

**Christian Spirituality BTS-5300M (3 credit hours)**

Canadian Mennonite University: Graduate Course Syllabus

Spring-Summer, 2020

9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.;<sup>1</sup> Monday – Friday, May 4-8 via livestreaming

Last day for voluntary withdrawal without academic penalty: 5:00pm, Friday, May 8.

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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.*

Note: this course will be delivered via livestreaming. This allows the course experience to be similar to classroom-based courses. All students should study the detailed livestreaming guidelines and requirements in this syllabus' appendix.

Course Description:

“This course introduces students to the study of Christian spirituality by examining diverse traditions of Christian spirituality historically and presently, by considering the scriptural and theological moorings of these traditions, and by engaging in research that studies spiritual life. Through these explorations, students will be invited to consider their own spiritual heritage and ongoing spiritual development” (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.

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<sup>1</sup> This course will be offered as a hybrid course, with scheduled online class sessions and independent study. Therefore, the class will meet only for half days from May 4-8, but will require more writing assignments than a conventional class-based course.

Objectives and aims of this course:

Students will

1. explore Christian spirituality as an academic field of inquiry by discussing Christian spirituality 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(s).
4. be invited to become more like Christ as they propose future directions for their own spiritual life in relation to the spiritualities of their own traditions.

Textbooks\*:

Demarest, Bruce, editor. *Four Views on Christian Spirituality*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012. 220 pp.

Holt, Bradley. *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*. Third Edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017.<sup>2</sup> 292 pp.

\*If you have read any of these textbooks for another course at CMU, please discuss with the professor the possibility of an alternative textbook.

Selected readings will be provided by the professor on Moodle:

Brown, Warren S., Nancey Murphy, H. Newton Malony, editors. *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998. 6 pp.

Murphy, Nancey. *Bodies and Souls, or Spirited Bodies?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. 56 pp.

———. “Science, Anabaptism, and Theological Anthropology,” in *Religion and Science: God, Evolution and the Soul—Proceedings of the Goshen Conference on Religion and Science*,” edited by Carl S. Helrich. Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2002. 16 pp.

Sheldrake, Philip, editor. *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005. 42 pp.

Others as may be assigned during the week of classes.

Recommended:

Collins, Kenneth J. *Exploring Christian Spirituality: An Ecumenical Reader*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000.

Foster, Richard. *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998

Sheldrake, Philip. *A Brief History of Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007.

———. *Spirituality & History*, Rev. Ed. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1995.

———. *The Spiritual Way: Classic Traditions and Contemporary Practice*. Collegeville: Liturgical Press Academic, 2019.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to use the third edition because it includes much new material.

<sup>3</sup> Of the five recommended books, this one is not in the CMU library.

Assignments—summary:

- |   |     |                         |
|---|-----|-------------------------|
| 1. Article Reading Comments             | 5%  | Due: May 4              |
| 2. Holt Reading...                      |     |                         |
| a. Log, Response, Interactions          | 15% | Due: May 25, 29, June 2 |
| b. Journal Reflection                   | 5%  | Due: July 6             |
| 3. A New Chapter                        |     |                         |
| a. Chapter Draft                        | 20% | Due: June 22            |
| b. Responses to the Draft               | 5%  | Due: June 29            |
| 4. Living Spirituality Research Project |     |                         |
| a. Proposal                             | 10% | Due: June 15            |
| b. Paper and Abstract                   | 25% | Due: July 27            |
| c. Responses                            | 5%  | Due: August 4           |
| d. Appendix                             | 10% | Due: August 10          |

Assignments—details:<sup>4</sup>

1. Article Reading Comments 5% Due: May 4  
One week before classes begin, each registered student will be assigned two essays from *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*.

Students will be given scanned copies via Moodle. To access Moodle, go to <https://moodle.cmu.ca> and click on the link for this course. Instructions for logging in will then be provided on the webpage. Students must know their own CMU Network username and password to access Moodle.

During the first class, each student will present to the class the following:

- (a) the main thesis and argument of each assigned reading,
- (b) an aspect of each reading that the student found especially provocative,
- (c) the particular significance of each reading for this class' learning about spirituality (i.e. answer the question "so what?"), and
- (d) one important question from each reading for the class' discussion.

Students should understand the reading well enough to lead the class in a discussion of the readings' topics. The time allotted for each presentation (based on the number of students in the class) will be sent to students at least three days before the first class.

Students will also give the professor their reading comments in writing (maximum 2 pages [600 words] per assigned essay—1 page for [a], and 1 page for [b]–[d]).

