



REGR 6109: Thomas Merton: Mentor
Course Syllabus, Summer 2013
Session B: June 24th-August 18th

Instructor: Dr. Elizabeth-Jane McGuire
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Course Description:

This course will invite the participant to get to know Thomas Merton as writer, monk, and spiritual guide for the twenty-first century. The key to Merton's spirituality was his honesty and deep self reflection and awareness. This led him to experience several significant transformations in his life, from bohemian to Catholic, from student and teacher to monk, from the seclusion of the monastery to the social justice issues of the world, and from the spirituality of the West to the ways of the East. Merton is the mentor for this course. As students get to know him, they will be invited to use Merton as a model for their own spiritual journey and to consider how his thought might apply to the social issues of today.

Required Texts:

Thomas Merton, *Seven Storey Mountain* (any edition)
Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (any edition)

NB: Additional required readings will be distributed online via the course modules.

Grades:

Course grade will be weighted and assigned as follows:

Discussion board participation 35%

- See the handout in Module One, Week One for details and expectations regarding posts in this course.

Two-page reflection papers 30% (10% each)

- Students will submit a two-page reflection paper at the conclusion of Modules 1, 2, and 5.

Final paper 35%

- Each student will write a focused 8-page paper on one theme in Merton's writings that we read this term. The topic must be approved by the professor in advance (ideas may be

submitted via e-mail); a proposal of around 300 words must be submitted to the professor by the end of Week Four (at the end of Module Three). The Final Paper is due on August 18, 2013 by midnight. The instructor's expectations for the paper are shaped by the following rubric, with which you should make yourself familiar:

<http://www46.homepage.villanova.edu/john.immerwahr/TP101/Paps/Papeer%20Rubrics.pdf>.

Policies:

Accommodations for students with disabilities:

- Please advise the instructor of any special problems or needs at the beginning of the course. Those students seeking accommodation based on disabilities should provide a note obtained through the Office of Disability Services. They can be contacted at: (718) 817-0655

Academic integrity:

- Any work you turn in with your name on it signifies that it is your work. Words or ideas that are not your own must be cited consistently according to the MLA or Chicago method. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating) will not be tolerated.

Course Outline

A note on modules:

The course will be divided into six module weeks. There will be reading, presentations, discussions and assignments for each module. Competencies and evidence of these competencies will be indicated for each module. The duration of each module week will be 7-10 days. The following is an overview of each module week:

Week Zero: Introduction to the Course

Students will become familiar with the technology needed to take the course. In addition, they will consider how they want to introduce themselves to the rest of the class through image (picture) and word. It will be important to begin reading *The Seven Storey Mountain* at this time.

Weeks 1 and 2: Introduction to Thomas Merton—Part 1

This week will introduce students to the person of Thomas Merton—his life, works, and influence. By the end of these modules, the student will (1) have some idea of what mysticism, solitude and contemplation are, and (2) begin to know Thomas Merton as a key player in mystical thought.

Week 3: Introduction to Thomas Merton—Part 2

Students will continue to get to know Thomas Merton. By the end of this module, students will further understand the complexity of Thomas Merton. Throughout this week, students should consider the most significant changes that occurred in Merton's life and how, why, where, and when these happened.

Week 4: From Monk to Social Activist

Students will explore the social issues that concerned Merton and consider whether the message he offers has the ability to transcend time to address some of the issues of our time.

Week 5: Merton's Tool Box

Merton was transformed by beauty: journals, poetry, letters, photography, and art all affected and shaped him. How did he use these tools, and which ones might you use on your journey?

Week 6: Merton and Interreligious Dialogue

Merton's journey led him to embrace other religious traditions while remaining faithful to his Judeo-Christian roots. Interreligious dialogue is a significant task for our time. Can Merton guide us through this process?

Weeks 7 and 8: Transcending Time and Human Boundaries

In the final week of the course, students will collect all of the information they have gained and the personal reflections that they have written in their journals and make some decisions on how Merton might be a spiritual mentor for them. How might we change the world following his roadmap?

Writing Guidelines

- Use a four line, single-spaced heading (your name, the date, the class, the professor)
- Give your paper a creative title that reflects the content of your paper (rather than the assignment); center it, but don't underline, italicize, or boldface the title
- Cite quotations consistently according to MLA or Chicago formatting
- 12 pt. font
- Times New Roman
- 1" margins all around
- Double spaced
 - A note on double-spacing in Word:
 - If you can't get the spacing right, look for the pre-set formatting boxes in the upper right-hand corner of your screen. Click "Select All" and then click on the second pre-set format from the left—it should say "No spacing." Once you do that, the spacing will revert to single-spacing, and then you can (still selecting all text) double-space the document normally.
- No extra space between paragraphs (aside from the double space)
- Page numbers inserted
- Spell-checked
- Stapled—I'll take off points if you don't staple it. Seriously. Buy or borrow a stapler.
- In Word, you may need to fiddle with the settings to get it to fit these specifications, but all papers for this course (and most courses, unless the professor instructs you otherwise) should have this formatting.