



Transforming Hearts and Minds to Serve the World

REL 253 The Self

Spring 2021,

REL 235A Tuesday/Thursday 2:30-3:45, Memorial 104

REL 235B Tuesday/Thursday 4-5:15, Memorial 104

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Office Hours this semester will be held via Zoom. Please email to make an appointment or to let me know that you would like to "drop in."

Monday 4-5

Tuesday 10-12

Wednesday 1-2, 4-5

Thursday 10-12

Zoom ID for Office Hours: 537 719 8126

Zoom ID for Remote Class Attendance:

	REL235A	REL235B
Meeting ID	955 5293 6886	931 4866 9613
Passcode	917809	432578

Description

Ethics and morality typically deal with the question of what is right and wrong for our actions. Spirituality at its most general is thought to be oriented towards attaining a happy, integrated life. This course will raise questions about what it means to live a moral and ethical life. Students will also examine the relationship between spirituality and what it means to be a "whole" self/person.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Identify, analyze, and critique multiple philosophies of the self and their ethical implications.
2. Identify, compare, contrast, and appropriate multiple spiritual resources from the Christian tradition.

3. Analyze and evaluate correlations among the ethical goals and practices of multiple spiritualities and philosophies of the self.
4. Analyze and develop biographical narrative in creating identity.
5. Articulate the relevance of philosophies of the self and spiritual practices for their own ethical lives.

Course Objectives

In this course, students are asked to examine critically various philosophies of the self that are implicitly or explicitly operative in the social imaginary. They will draw on various understandings and practices of spirituality from the Christian tradition. They will understand the role of biographical and autobiographical narrative in integrating the self as an ethical agent in the world.

Teaching Strategies/Course Requirements

University Academic Goal	Outcome	Strategy/Requirement	% of grade
1c, f 2a, b, c 3c, d 4 5a-d	5	Spirituality/Ethics Journal Entries	20%
1b, c, d 2a, b, c, e, f 4 5a-d	1-5	Class preparedness and participation	15%
1b, c, d 2a, b 3a, c, d 5a-d	1, 2, 3	Quizzes	20%
1b, c, d 2a, b, c, e 5a-d	1-5	Written and CANVAS assignments (Reading summaries, reflections, discussion boards, reading quizzes)	25%
2b, c, f 3a, c 5a-d	1, 2, 3	Final Exam – VoiceThread Illustrated Essay	20%
2a, b, c 3d	1-5	Discussion Leadership	Bonus

Required Texts

Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. Oxford World's Classics. 2009 is the latest printing, but there are also earlier printings. 978-0199537822

Dorothy Day. *The Long Loneliness*. Multiple formats and editions, I'm recommending the HarperOne edition since it is still in print and easy to find used. 978-0060617516

James Martin, SJ. *Becoming Who You Are: Insights on the True Self from Thomas Merton and Other Saints*. Mahway, NJ: Hiddenspring, 2006
978-1-58768-036-6

You must have access to a Bible for some assignments. You will not need to carry it to class.

Additional readings and others sources will be made available to students through CANVAS or will be available online.

Course Policies

Several academic policies are common to all undergraduate courses at Rivier University. You will find these common policies at the following web address:

<https://catalog.rivier.edu/content.php?catoid=107&navoid=1795>. In particular, please thoroughly review policies related to "The Classroom" (see "Attendance," "Behavior," and "Electronic Devices"), and "Academic Standards" (particularly "Academic Honesty"). Please also consult the resources Rivier University offers to address special needs: <https://www.rivier.edu/academics/support-resources/disability-services/> and <https://catalog.rivier.edu/content.php?catoid=111&navoid=1910#disability>

As your instructor, I require you to have read these policies. I draw your attention to the following points of emphasis:

1. Attendance:
 1. Regular and punctual attendance is required. Missed classes or repeated tardiness WILL affect your participation grade and deprive you of a crucial learning opportunity. Please note the university policy on habitual non-attendance.
 2. **However**, during this COVID-19 emergency, if you experience any potential symptoms or are concerned that your presence in the physical classroom may endanger your health or the health of others, **please join during the usual class time via Zoom link**. Students who attend class remotely are considered to be **present** for that class session, and of course are expected to participate in the class session actively.
 3. In the event of an absence due to illness or family emergency, the student is responsible for all work missed. Check with the instructor **NO LATER THAN** the day of your return to class.