2. Holt Reading...
  - a. Log, Response, Interactions:  
Reading log 5% Due: May 25  
(4 pages, 1200 words total; that is, 100 words per chapter, including Introduction and Afterword)  
The reading log consists of the student's 'margin notes' (in bulleted points) as s/he read through the textbook. Priority should be given to notes that discuss and critique central points

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<sup>4</sup> Although not all these assignments are strictly academic in genre (e.g. reflections, responses, interactions), all assignments should conform to academic standards of formatting and of citing sources (cf. details below).

of the chapters. These notes may 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 in the book.

Response 5% Due: May 29.

(3 pages, 900 words)

Write a more developed engagement with one recurrent theme from the student's log, in light of the student's proposed definition of Christian spirituality (be sure to include the definition). Post the response to Moodle; do not email it to the professor.

To post this and other assignments to Moodle, go to <https://moodle.cmu.ca> and click on the link for this course. Then click on name of the assignment, and then on "Add a new discussion topic" to post your submission.

Interactions 5% Due: June 2

(2 pages, 600 words)

Write 4 entries on Moodle as ways of interacting with the posted assignments. Interact with at least 2 other students' assignments, *and* with students who respond to your assignment. Each entry must be at least 150 words.

b. Journal Reflection. 5% Due: July 6

By May 8, each student will select one of the exercises from *Thirsty for God* (cf. end of each chapter), so that the student can do this exercise at least 3 times a week over the next 40 days. Afterwards, write a 3 page (900 word) personal reflection that describes and evaluates the effects that this exercise has had on the student.

3. A New 'Chapter'

a. Chapter Draft 20% Due: June 22

Working in groups assigned by the professor, prepare for the class a presentation that is a brief, additional 'chapter' for the textbook book *Four Views* (groups and time limits will be announced by May 8). Each group will choose, with the approval of the professor, another Christian denomination or tradition to study.

The presentation and associated paper (8 pages [2400 words]) will present the key features of the spirituality of that denomination or tradition, followed by four responses (as if written by the four authors of *Four Views*). Include in the paper a statement that outlines how the tasks of the assignment were divided evenly among the group members. The presentation is to be uploaded to Moodle, and can take a variety of forms: for example, video-recording, PowerPoint with audio, Prezi video, Zoom webinar.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> If the class so chooses, it can arrange to meet for a Zoom session to hear the presentations 'live.' In that case, the written responses will be replaced by live conversations. In that case, students will be given self-grading sheets for evaluating themselves.

- b. Responses to Draft 5% Due: June 29  
(1½ pages, 450 words)

Write 3 entries on Moodle as ways of interacting with the presentations. Interact with other students' assignments, *and* with students who respond to your assignment. Each entry must be at least 150 words.

4. Living Spirituality Research Project

- a. Proposal 10% Due: June 15

Submit a 2-page (600 word) proposal for the research project (as detailed below). Each proposal will include

- i. one clearly stated research question,
- ii. the student's motivations for selecting this research question,
- iii. limitations to the research,
- iv. the expected relevance and importance of the research to the class,
- v. a list of readings (at least 200 pages, above and beyond the two required textbooks) that will inform the research about the chosen Christian tradition, and
- vi. the primary research to be conducted—whether more along the lines of historiography or ethnography. (Be sure to indicate whether non-family members will be interviewed, so that the professor can provide the forms that must be completed for such research to meet CMU's Ethics policies.)

- b. Paper and Abstract 25% Due: July 27

Write a 15-page (4500 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 lived 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 four examples in *Four Views*). The Christian tradition that is chosen should be described briefly in an extended introduction to the paper.

The research paper has two major components:

- a) Half to two thirds of the paper will present the student's discoveries made by studying the life of one person within the tradition being studied. The person should still be living, or have died no earlier than 1975. Research into this person's Christian spirituality can be based on memoirs, journals, biographies, autobiographies, and/or interviews. Students who choose to interview non-family members must complete several simple forms, in keeping with the CMU Ethics Protocol which has been approved for this assignment. Students must consult the instructor about how to use these forms.
- b) The final half to one third of the paper will be (i) an analysis and then (ii) a synthesis.
  - i. The student will identify the key features and/or themes of the researched person's spiritual life, and then 'locate' that spirituality with respect to Scripture, and to two paradigms or grids from literature on Christian spiritualities. Recommended examples include  
Richard Foster *Streams of Living Water* (six traditions),  
Bradley Holt *Thirsty for God*,  
Philip Sheldrake *The Spiritual Way* (five types),  
———. *A Brief History of Spirituality* [i.e. four paradigms],

———. *Spirituality and History* [cf. last chapter].

