues Mar 31 – Mon Apr 5	Tues Mar 31	***No Reading***	
13	Tues Apr 6 – Fri Apr 9	Tues Apr 6	***No Reading***	

**Week 5 is the heaviest Comer week because it combines three sections.

- **Revision week is April 12-16, 2027**. Students are encouraged to submit revised assignments soon after they receive their marked assignments.
- **No assignments** will be accepted after the course end date: ***April 16, 2027***.

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
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