“Contemplation is basically a social matter. Solitude has its own special work: a deepening of awareness that the world needs. A struggle against alienation. True solitude is deeply aware of the world’s needs. It does not hold the world at arm’s length…Contemplation at its highest intensity becomes a reservoir of spiritual vitality that pours itself out in the most telling social action.” (Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander)

DRAFT Syllabus (subject to revision)

SPST 2504: SPIRITUALITY OF THOMAS MERTON
Clare Ronzani
Spring 2011
(clareronzani@comcast.net) (510) 352-6765; (510) 848-5232 ext. 14

REQUIREMENTS

I. READINGS

A. Common Readings
   Malits, Elena, *The Solitary Explorer: Thomas Merton’s Transforming Journey* (selections on Moodle)
   Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*
   Merton, *The Intimate Merton: His Life from His Journals*, ed. Patrick Hart and Jonathan Montaldo
   Merton, *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master* (selections, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham)
   Materials posted on Moodle

B. Readings of choice: 2-3 books (or the equivalent in essays, tapes, etc.) on a particular focus in Merton. Focus areas include the following (suggested bibliography will be provided):

1. *The Inner Merton: Journals*
2. *Prayer/Solitude/Contemplation*
3. *Merton’s Social Critique*
4. *Merton and Inter-Religious Dialogue*
5. *Merton’s Literary Writing/Poetry and Art*
6. *Merton’s Letters*
7. *Merton and the Natural World*
8. *Other* (contact Clare)
C. Recommended: *Thomas Merton: Essential Writings* (ed. Christine Bochen)

II. PARTICIPATION IN CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

III. CLASS PRESENTATIONS: Depending on your interests, this may be done either individually or collaboratively with others on a given topic.

**Focus:**
1. To highlight what your particular study offers you/us to further our understanding of Merton
2. To explore how a consideration of his spirituality might help us to relate contemplation and action, prayer and prophecy in our own lives and historical reality.

These presentations may be *as creative as you are*, incorporating *both input and group discussion/response/process*. They will be evaluated in terms of how well you:

- distill Merton’s thinking on the topic
- raise pertinent insights/questions regarding contemporary spirituality which arise from your having dealt with the content
- integrate input and group engagement/discussion.

**Suggestion:** Brief excerpts from your readings to be given out one week prior to your presentation, to acquaint the rest of the class with the topic you are presenting.

IV. WRITTEN WORK

1. Reflection papers

   Three brief reflection papers (approximately three pages; see dates below)
   The purpose of these papers is to articulate what is evoked for you as you read Merton and participate in class discussions -- e.g. what in the readings/discussion has offered you particular insight; what you find stretching and/or confirming; how/where Merton calls you to deeper prayer and engagement in the world.

   Questions for your consideration will be posed in some class sessions. In the spirit of Merton, feel free to incorporate poetry, art, etc., as well as prose, in your reflection papers.

   **Due dates:** February 23
   March 16
   April 13

2. Final paper: 8-10 pages, based on the topic of your class presentation.

   **Due date:** May 18

V. Grading (1/3 attendance/participation; 1/3 reflection papers; 1/3 presentation/final paper)
SPST 2504
Spirituality of Thomas Merton
Clare Ronzani
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Feb. 2: INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

Feb. 9: THE JOURNEY AND VISION OF THOMAS MERTON
Reading: Cunningham, Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master, Introduction
Malits, The Solitary Explorer, chapter 2: “Journey into the Unknown”
Reader: Shannon, Hidden Ground of Love, Letters
to Catherine de Hueck Doherty
Merton, New Seeds of Contemplation, ch. 1-3

Feb. 16: MERTON: EXPLORING VOCATION/BECOMING A MONK&WRITER
Reading: Hart and Montaldo, Intimate Merton, pp. 1-102
Cunningham, 63-106, from Seven Storey Mountain
New Seeds, ch. 4-6

February 23: EXPLORING SOLITUDE
Reading: Cunningham, 241-250, from Thoughts in Solitude
Malits, ch. 3, “The Solitary Explorer”
Reader: “Notes for a Philosophy of Solitude” (from Disputed Questions)
“Silence and Solitude” (from Thomas Merton: Essential Writings)
“Thomas Merton, Man of Prayer” (Steindl-Rast, from Thomas Merton, Monk)
New Seeds, ch. 7-9