Corinne Ware *Discover Your Spiritual Type*

- ii. Based on the research findings and analysis, 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 Christian tradition or denomination.

Post a 1 page (300 word) précis or abstract of the paper on Moodle. The abstract should include the paper's research question and primary findings, and provide one question to stimulate further exploration.

- c. Responses 5% Due: August 4

(2 pages, 600 words)

Write 4 entries on Moodle in response to the abstracts. Interact with at least 2 other students' assignments, *and* with students who respond to your assignment. Each entry must be at least 150 words.<sup>6</sup>

- d. Appendix 10% Due: August 10

Write a 5-page (1500 words) personal response to the research project. The student will write about her/his own spirituality in relationship to the research project. The student's response should include the following components:

- describe;
- compare and contrast;
- lament; and
- desire.

Students are expected to organize their response in way that is coherent and focused.

Assignments—calendar:

<u>Due Dates:</u>	<u>Assignments:</u>
Monday, May 4	Article Reading Comments
Tues.-Fri., May 5-8	Attend Classes, and do assigned readings for each day: Tuesday: Foreword, Introduction, Chapter 1 of <i>Four Views</i> Wednesday: Chapter 2 of <i>Four Views</i> Thursday: Chapter 3 of <i>Four Views</i> , and Nancey Murphy selections Friday: Chapter 4 of <i>Four Views</i>
Monday, May 25	Holt Log
Friday, May 29	Holt Response
Tuesday, June 2	Holt Interactions
Monday, June 15	Project Proposal
Monday, June 22	'New Chapter' Presentation

<sup>6</sup> If the class so chooses, it can arrange to meet for a Zoom session to discuss the project abstracts 'live.' In that case, the written responses will be replaced by live conversations. In that case, students will be given self-grading sheets for evaluating themselves.

Monday, June 29	‘New Chapter’ Responses
Monday, July 6	Journal Reflection (40-day practice)
Monday, July 27	Project Paper and Abstract
Tuesday, August 4	Project Responses
Monday, August 10	Project Appendix

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

Grades become final only after they are vetted and approved by the Dean’s Office.

Academic Policies:

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

The following comments are supplementary to these policies:

Academic Writing:

All written assignments should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (online at [www.cmu.ca/library](http://www.cmu.ca/library) (click on ‘MORE’ at the bottom of the page, then look under the heading ‘Writing Assistance’) and summarized in Diana Hacker’s *A Pocket Style Manual*, seventh 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.

Excellence in terms of format, spelling, grammar, sentence and paragraph construction, etc. are assumed. Frequent and persistent errors will result in lower assessments. Formal title page, footnotes or endnotes, bibliography, skilled paragraphing, etc. are essential for academic writing. Where the length of an assignment is defined in a range, be aware that ‘exceptional’ and ‘excellent’ grades are more likely to be awarded for work that is closer to the maximum length than the minimum (unless the work is especially outstanding).

#### Attendance:

If a student must miss class due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, it is the student's responsibility to talk with the professor as soon as possible about missing material. Students who miss the equivalent of 2 weeks of classes (6 hours) will be required to complete an additional assignment for the course. Students missing an excessive number of classes without valid reason may be barred from further class attendance.

#### 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, unless an extension has been granted prior to the due date. The exception is Reading Logs; they will not be accepted for grading after the class in which they are due.

All assignments are to be submitted by email (unless specified for Moodle), and must be sent as '.docx' Microsoft Word documents. Other word-processing formats or PDF's are not acceptable. The professor will notify the student by return email of the time and date on which the emailed assignment was received (normally, this will happen within 24 hours of the professor receiving the assignment, not including weekends). It is the student's responsibility to gain confirmation that the professor received his/her assignment.

*It is my commitment to return graded assignments to the students in a timely manner.* Assignments will be returned by email or Moodle.

#### 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 Integrity:

All students must be familiar with CMU policies regarding plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct. It is essential that students read the document "Academic Misconduct at CMU" that is taken from the CMU Academic Calendar (available online) and posted on the Student Portal.

All material referred to in any assignment MUST be appropriately referenced. Plagiarism is a serious matter. Students should be aware of CMU Academic Policies, particularly those regarding academic misconduct (plagiarism and cheating), which apply to all University courses. These are detailed on CMU's website (<http://www.cmu.ca/students.php?s=registrar&p=policies>) and in the CMU Calendar.

