

Lexington Theological Seminary
LF 673 Thomas Merton: His Life, Spirituality and Social Consciousness
January 15, 16 and 17, 2021
COURSE SYLLABUS

Professor: Dr. William (Bill) Grimes, D.Min

Email: wgrim2@uky.edu

Cell Phone: (606) 776-6330

Office hours: I am available via email. I will respond to email queries soon after they are received. If there is an emergency, please call the cell phone number and leave a message.

Meetings via Zoom are available with prior appointment.

Course Description:

This course is designed to introduce students to the life, spirituality and social awareness of the renowned Trappist monk, Thomas Merton. It will do so via three interlocking approaches. The first will focus on Merton's life, noting the important people and events that were formative for his spirituality, and helped shape his ministry as spiritual director and author. The second focus will be on Merton's spirituality, reviewing not only on how his life influenced his spiritual formation, but also on how his studies of other faiths also influenced him. The third focus will be on the development and growth of his spiritual consciousness and how these influenced his commitment to social issues, even as he lived the life of a cloistered contemplative monk.

Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Intellectual

- Become acquainted with the life, thought, and writings of Thomas Merton
- Explore Merton's vast and eclectic array of interests and writings
- Examine how Merton's interactions and communications with those he met and with world religions helped shaped his worldview

2. Practical

- Develop a basic knowledge of Merton and institute practical ways in which to continue to study, learn, and grow from his teachings so that he can serve as a spiritual mentor
- Consider ways in which you can apply his teachings to your life and to that of your congregation/ parish setting/ context

3. Spiritual

- Consider ways in which you can grow personally and spiritually as you study how Merton developed spiritually, deepened his knowledge of God, and applied his spirituality to personal life issues

Course Expectations:

Each student will be expected to attend all lectures and complete all assignments.

Each student will be required to prepare one brief presentations (5-10 minutes) on chapters in the book *New Seeds of Contemplation*. This will require careful and thoughtful reading of the assigned chapter and prayerfully consider the message of the author. Each student should analyze the theology of the passage, explain the poetic wording and show how it might apply to the lives of those of us who are reading and studying Merton. Rubric will be attached.

Each student will be expected and encouraged to have active participation in the class discussion and be willing to give input and ask questions. All questions are important, and every inquiry will be answered openly and with candor. As adult learners we each have something to teach another. Each of us will learn from this interaction including the professor.

Each student will be expected to write a final paper. The paper will be 1500 to 2000 words. It will be due by midnight on Monday, February 15, 2021. Rubrics for the paper will be attached to this syllabus.

Required Texts:

Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1962
Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Destruction*, American Book-Stratford Press, Inc. 1964

Strongly Recommended Text: (not mandatory)

Thomas Merton, *Seven Storey Mountain*, Harcourt Brace and Company, Inc., Copyright 1948

Suggested Texts:

Bonnie B. Thurston, *Shaped by the End You Live For* (Thomas Merton's Monastic Spirituality), Liturgical Press, 2020
Robert Inchausti, *Thomas Merton's American Prophecy*, State University of New York Press, 1998

Bibliography:

Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander, Thomas Merton, Doubleday, 1966
Gandhi on Non-Violence, Editor: Thomas Merton, New Directions, 1964
Journey into Emptiness: Dogen, Merton, Jung and the Quest for Transformation, Robert Jingen Gunn, Paulist Press, 2000
Merton A Biography, Monica Furlong, Harper and Rowe, 1980
New Seeds of Contemplation, Thomas Merton, New Directions, 1961
No Man is an Island, Thomas Merton, Harcourt Brace, 1955
Seeds of Contemplation, Thomas Merton, Hollis and Carter, 1949
Seeds of Destruction, Thomas Merton, Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1964
Seven Storey Mountain, Thomas Merton, Harcourt Brace, 1948

Shaped by the End You Live For - Thomas Merton's Monastic Spirituality, Bonnie Thurston, Liturgical Press, 2020