Recommended reading: “Renewal and Discipline” (Contemplation in a World of Action)
Thomas Merton: Essential Writings, Part 1: “A Call to Contemplation” (ed. Christine M. Bochen)

Reflection Paper due (double space, 12 point font)
March 2: EXPLORING THE MONK’S TRUE LIFE/CONTEMPLATION AND THE TRUE SELF
Reading: Intimate Merton, 103-154
Cunningham, 121-164, Conjectures
Malits, ch. 6 “A Mind Awake in the Dark”
New Seeds, ch. 10-12
Recommended: Cunningham, “Letter on the Contemplative Life”

March 9: TURNING TOWARD THE WORLD
Reading: Cunningham, 368-387, from Contemplation in a World of Action
Malits, ch. 4, “A Guilty Bystander”
Intimate Merton, 155-209
Reader: “The Shoshoneans,” from Ishi Means Man
New Seeds, ch. 13-14
Recommended: Thomas Merton: Essential Writings, Part II: A Call to Compassion

March 16: ISSUES OF CONSCIENCE: WAR AND PEACE/NONVIOLENCE
Reading: Reader: “Blessed are the Meek” (Faith and Violence)
“Gandhi, the Gentle Revolutionary” (Nonviolent Alternative)
“Toward a Theology of Resistance” (Faith and Violence)
“Original Child Bomb” (The Nonviolent Alternative)
“A Devout Meditation in Memory of Adolf Eichmann”
“Peace and Protest” (Faith and Violence)
Douglass, James, Foreward to Cold War Letters
Selections from Cold War Letters
New Seeds, ch. 15-17
Reflection Paper due

March 23: (Spring Break: no class!)

March 30: TBA
New Seeds, ch. 18-20
Additional reading tba

April 6: THE HERMITAGE
Reading: Intimate Merton, 211-267
Cunningham, 214-222, “Day of A Stranger”
Reader: “Merton’s Hermitage: Bachelard, Domestic Space, and Spiritual Transformation” (Spiritus, Fall 2004, Vo. 4, No. 2)
New Seeds, ch. 21-23
April 13: MERTON AND THE FEMININE
Reading: Intimate Merton 269-312
Cunningham, 257-264, “Hagia Sophia”
Reader: “The Feminine Mystique” (Springs of Contemplation)
(Cross Currents 39: Spring 1985, pp. 64-82
Selected poems (handouts)
New Seeds, ch. 24-25
(plus preparatory reading for presentations)

Reflection paper due

April 20: MERTON AND NATURE (possible class presentation)
Reading: Cunningham, 165-222, A Vow of Conversation
Weis, “Dancing with the Raven: Thomas Merton’s Evolving View of Nature” (from The Vision of Thomas Merton)
Weis, “Discovering Compassion in the Wilderness” (Thomas Merton’s Gethsemani)
New Seeds, ch. 26-27
(plus preparatory reading for presentations)

Recommended: When the Trees Say Nothing; Thomas Merton
Writings on Nature (ed. Deignan)

April 27: MERTON AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE
and CLASS PRESENTATIONS
Reading: Cunningham, 223-237 (Asian Journal) and 399-420 (“A Christian Looks at Zen”)
Intimate Merton, 313-363
Malits, ch. 5, “A Poor Pilgrim”
Reader: Shannon, “Thomas Merton in Dialogue with Eastern Religions” (The Vision of Thomas Merton, ed. O’Connell)
New Seeds, ch. 28-29
(preparatory reading for presentations)

Recommended: Merton, “On Taoism” and “On Hinduism” (Thoughts on the East)

May 4: CLASS PRESENTATIONS
Reading: New Seeds, ch. 30-35
Recommended: *Thomas Merton: Essential Writings*, Part III: A Call To Unity

**May 11: MERTON’S INTEGRATION AND OUR OWN: A MERTON CELEBRATION**

Reading: *New Seeds*, ch. 36-39

**MAY 18: Final Reflection Paper due** (no class session). Please put paper in Clare’s mailbox at JST-SCU with return SASE envelope.