If you still have questions about appropriate referencing and what plagiarism is, a useful tutorial can be found here: <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/>.

#### 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 or 204-487-3300 ext. 340.

In recognition of individuals with asthma, allergies and severe environmental and/or chemical sensitivities, CMU is striving to become a scent-free campus. Students, staff and guests are asked to refrain from wearing fragrances and scented personal care products at CMU. This includes perfumes, colognes, aftershave and scented hair products. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated by those affected.

#### Other Academic Supports

CMU offers its students academic supports at no cost. Academic tutors are available to all students; see Vern Kehler, Coordinator of Student Advising (vkebler@cmu.ca), to set up a first appointment with a tutor. Volunteer tutors are available to work on a one-on-one basis with students; see Vern for details, or check [www.cmu.ca/students.php?s=studentlife&p=academic](http://www.cmu.ca/students.php?s=studentlife&p=academic).

### **Appendix: Live-Streamed Courses**

A live-streamed course makes it possible for students at a distance to observe and participate interactively with an on-campus class in real time. Those who attend a class by live-streaming see and hear the professor. They can watch class media presentations (e.g. PowerPoint) on their computer screens. They can follow and participate in class discussions, posing questions and making comments of their own. They can have discussions with other students when the class breaks into smaller groups. Through the internet, students at a distance can share the essential elements of a regular class experience with those who attend class in person.

Unless otherwise stated in the syllabus, live-streaming students will do the same course assignments and follow the same course schedule as on-campus students.

#### Requirements for Participating in a Live-streamed Course

- Because the number of live-stream participants to a course is limited, ***students must receive faculty permission prior to the beginning of the course*** in order to participate through live-streaming.
- ***Students must participate in classes in real-time***, as they would if they were attending class in person. For example, those who take a live-streamed course that meets on Wednesday evenings will be expected to be in that class virtually, or physically when that class is in-session. (If live-streaming students come to Winnipeg, they are welcome to attend class in person.)
- Participation in a course through live-streaming ***requires the following:***
  - ***a fast and consistent internet connection*** (broadband ADSL or cable; or wireless 3G or 4G/LTE—wired is better than wireless),
  - ***a reasonably up-to-date computer*** system (at least MacOS 10.7 or Windows 7; mobile devices usually work as well),
  - ***a supported browser*** (e.g. Firefox 27+, Chrome, 30+ Safari 7+, IE11+),
  - ***Zoom software*** (provided by CMU),
  - ***a webcam***, and
  - ***a good quality headset with a microphone*** (CMU can suggest some).

- CMU has the capacity to record live-streamed courses for later viewing, but does not do so as a matter of routine. If it is difficult for students to participate in a class session, they may ask the professor for permission to watch recorded versions of the class. This permission will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
- Students may use the Zoom software to meet together via live-streaming between classes (e.g. for group projects or other consultations). Contact the professor for instructions.
- Students must familiarize themselves with the live-streaming software platform (i.e. Zoom) and ensure that their link, webcam, and headset are working properly ***before*** the first class session. Please arrange for a practice run on the system with the professor ***prior*** to class; this is essential. A practice run can be arranged by email.
- ***Be sure to login for each class session at least 15 minutes before the class begins.*** Remember that any testing of the system or other logistics that requires faculty assistance needs to be done before class starts. The professor will do their best to ensure that everything is in place for the live-stream session; but they cannot allow live-stream setup to significantly delay or interfere with the smooth flow of the class session once class begins. (To avoid distracting the class, it is helpful to mute the mic on your computer when you are not speaking to the class.)
- Arrange a backup plan with your professor in case of a system failure. CMU uses high-caliber, up-to-date equipment and communication platforms for live-streaming, but hardware and internet connections are not infallible and on occasion may fail. Your professor cannot stop class in order to troubleshoot and resolve technical problems in this unlikely event. To minimize possible disruption in the case of a loss of connection:
  - provide the professor with your email, text, or phone contact information before the course begins so that the professor can contact you at the next natural break in the class;
  - discuss with the professor the possibility of a back-up link to the class in case of a system failure (e.g. a Skype or phone link if the Zoom connection fails); and
  - have a plan for follow-up contact with the professor and/or a fellow student to fill any gaps in your interaction with the class (as you would if you had to miss a class for other reasons).
- If you have technical difficulties that you cannot solve with your professor (e.g. with the login process), contact Richard Boyd from CMU's I.T. department (204.451.0980).