

**THIS IS A DRAFT ONLY!**  
**SOME CHANGES WILL BE MADE TO THIS SYLLABUS BEFORE SEPTEMBER 5.**  
**YOU MAY CONTACT THE PROFESSOR FOR UPDATES BEFORE THAT DATE.**

**Christian Spirituality BTS-5300M (3 credit hours)**  
Canadian Mennonite University: Graduate Course Syllabus  
Fall, 2013

2:30 p.m. – 5:15 p.m.      Thursdays, September 5 – November 28      CMU Room ???

Instructor:      Andrew Dyck, PhD (candidate), VU (Vrije Universiteit) Amsterdam  
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**Mission statement of Canadian Mennonite University:**

*CMU is an innovative Christian university, rooted in the Anabaptist faith tradition, moved and transformed by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Through teaching, research, and service CMU inspires women and men for lives of service, leadership, and reconciliation in church and society.*

**Mission statement of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary Canada:**

*MBBS exists to educate and equip people who help lead the church in reaching Canada and the world with the good news of Jesus Christ.*

Course Description:

“This course examines various traditions, disciplines, and practices of Christian spirituality in the context of their historical development and contemporary expression. Students will be challenged to expand the scope of their understanding and practice of spirituality as they engage and process the course material from within the context of their own faith tradition.” (as posted at [www.cmu.ca](http://www.cmu.ca)).

This course has been designed for students wanting an expanded perspective of how God has been and is at work among Christian traditions, for students curious about their own spirituality and the spirituality of their Christian heritage, and for students wanting to be more receptive to the ways the Spirit of Jesus is present and active among people today.

Objectives and aims of this course:

Students will

1. learn that Christian spirituality is an academic field by discussing Christian spirituality as a recognized field of inquiry that stands in relationship to theology and other disciplines.
2. demonstrate their understanding of the breadth of Christian spirituality by distinguishing between various expressions of Christian spirituality seen in scripture, church history and the twenty-first century.
3. grow in their attentiveness to the spirituality that is shaping them by giving careful attention to the particular spiritualities of people within their own Christian traditions.
4. be invited to become more like Christ as they propose future directions for their own spiritualities in relation to the spiritualities of their own traditions.

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Textbooks and reading materials:

- Foster, Richard. *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of the Christian Faith*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998.  
Holt, Bradley. *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*. Second Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005

On Reserve in CMU Library:

- Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*. Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2005.  
Sheldrake, Philip. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.  
Thompson, Marjorie. *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Other short readings (e.g. articles and book excerpts) will be assigned during the course.

??? See Bibliography for Other Recommended Readings

Assignments—summary:

Article Comments	5%	September 12
Chapter Responses	15%	September 19-October 31 (each week except Oct. 17)
Project Proposal	10%	October 3
Reading Log	10%	October 24
Research Project	35%	November 7-28 (depending on date of presentation)
Project Appendix	15%	December 5
Class Participation	10%	throughout

Assignments—details:

**Article Comments** Due: September 12  
During the Sept. 5 class, each student will be assigned one essay to read from *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* (on reserve in CMU's library). On Sept. 12, each student will present to the class (a) the main argument of the article, (b) an aspect of the article that the student found especially provocative, (c) the particular significance of the article for this class' learning about spirituality (i.e. answer the question "so what?"), and (d) an important question worthy of the class's discussion (although not all questions will necessarily receive discussion time). The student will give the professor these four responses in writing (maximum 1 page or 300 words).

**Chapter Responses** Due: September 19-October 31

Each week, read the assigned chapter from *Streams of Living Water*. Also select one simple spiritual exercise that is a direct expression of the stream of spirituality in that week's chapter and spend 2 hours doing that exercise during the week (preferably spread over at least 3 different occasions). The professor will give suggestions for spiritual exercises, drawing on the textbook and on *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* and *Soul Feast* (both will be on reserve in CMU's library).