Silent Lamp - The Thomas Merton Story, William Shannon, Crossroad, 1992

Soul Searching - The Journey of Thomas Merton, Editors: Morgan C. Atkinson, Johnathan Montaldo, Liturgical Press, 2008

Spiritual Direction and Meditation, Thomas Merton, Collegeville, 1959

Stages of Faith, James W. Fowler, Harper and Rowe, 1981

The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation, Thomas Merton, Editor: William Shannon, Harper One, 2003

The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton, Editors: : Naomi Burton, Brother Patrick Hart OCSO, James Laughlin, New Directions , 1968

The Journals of Thomas Merton

Run to the Mountain: The Story of a Vocation The Journals of Thomas Merton, Book 1: 1939-1941 (The Journals of Thomas Merton) *Entering the Silence: Becoming a Monk and a Writer* (The Journals of Thomas Merton Book 2) | by Thomas Merton | Mar 17, 2009

A Search for Solitude: Pursuing the Monk's True Life The Journals of Thomas Merton, Book 3: 1952-1960

Turning Toward the World: The Pivotal Years (The Journals of Thomas Merton, Book 4: 1960-1963) by Thomas Merton

Dancing in the Water of Life (The Journals of Thomas Merton) Book 5 of 7: by Thomas Merton

Learning To Love: Exploring Solitude and Freedom (The Journals of Thomas Merton Book 6) The Journals of Thomas Merton | by Thomas Merton and Christine M. Bochen

The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey (The Journals of Thomas Merton) Book 7 of 7: by Thomas Merton

The Man in The Sycamore Tree, Edward Rice, Doubleday, 1970

The Merton Seasonal - A Quarterly Review, Winter 2018, Vol 43, No 4, International Thomas Merton Society

The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton, Michael Mott, Houghton Mifflin, 1984

The Sign of Jonas, Thomas Merton, Doubleday, 1953

The Wisdom of the Desert, Thomas Merton, New Directions, 1960

Thomas Merton - A Pictorial Biography, James Forest, Paulist Press, 1980

Thomas Merton Contemplative Critic, Henri J.M. Nouwen, Triumph Books, 1991

Thomas Merton on Contemplation (4 CDs), Now You Know Media, 2004

Thomas Merton Passion for Peace (A Reflection on War and NonViolence), Crossroad, 1995

Thomas Merton: A Book of Hours, Editor: Kathleen Deignan, Sorin Books, 2007

Thomas Merton's American Prophecy, Robert Inchausti, State University of New York Press, 1998

Thoughts in Solitude, Thomas Merton, Dell Publishing, 1956

Vietnam- Lotus in a Sea of Fire, Thich Nhat Hanh, Hill and Wang, 1967

Vow of Conversation, A, Thomas Merton, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1988

Teaching Method:

Due to the COVID-19 medical emergency, classes will be held via Zoom and Canvas, rather than on site. We will meet Friday, January 15 through January 17, 2021 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and from 1:30 to 5:00 p.m., ET. In addition to lectures, there will be reading assignments and required papers. The course will be organized in the following manner:

- **Section A:** The life of Thomas Merton. This section will highlight the important events and people who contributed to the growth, spirituality, and conscience of Merton. It will go from his birth in 1915 until his death in 1968. Certain events will be emphasized, and the class will spend time analyzing and discussing these events and discover how they shaped Merton into the well-known sage, spiritual director and author that he eventually became.
- **Section B:** The spirituality of Merton. Based on some of the ideas and insights gained in the first section of the course we will see how Merton developed in his spirituality. The seeds of wisdom and grace in his life will be examined and pondered to so as to see the spiritual faculties and depth of insight that shaped his awareness of his spirit-self. The student will experience some of Merton’s spirituality by reading reflectively and prayerfully the chapters of his classic book *New Seeds of Contemplation*. Finally, we will discuss the interreligious dialog and deep study of Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism (among others) that opened his mind, heart and faith to the beauty of the spirituality of those religions.
- **Section C:** The development and continued growth of his spiritual consciousness will be examined in detail. The student will begin to understand how and why a cloistered contemplative monk could reach out to the world with opinions and insights into some of the most difficult moral issues of our time. Merton was deeply concerned with the state of race relations during the sixties and the absurdity of the Viet Nam war.

