

SENIOR SEMINAR COURSE DESCRIPTIONS
FALL 2008

IDS 402-01 – Christianity and Literature – Curtis Gruenler
TR 1:30-2:50 SciCtr 1111

The premise of this course is that we come to understand our vocations, our callings in life, largely through imagining our lives as stories. Being called to a vocation often involves encountering narratives that lift us out of the stories we have inherited and enable us to imagine our lives in new ways. We will read some novels, like David James Duncan's *The River Why*, Wendell Berry's *Jayber Crow*, Walker Percy's *The Moviegoer*, or J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Fellowship of the Ring*, some autobiographies like Frederick Buechner's *Now and Then* and Anne Lamott's *Divine Comedy*, or Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Through reading and responding to these works together, we'll consider such questions as: How does a sense of vocation grow from the stories we imagine ourselves to be living? What narrative models do we use in imagining our lives, and where do they come from? What does it mean to think of God as the author of our lives? In what sense are we free to choose our own stories? How can we choose well? The main aim of the course is that we each would come away from it with a clearer sense of our own vocation, at least for now. Students will be asked to write frequent informal responses to the reading, a few short essays, and a life view paper.

IDS 438-01 – Models of Christian Spirituality – Jenny Powers
MW 2:00-3:20 Miller 242

This course examines the way in which Christian views of life are formed in the context of lived human experience. Special attention will be given to the many different ways Christians can articulate their understanding of their experience.

IDS 452-01A – Education and Christian Ways of Living – C. Baars Bultman
MWF 12:00-2:50 (meets first 5 weeks only)

This seminar asks you to examine your own complex and arduous search for the moral high ground. Our discussions will be framed by the seminar's on-going concern with search, struggle, sacrifice and service. The course readings will be varied and will include works by the novelist Walker Percy and the moralist and child psychiatrist Robert Coles, as well as the libretto from "Les Miserables."

IDS 461-01 – Science and Christian Perspectives – Stephen Taylor
MWF 1:00-1:50 SciCtr 3128

In general, the classes will begin with a discussion of the most recent readings. The books chosen are very readable, and deal with an adjustment to life with Christian values in mind. The students will not be graded on where they stand, but on their depth and consistency of thought, as expressed in the assignments. The culmination of their thoughts will be expressed in their Life View Paper (LVP) of the grade. Magazine article reading and presentation assignments will be made over current perspectives on medicine, science and human values (and how they are connected to our lives). A formal schedule of the class activities will be given out at the beginning of the course. The books that will be **required** are:

Johnson, Timothy. *Finding God in the Questions*. Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2004.

Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. New York, Macmillan Co., 1960.

Myers, David G. *The Pursuit of Happiness*. New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992.

Smedes, Lewis B. *The Art of Forgiving. When You Need to Forgive and Don't Know How*. New York, Ballantine, 1966.

Polkinghorne, John C. *Quarks, Chaos and Christianity*. New York, Crossroad Pub. Co., 2001 or Barbour, Ian G. *Religion and Science*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.

IDS 471-01 – Dying, Healing and Thriving – Jeff Tyler

TR 9:30-10:50 LH120

How do we come to live full and healthy lives? How do we deal with disappointment, setback, suffering, and even death on the way to the *Good Life*? This seminar focuses on the abundant life, especially as understood in the Christian tradition, by exploring the nature of dying, healing, and thriving.

When we engage and reflect on the pain and promise of this life, we live with greater meaning, purpose, and faith. We suffer, sometimes wither, and then recover, grow, and prosper. We lose loved ones, grieve, and move on with a deeper sense of the meaning of life; it is possible that we will live more fully after a close encounter with death. This movement from death to life is captured in the Christian spiritual rhythm of dying, healing, and rising again. We will explore together—read, observe, listen, discuss, and write—how we might find insight, comfort, and meaning in the face of ultimate death. We will investigate how we heal from the smaller forms of death in our lives--change, failure, disappointment, illness, and alienation. Finally we will ask how we might live abundantly and savor the gifts of life, while we are yet aware of the presence and shadow of death.