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Then write a 1-page (300 words) journal entry on what was familiar and unfamiliar in both the chapter and the spiritual exercise of that week. The journal entries will not be shared in class, but students will be expected to draw on their experiences of the spiritual exercises when discussing in class the chapter of the week.

All journal entries are due at the start of the designated class; late chapter responses will not be accepted for grading.

**Living Spirituality Project Proposal**

Due: October 3

Submit a 2-page (600 words) proposal for the research project (see details below). Each proposal should include (a) one clearly stated research question, (b) the student's motivation for selecting this research question, (c) limitations to the research, (d) the expected relevance and importance of the research, (e) a list of readings comprising at least 300 pages (not including the two course textbooks) about the chosen Christian tradition that will inform the research, and (f) the primary research to be done.

**Reading Log**

Due: October 24

Based on a reading of *Thirsty for God*, submit (a) a 5-page (1200-1500 words) reading log and (b) a 3-page (900 words) reflection.

The reading log, which may be in bulleted points, consists of the student's 'margin notes' while reading the textbook. These notes should include points of agreement and disagreement, questions, insights, and possibilities for further inquiry. Each note should indicate the page number (in parentheses) where it would belong. There should be half a page of notes (150 words) for each chapter.

In the reflection, the student draws on his/her reading of *Thirsty for God* to respond to Philip Sheldrake's claim that there are "four major paradigms of Christian spirituality... 'the monastic paradigm,' 'the mystical paradigm,' 'the active paradigm,' and 'the prophetic-critical paradigm.'"<sup>1</sup>

**Living Spirituality Research Project**

Due: November 7-28

Write a 20-page (6000 words) research paper that focuses on the living spirituality of the student's own Christian tradition (whether expressed in a denomination or not). This may be either a tradition with which the student is especially familiar (e.g. from having spent years in that tradition), or a tradition of which the student is now becoming a part (note: this tradition should be defined more narrowly than the six streams in *Streams*).

The research paper has three major components:

- a) One quarter of the paper will present the spirituality of the selected tradition, based on at least 300 pages of readings that describe the roots of that tradition.
- b) Half of the paper will present the student's discoveries made by studying the life of a person within that tradition. The person's life span should include at least ten of the past fifty years (i.e. the person is still living, or died after 1973). Research into this person's spirituality can be based on memoirs, journals, biographies, autobiographies,

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), xii.

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and/or interviews. (Note: interviews require signed permissions, as per CMU research guidelines.)

- c) The final quarter of the paper will be an analysis and then synthesis.
  - a. The student will identify the key features (incl. gifts and pitfalls) of that person’s spirituality, and then ‘locate’ that spirituality with respect to Scripture, to Holt’s and Foster’s descriptions, and to Sheldrake’s “four major paradigms.”
  - b. Based on the research’s findings, and with reference to the spiritual needs of the student and his/her peers, the student will then suggest strengths and weaknesses of the spirituality of the selected tradition or denomination.

**Living Spirituality Project Appendix**

Due: December 5

Write a 10-page (3000 words) personal response to the research project. The student will write about her/his own spirituality within the stream of the research project. The student’s response should include the following components: describe; compare and contrast; desire; lament; and propose the beginnings of a Rule for Life for the student.

**Class Participation**

Because this course will frequently be conducted as a seminar, participation by each student in class presentations and discussions is essential for this class to form a learning community. The professor will provide students with an explanation of the criteria for grading class participation.

Equivalency chart of letter grades to percentage and numerical grades:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Grade Points</u>	<u>Descriptor</u>
A+	95-100	4.5	Exceptional
A	88-94	4.0	Excellent
B+	81-87	3.5	Very Good
B	74-80	3.0	Good
C+	67-73	2.5	Satisfactory
C	60-66	2.0	Adequate
D	50-59	1.0	Marginal
F	0-49	0.0	Failure

All grades submitted by CMU’s professors are provisional until vetted by the Dean’s Council. That process occurs early in January for fall semester grades and early in May for winter semester grades.