Grading

Class Participation	10%
Small Group Discussions	15%
Individual Presentations	25%
Final Paper	50%

Grading Scale

<u>A [100 - 93]</u>	<u>B+ [89 – 87]</u>	<u>C+ [79 – 77]</u>	<u>D+ [69 – 67]</u>	<u>F [59 and below]</u>
<u>A- [92 – 90]</u>	<u>B [86 – 83]</u>	<u>C [76 – 73]</u>	<u>D [66 – 63]</u>	
	<u>B- [82 – 80]</u>	<u>C- [72 – 70]</u>	<u>D- [62 – 60]</u>	

Calendar of Events

January 4, 2021

Precourse assignment:

Required Reading: *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Pages 1- 122 (D.Min students should read the entire book.) *Seeds of Destruction*, pages 1 – 116 (D.Min students should read pages 1 – 220.) Each student will be responsible to present one chapter of *New Seeds of Contemplation* to the class on January 16th in the afternoon. The chapters will be assigned on Canvas. Rubric for the presentation will be attached.

January 15, 2021 Section A: The Life of Thomas Merton

Required Readings: None

Suggested Readings: Articles in Canvas (Modules)

- a. Encountering Others: Interpreting The Faith Development of Thomas Merton in Light of Fowler's "Stages of Faith" by Joseph Raab
- b. The Hound of Heaven by Francis Thompson
- c. 18 Poems by Thomas Merton
- d. Merton Letter Pentecost 1967 and Paschal Time 1968
- e. Familiarization with Merton's Seven Storey Mountain would be helpful
- f. Homily at Merton's Funeral Mass by Fr. Flavian Burns, OCSO
- g. Learning to Love, Book Review by Paul Quenon, OCSO

Lecture

9:00 AM to 11:45 AM – Thomas Merton's Life Part A

10:00 Breakout Session on Faith Development of Merton

Topic for discussion: How did Merton's life effect his stages of Faith Development according to Fowler's Theory.

10:30 Reports

11:00 Breakout Session on Hound of Heaven

11:30 Reports

Noon: Worship at noon (see Canvas for Zoom link)

12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Lunch

1:30 to 4:45 PM - Thomas Merton's Life Part B

Break

Breakout Discussion: 2:30 p.m.

Breakout discussion reports: 3:00 p.m.

Topic for discussion: . How did Merton's relationship with "M" affect his monastic life, spiritual life and future as a hermit?

Lecture and Q&A: 4:00 p.m.

January 16, 2021

Required Reading: *New Seeds of Contemplation*, pages 1- 122 (D.Min students should read the entire book.)

Suggested Readings: Articles in Canvas (Modules)

Striving toward Authenticity: Merton's "True Self" and the Millennial Generation's Search for Identity. Daniel Horan, OFM

- a. Merton's "True Self" and the Fundamental Option, Mark O'Keefe, OSB
- b. Le Point Vierge, Thomas Merton

Preparation for presentation during class on January 16th.

Each student will be required to prepare one or more brief presentations (5-10 minutes) on chapters in the book *New Seeds of Contemplation*. This will require careful and thoughtful reading of the assigned chapter and prayerfully considering the message of the author.

Presentations will be graded on 1) Context, 2) understanding and clarity of presentation regarding the theology and spirituality of the passage, 3) Understanding and presentation of the poetic language, 4) the application of the subject matter to the growth and understanding of the spiritual life.

9:00 AM – 11:45 Lecture on Zoom: Section B: The Spirituality of Thomas Merton

11:45 AM Break

Noon: Worship (See Canvas for Zoom Link)

1:30 PM – 4:45 PM Continuation of Lecture Section B

2:30 PM: Student Presentations

Each student will be assigned 1 chapter of New Seeds of Contemplation

Each student will give a 5 - 10 minute presentation on that chapter (Rubrics for this presentation will be found below)

4:00 PM Continuation of student presentations and other discussion topics

Open discussion, questions, comments, complaints.

