TH410: Seminar in Theology: Writings of Thomas Merton
Spring, 2014
Saint Joseph's College of Maine

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR: Dr. Marilyn Sunderman, RSM

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This seminar provides an intensive exploration of the spiritual theology of Thomas Merton by studying some of his key writings and selected commentary on these writings. Topics treated in the course include Merton's reflections on monasticism (especially Cistercian monastic life), silence, solitude, contemplation, faith, the true self, being "in Christ", love, nature, Eastern religions (especially Zen Buddhism), social justice issues such as racism and war (including the cold war and nuclear war).

COURSE OUTLINE:

I. **Introduction to the Life and Writings of Thomas Merton**
   Readings: Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master, 1-60
   TMSM, 63-106
   The Vision of Thomas Merton, 9 - 20
   VOTM, 23-41

II. **Merton and Monasticism**
   Reading: VOTM, 65-75

III. **Merton's Spiritual Theology**
    Readings: Merton, Life and Holiness
    VOTM, 43-62
    TMSM, 294-356
    TMSM, 421-431
    TMSM, 368-387
    TMSM, 241-250
    TMSM, 251-256
    TMSM, 257-264
    TMSM, 265-279
    TMSM, 280-293
    TMSM, 357-367

IV. **Merton and Nature**
   Readings: TMSM, 388-398
   VOTM, 135-153
   VOTM, 119-33

V. **Merton and Eastern Religions**
   Readings: TMSM, 223-237
   TMSM, 399-420
VI. **Merton's Journals**
Readings:  
- TMSM, 107-120  
- TMSM, 121-164  
- TMSM, 165-213  
- TMSM, 214-222  
- VOTM, 77-97  
- VOTM, 99-117

VII. **Merton's Poetry**
Readings:  
- VOTM, 155-184  
- VOTM, 187-201

VIII. **Merton and Social Justice**
Reading:  
- Merton, Peace in the Post-Christian Era

IX. **EVALUATION OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE:**
1. **Classroom participation** includes keeping a journal, presentations based on required readings, asking/answering questions, offering comments and doing individual/group work during/outside class. Class participation is worth 20% of the course grade.
2. **Attendance:** Value: 15% of the course grade. This grade is based on the percentage of the student's class attendance.
3. Any act of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for a given assignment.
4. All student presentations/writing in this seminar will be evaluated on the basis of quality of content, clarity of expression and grammatical correctness.
5. Each student completes a **review of a book written by Thomas Merton.** The review is a 5 page, double-spaced, typed paper that includes a summary of material treated in the text; a discussion of agreements/disagreements (i.e., any combination of 4 with rationale for each) that the student has with the content of the text; a discussion of strengths/weaknesses (i.e., any combination of 4) and a treatment of at least 3 ways in which the student can apply to his/her life what s/he has learned from reading this book. The paper must be typed or compute-generated with a font size of 12. Top and bottom margins must be 1" and side margins 1" - 1.25". Value of paper is 10% of the course grade. Each student completes an in-class presentation of his/her review. The in-class presentation is valued at 5% of the course grade.
6. Each student reviews a **CD lecture series by/about Thomas Merton** and then writes a 5 page, typed, double-spaced summary of the lecture, which includes a discussion of several agreements/disagreements (any combination of 2 with rationale for each). This review is valued at 10% of the course grade. Each student completes an in-class presentation of his/her review, which is valued at 5% of the course grade.
7. Each student completes a final essay valued at 10% of the course grade.
8. **Research paper:** Each student writes a 10 page, typed, double-spaced research paper that develops one of the topics from the list provided by the professor. The bibliography for this paper includes a minimum of 6 entries, (two of which can be from Internet sources) which represent at least 200 pages of reading outside of the course reading requirements. Each bibliography entry must indicate pages read. The research paper should be typed or computer-generated with a font size of 12. Top and bottom margins should be 1" and side margins 1" - 1.25. Value of the paper is 20% of the course grade. Each student completes a 20 minute classroom presentation based on the contents of his/her research paper. This presentation is valued at 5% of the classroom participation grade.

X. **Required Readings:**