Course schedule and reading deadlines:

		<u>Articles</u>	<u>Foster</u>	<u>Holt</u>
September 5	Introductions for Christian Spirituality			
September 12	Spirituality and Theology (and more)	as assigned		vii-31
September 19	Contemplative Spiritualities	as assigned	ix-58	32-78
September 26	Holiness Spiritualities	as assigned	59-96	79-115
October 3	Charismatic Spiritualities	as assigned	97-134	116-180
October 10	Social Justice Spiritualities	as assigned	135-184	131-202

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October 17	<i>The class will not meet this week.</i>			203-213
October 24	Evangelical Spiritualities	as assigned	185-234	
October 31	Incarnational Spiritualities	as assigned	235-304	
November 7	Student Presentations			
November 14	Student Presentations			
November 21	Student Presentations			
November 28	Student Presentations; Rule for Life	as assigned		

Academic Policies:

Students are expected to be familiar with CMU’s academic policies, as published in the *Academic Calendar* in the *Graduate Student Registration Guide* (both are online at [www.cmu.ca](http://www.cmu.ca)). Sections of particular relevance include “Attendance in Classes,” “Extensions and Incompletes,” “Email Submission of Assignments,” “Multiple Submissions of the Same Work,” “Attendance in Classes,” “Examination Rescheduling,” “Students with Disabilities,” “Academic Misconduct,” and “Appeals.”

The following comments are supplementary to these policies:

Voluntary Withdrawal:

The last day for voluntary withdrawal from fall courses without academic penalty is November 13.

Academic Writing:

Written assignments should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (online at [www.cmu.ca/library](http://www.cmu.ca/library)) and summarized in Diana Hacker’s *A Pocket Style Manual*, fifth edition, which is available in CMU’s bookstore). These resources specify details for formatting (e.g. 1-inch margins, formal fonts in 10- to 12-point font size, double-spacing) and for citing sources.

Attendance:

If a student must miss class due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, it is the student’s responsibility to talk with the instructor as soon as possible about missing material. Students missing an excessive number of classes without valid reason may be barred from further class attendance and from taking the examination in the course.

Extensions:

The instructor has full discretion in granting extensions. Extensions must be requested *before* the due date of an assignment—normally at least one week before the assignment’s due date.

Submission of assignments:

All assignments submitted after the specified due date and time will be penalized one letter grade for each day late (e.g. from B to C+). No assignments will be accepted or graded if the instructor receives them more than five business days after the due date.

???All or no assignments may be submitted by email. The instructor will notify the student by return email of the time and date on which the emailed assignment was received. It is the student’s responsibility to gain confirmation that the instructor received his/her assignment.

???Assignments submitted by email must be sent as Microsoft Word documents (either .doc or .docx), not in other word-processing formats or as PDF’s.

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*It is my commitment to return graded assignments to the students in a timely manner.* This will be done by means of student mailboxes. (Graduate students without a student mailbox may choose to receive their graded assignments in the professor's office door mailbox, or at the receptionist's desk on the south campus.)

**Communication:**

Students are encouraged to engage the instructor outside of class hours. His contact details and office number are above. Beyond this, email will be considered a standard means of communicating. Students should therefore check their CMU email regularly.

**Academic Misconduct:**

Plagiarism and cheating will be treated very seriously, as outlined in the Academic Catalogue. It is the student's responsibility to be familiar with these published expectations.

**Students with Disabilities**

CMU strives to provide a fair and supportive learning environment for academically qualified students with disabilities. The University will seek ways to develop and provide services that support students with disabilities. The Disability Services office coordinates with the Academic Office to provide academic accommodations to eligible students. If you are eligible for these services or have questions about becoming eligible, please contact Sandra Loeppky, Coordinator of Disability Services at [sloeppky@cmu.ca](mailto:sloeppky@cmu.ca) or 204-487-3300 ext. 340.

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Supplementary reading suggestions:

This is a sampling of the many excellent resources available today (not including the books listed above) on spiritual formation and spirituality. CMU's library offers many more.

\*These books are not in CMU's library.

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