January 17, 2021

Required Reading: Seeds of Destruction, Thomas Merton, p 1-116 (D.Min. students read pages 1 – 220.)

Suggested Readings: Articles in Canvas (Modules)

- a. Thomas Merton's Social Conscience in Formation – Correspondences with Czeslaw Milosz, 1958-1962, James C.R. Cronin
- b. Thomas Merton and the Awakening of Social Consciousness, Dennis Q. McInerney
- c. Letter from Birmingham Jail, Martin Luther King, Jr.
- d. Letters to a Black Catholic Priest, Thomas Merton
- e. Pacem in Terris (Peace on Earth), Pope John XXIII
- f. Letters to a White Liberal, Thomas Merton
- g. Thomas Merton and Racial Reconciliation, Albert Raboteau

Lecture

9:00 AM – 11:45 AM Lecture on Zoom: Section C: Social Consciousness of Thomas Merton
Class Discussion on Zoom

Continuation of Lecture Section C

11:45: Break

Noon: Worship (See Canvas for Zoom Link)

1:30 PM – 4:45 PM Continuation of Lecture Section C

2:30 PM – 3:00 PM Small group discussion: Topic: Are Merton’s writings on racism appropriate for today? How can they be applied?
Open Class discussion and finish any remaining lecture topics.
4:30 PM: Questions and Answers.

Post Course Assignment (Final Paper)

Complete a final paper of 1000 to 1500 words (for D.Min students 1500 to 2000 words) with (Times New Roman, 12 pitch, double-spaced) on the topic “My Life, Spirituality, and Social Consciousness.” In this paper, you will apply the principles that you learned in this course to the practice of your personal and congregational/parish ministry.

The paper will be evaluated on the following: theological depth, a well articulated spirituality that takes into account sound spiritual practices as well as a clear articulation of what “spirituality” means, and how these two (theology and spirituality) can inform transformative ministries of justice in your parish work (praxis) given your particular context. In addition, papers will be graded upon the quality of sources (you should include at least 3 works by Merton, and 2 secondary works about his him as well as at least a secondary work about Roman Catholic social justice or spirituality), grammar and spelling, and adherence to the LTS policy on just language. This paper is due by February 15, 2021 at midnight of a student’s time zone.

Discussion Evaluation:

Guidelines will be followed as listed in the Common Syllabus (on Canvas).

Just Language Policy:

Lexington Theological Seminary has a just language policy that extends to the use of inclusive God-talk as well as gendered-neutral language. For more on this policy, please go to Appendix H in the Student Handbook, <https://www.lextheo.edu/appendix-h-language-issues/>. ETHICS If theology is ultimately praxeological, that is to say, integral to real “flesh and blood” issues, it is also then intimately linked to ethics. One cannot engage in honest “God-talk” and proscribe to unethical behavior. For this reason, LTS holds its students, staff, and faculty to the highest standards of ethical behavior. As such, any dishonest use of ideas—written or oral—or material from a source not original to one, without proper attribution is considered plagiarism, and carries with it the potential for serious penalties. For more on the policy regarding plagiarism, please see Appendix J, <https://www.lextheo.edu/appendix-j-policy-regarding-plagiarism/>. Ethics applies to behavior on discussion boards. Hurtful, discriminatory, or what is deemed harassing posts as defined by our grievance policy will lead to an application of disciplinary actions as defined by the LTS policy (refer to your student handbook <https://www.lextheo.edu/3-0-community-life/#3.1> and to appendix C <https://www.lextheo.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Appendix-C-formatting-revised-August2019.pdf>

Syllabus:

This syllabus and its content are subject to change for editing purposes and to further the goals of the course. Students will be notified of any changes made in a timely fashion. Rubrics for the assignments will be provided as attachments to the Syllabus.