IDS 495-01 – Activists and Advocates for a Better World – Julie Kipp

M 6:00 – 8:50 p.m. LH220

This course is designed to promote "service learning." This is to say that the course aims to get you out in the world *doing something* rather than just into the library thinking about what others have done, or what you might at some time do. We will be reading, discussing, and responding in writing to texts that grapple with questions about service (how/when/why/if we are called "serve" one another), but we will also develop and carry-out specific projects that involve service in our community. This might involve volunteering your time, advocating a cause, taking action on a specific issue close to your heart. In *The Call of Service: A Witness to Idealism*, Pulitzer Prize winner Robert Coles claims that "all service is directly or indirectly ethical activity, a reply to a moral call within, one that answers a moral need in the world." To this end, this course is designed not simply to help you to think about activism and advocacy as a way of life, but to encourage you to begin living that life right now. My mother used to tell me that "much is expected of those to whom much has been given." This course will push you first to consider what that means for you and then *to go out and do something* about it.

IDS 495-02 – Change, Complexity, Christianity – Dianne Portfleet
TR 12:00-1:20 LH222

The seminar is entitled Change, Complexity and Christianity. It will focus on the rapid changes occurring in all areas of our culture, how complex all problems and solutions are becoming because of this rapid change, and the difficulty of institutions keeping up with the rapid changes. Part will be on our current condition, the majority will be on future predictions and the changes occurring, and all of it will be tied in to our personal lives, career choices, and values. Readings will include many in class handouts plus readings by Henri Nouwen, Frederick Buechner, Alvin Toffler and others. A strong emphasis will be placed on the quality of our thinking that will be required in the future as we adjust to the changes, become international in our thinking, and become critical and creative thinkers in our future careers.

IDS 495-03 – Vocation and Health Care – Steve Hoogerwerf
T 7:00-9:50 LH121

This course is designed to explore what it means to think about the meaning of vocation (from the Latin vocare, to call) especially in the context of health care. Using the concept of vocation suggests several questions that might be addressed: What would it mean to be “called” as a caregiver or healer? How would health care be different if one approached it as a vocation than if one considered it simply a career? How does theology, spirituality and ethics become an integral part of the vocation to care for those who are sick? If you do not expect to be working in health care, similar questions can be posed within the context of your own life and work. In fact, I encourage you to frame some of your own questions and share them with me early in the course.

When we consider our vocations or callings, we do not only think about jobs. Our life is more than our work, and our sense of calling can (and I think ought to) inform all of life: our relationships, leisure, citizenship, use of natural resources, and our service to the wider communities we live in. So, while we will often talk about vocation in the context of health care, we can and should expand our considerations to the whole of our lives.

The way we frame our questions and answers will unavoidably draw on the religious or philosophical perspectives we bring, so our topic is inescapably concerned with our worldviews. Throughout the course it is my intention that our class provide a safe and nurturing context in which each student can explore, clarify, verbalize, and question his or her worldview. As the course draws to a close, students will be invited to formulate their answers to these questions as they work toward completing their life view paper and presentation. A variety of readings, video presentations, classroom guests and creative learning activities will provide the basis for our semester-long conversation.

IDS 495-04 – Do No Harm – Catherine Clarey-Sanford
W 6:00-8:50 SciCtr 1135

This course focuses on an in-depth examination of the legal and ethical rights, responsibilities, and obligations of the practicing health care provider in a changing medical environment. We will discuss what it means to "do no harm" with an emphasis being placed on the analysis of what is morally right or good for those in our care. In this course, we will examine various topics that arise in the field of medicine—euthanasia; truth-telling by physicians; rationing of health care, and other issues—and attempt to reach reasoned conclusions regarding the moral issues we encounter. We will try to strike a balance between the practical and the theoretical: we will read and discuss actual cases and will attempt to extract the "universal principles" and general lessons from these cases.

IDS 495-05 – What's Worth Remembering – John Shaughnessy
TR 1:30-2:50 ChpB16

In this seminar we will explore what it means to remember from a variety of perspectives (including our own) to discover the ways in which remembering influences our understanding of others and ourselves. Memory will serve as a window for engaging in reflection and critical examination of our life experiences to discern and articulate why we believe what we believe and why we do what we do. We will read and discuss memoirs as one way to encounter people's reflections on their remembered lives. These memoirs will serve as a framework for the life view paper students will write.