

University of Dubuque Theological Seminary

IN722 Disciple Formation 4: Immersed in the Story

Spring 2022 - Online and Residential

.5 credit; letter grade

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Course Description

In Disciple Formation 4, students will define and discuss strategies and challenges to the role of grace, in light of their formation as Christian disciples and ministers. Students will demonstrate their application of course content in their own lives and ministry through established methods of theological reflection, such as journaling; inquiry-based learning; and open and guided discussion in small groups facilitated by the instructor, either online or residentially. Students will formulate a rule of life incorporating practices of discipleship and self-care. Disciple Formation 4 is required for Master of Divinity students. Prerequisites include IN521 and IN522, the August Residential retreat (or suitable equivalent approved by the instructor), and IN721.

Course Learning Objectives

Through active participation in the Disciple Formation series, students will develop the capacity to:

- List, describe, and explain examples of Christian practices used within the Christian traditions for the formation of disciples toward loving others and loving God. (Remember, Understand)
- Describe role of self-care in the life of a disciple and minister. (Understand)
- Demonstrate specific practices, such as journaling, theological reflection, scripture study, prayer, art and music reflection, self-reflection. (Apply)
- Experiment with practices and evaluate their formative impact on their love of God and love of others. (Analyze, Evaluate)
- Formulate a rule of life which incorporates specific discipling practices regularly into their lives. (Create)

In addition, through active participation in IN722, students will develop the capacity to:

- Define the role of grace within their specific Christian tradition and practice. (Remember)
- List, describe, and explain the work of grace in the life of a disciple and minister. (Remember, Understand).
- Evaluate their own activities, practices, and behaviors in light of God's work of grace. (Evaluate)
- Formulate a rule of life which incorporates practices to nurture the work of God's grace and self-care. (Create)

M. Div. Curricular Goals (Program Learning Objectives)

- Nurture habits and disciplines of study, prayer, and reflection that increase their love of God and neighbor and shape their personal and professional lives.
- Be formed by, live in, and minister out of Scripture and the historical and theological tradition of the Church.
- Educate and equip individuals and congregations to live and minister joyfully and faithfully as part of their own denomination and the ecumenical church.
- Integrate theology and practice in all areas of life and ministry.

M.A.M.D. Curricular Goal

- Adopt spiritual practices that nurture their personal lives as faithful disciples and witnesses.

Required Texts

Susan R. Pitchford. *The Sacred Gaze: Contemplation and the Healing of the Self*. ISBN: 978-0814635681

Course Requirements and Grading

The challenge in ministry and life is learning how to prioritize space for God and discipleship practices--practices which are mostly invisible, unrewarded, and often, seemingly unnecessary. Regularly engaging the course materials and practices can build a habit of making space for God. This course uses a *covenant grading* approach in order to focus on the *consistent* practice of spiritual disciplines over time, rather than making a judgment about the *quality* of practice. It gives you the choice and visible responsibility for completing course discipleship practices. **All students will complete the common practices and commit to a path.** Different seasons require different amounts and sets of practices. God loves you no matter what! Please decide which path you will be pursuing by **January 18** and email me, sforshey@dbq.edu.

Common Practices for All Students:

- Complete all practices for week 2 including Journal #2.
- Book Summary (500 words), *The Sacred Gaze* by Susan Pitchford.
- Journal #9.
- Write a *Spring Semester Review* (300 words).
- Designate an intentional time and place for listening and responding to God. *It is encouraged to use the work of this course as the practices for that time with God.*
- Regular engagement on-line for distance students or attendance in class for residential students. Please see attendance policy.
- Regular participation in a worshiping community as a worshipper; campus students - regular participation in UDS prayer and chapel opportunities.

Additional requirements

Path 1 (90% of the material or A)

- Complete all common requirements for the course.
- Complete at least 7 weeks of practices, as posted on Moodle--Readings, videos, music, forums, activities.
- Write 4 journals (300 words) which place your life into reflective dialogue with the readings.

Path 2 (80% of the material or B)

- Complete all common requirements for the course.
- Complete 6 weeks of practices, as posted on Moodle--Readings, videos, music, forums, activities.
- Write 3 journals (300 words) which place your life into reflective dialogue with the readings for the week.

Path 3 (70% of the material or C)

- Complete all common requirements for the course.
- Complete 5 weeks of practices, as posted on Moodle--Readings, videos, music, forums, activities.
- Write 2 journals (300 words) which place your life into reflective dialogue with the readings for the week.

Path 4 (60% of the material or D)

- Complete all common requirements for the course.
- Complete at least 4 weeks of practices, as posted on Moodle--Readings, videos, music, forums, activities.

Assignment Policy: If an assignment needs to be turned in late, please let me know the situation prior to the due date. Unexcused late journals/assignments will not be accepted. My expectation: do the assignment “well enough” for the current circumstances you find yourself in.

Online Materials Policy: Lack of engagement online for three consecutive weeks will lead to review and possible administrative withdrawal. Please let me know if an unforeseen circumstance prevents you from participating on-line.

Attendance Policy: Students are building or deepening habits of completion and good communication while in seminary. Please gift your colleagues with your consistent presence, online and/or on-campus:

- **Up to two excused absences from class or online** (with completion of make-up assignments) will not affect your final grade. Please contact me immediately if you must be absent due to illness, emergency, and prior unchangeable commitment. More than three absences will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- The **first unexcused absence**--absent for 2 full weeks online or from 1 campus class meeting without notifying me through email or via phone call--will receive a warning; the **second unexcused absence** will reduce the course grade by one full grade letter. The **third unexcused absence** will result in an automatic administrative withdrawal.

About the Readings: The content of this course may bring up personal struggles best worked through with a recovery group, pastoral counselor, therapist, or spiritual director. Please contact me if you need a referral or help discerning the most faithful next step.