

THOMAS MERTON'S SPIRITUALITY

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Introduction

This course will concentrate on the spiritual teaching of the late Thomas Merton (1915-1968) with the precise purpose of asking how his formation in the monastic life translates into meaningful ways for non-monastics to enter more fully into the Christian life. The argument will be made that his own writings can shed light on the Christian life without the imposition of his monastic life on the lives of those who are not monks.

PLEASE NOTE THAT IF YOU KNOW LITTLE OR NOTHING ABOUT MERTON IT WOULD BE ADVISABLE TO READ THE GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO *THOMAS MERTON: SPIRITUAL MASTER* BEFORE CLASS BEGINS. MORE AMBITIOUS STUDENTS MIGHT ENJOY *THOMAS MERTON AND THE MONASTIC VISION* (EERDMANS, 1999) WHICH SUMS UP MY MATURE THINKING ABOUT HIM.

Required Texts

We will read, in this order, three works of Thomas Merton:

Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master – The Essential Writings (Paulist Press)

The Intimate Merton: His Life from the Journals (Harper San Francisco)

New Seeds of Contemplation (New Directions)

Course Requirements

This course will consist in a combination of lecture and class discussion. In order to have the course function properly, the following minimal obligations are expected: students must attend all classes and be on time; the assigned readings are to be done before class begins; any oral presentation needs to be prepared ahead of time; written assignments are to be turned in on the assigned date in hard copy; proper class decorum is to be observed (e.g. no eating breakfast in class, etc.).

Written Assignments

On the last day of each week students will turn in a written reflection paper on the readings for that week. The reflections should be based on the readings. The papers should be four to five typed pages in length and must reflect a serious engagement with the chosen reading(s) and not pious prattle about how one "feels" about the reading, etc. These written assignments will count for 75% of the final grade with the other 25% based on attendance and class preparation.

Schedule

Week One: We will read and discuss the autobiographical writings – pages 65-237. The weekly paper will be written on one of the essays (free to choose which one) on the spiritual writings of part two.

Week Two: We will read the entire *Intimate Merton* with the professor choosing particular themes for lecture and discussion. The weekly paper will be done on a particular theme or a particular section of the journals.

Week Three: We will read *New Seeds* with particular attention to the opening chapters. The final paper will be a reflection on one of the chapters in the text.