4. If you know you are going to miss a class, both wisdom and courtesy dictate that you contact the instructor as soon as possible.
5. Holiday travel absences are not excused absences.
1. Academic integrity is expected. On papers, homework assignments, and quizzes, your work must be your own. Plagiarism or cheating will result in no credit being awarded for the assignment and may result in failure of the course. It will also be reported to the University, which may impose additional sanctions. If you have any doubts as to what actions may violate the academic integrity of your work, please ask beforehand.
2. Late Assignments:
 - a. Please be attentive to due dates for assignments.
 - b. Ordinary homework assignments (reading reflections, CANVAS discussion posts, etc.) pertain to the work in which we are engaged right at the moment; therefore, they may not be turned in late. No credit will be given for late assignments. These assignments are generally due no later than the night before class. (In cases of absence due to serious illness, family emergency, please consult with your instructor as well as with your academic advisor for fair modifications.)
 - c. Essays and presentations may be turned in up to two days late, with a 10% grade penalty each day. After two days, the assignment will not be accepted and no credit will be given. **Please note that the final VoiceThread essay will not be accepted late.**
 - d. As the instructor, I reserve the right to make exceptions for extenuating circumstances.
3. Technology – **COVID-19 Policies**
 - a. All cell phones must be silenced and remain unused during class. Students who call, text, email, or engage in any other type of electronic communication, including the checking of voicemail, email, and text messages, during class time **will not receive credit for class participation that day.** It is the student's responsibility to avoid even the appearance of engaging in electronic communication during class. **There will be no additional warnings.**
 - b. **However,** the COVID-19 pandemic results in our having a mixture of in-person and remote learning during class. It also calls us to maintain a social distance that interrupts our normal mode of collaboration, and so there are more moments than usual when electronic collaboration is appropriate and helpful. **Therefore, the use of laptops or tablets** during class is permitted for taking notes, for approved small-group and large-group collaborations, and for reading electronic versions of the textbooks or other course material. Of course, when none of these functions is relevant to a class activity, these devices should be closed, turned off, or put away.
 - c. Violation of this policy is grounds for the instructor to rescind the right of any student to use a laptop or tablet. Violation of the policy that interferes with class

learning is grounds for the instructor to prohibit electronic devices from the classroom entirely.

4. Email and CANVAS

- a. All email communications will be sent to the student's Rivier University email address. It is recommended that you check this email account daily.
- b. This course will rely heavily on CANVAS, the learning management system. Students will be able to access readings and to submit assignments through CANVAS. Use CANVAS to keep track of the evolving syllabus as assignments and readings are specified. Check CANVAS daily.

COVID-Related Classroom Guidelines

The tradition of Catholic Social Teaching that is so much a part of Rivier's mission emphasizes that we must act in solidarity with one another in order to promote the common good. In keeping with these principles, as a class, we will endeavor to support each other in promoting and preserving the health of each other, of our families, and of the campus community. We are learning and teaching in a time of uncertainty, and so I am confident we will approach the semester with both thoughtful care for each other and a willingness to continue to figure out the best solutions together. I refer you to the University Return to Campus Plan.

https://www.rivier.edu/student-life/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2020/08/Return-to-Campus-Plan-for-Students_8.3.20.pdf

Practically speaking, then:

- Treat every person in the classroom as if they or someone with whom they live is particularly vulnerable to COVID-19. Some people may not want to discuss whether or why they are vulnerable, so let us assume that everyone is.
- I encourage you to wipe down your desk area as your first sit down.
- As per university policy, we will all wear a mask over our nose and mouth at all times in the classroom building.
- Unfortunately, because we are masking, please do not consume food and drink in the classroom.
- We will disperse our seating in the classroom as widely as possible. Please sit six feet from your closest neighbor whenever possible. A good rule of thumb is to leave empty seats between you whenever possible.
- When entering and exiting the classroom, please take time to remain spaced as close to six feet as possible.
- If you are not able to find a safe, socially-distant spot in the classroom, please let your instructor know. If we cannot solve the problem, you do not need to stay in a classroom that is not safe.
- We will all, including your instructor, take very seriously the Daily Health Screen.

<https://it.rivier.edu/information-technology/home-screening/>

- If you have any doubt about whether you should be on campus on a given day, stay away. I know that under normal circumstances most of us will ignore the minor symptoms of the common cold and go to class/work/practice. This semester, let us consider that those minor symptoms may not simply be the common cold and that our presence might endanger ourselves and others. **Please attend remotely instead.**
- I will make every effort to accommodate you and keep you up with course material when you are staying away from class in an effort to preserve everybody's health. **You will not be punished academically for doing your part to preserve the health of your classmates, your instructors, and your families. I will work with you. Please do your best to attend class remotely if health reasons dictate that you should not be present in person.**
- Please follow university policy after a positive COVID test or a presumptive positive based on symptoms (page 7 of the [Return to Campus Plan](#)).
 - If the student had a confirmed case of COVID-19 or believes to have had COVID-19 and experienced symptoms, the student may return to campus:
 - at least 10 days after symptoms first appeared, and
 - at least 24 hours with no fever without fever-reducing medication, and
 - symptoms have improved
 - If the student tested positive for COVID-19 but had no symptoms, the student may return to campus after:
 - 10 days have passed since positive test, and
 - the student continues to have no symptoms
 - Students returning to campus will be asked to provide documentation, which may include a statement from a healthcare provider, clearing the student to return to campus. Documentation and questions should be directed to the following offices:
 - Resident students: Office of Student Life and Housing Services at housing@rivier.edu
 - All other students: Office of Student Affairs at studentaffairs@rivier.edu

Course Requirements

1. This class thrives on the exchange of ideas. Students are expected to prepare for class with thoughtful reading and reflection. You will participate in class by listening actively to their instructor and peers, contributing your ideas, responding to the ideas of others, and asking and answering questions. Participation counts for 15% of your final grade.
2. Five journal reflections of 1-2 pages counts for 20% of your final grade.
3. There will be four quizzes over the course of the semester. Together they count for a total of 20% of your grade.
4. Instead of a final exam, you will submit an illustrated essay that you narrate on VoiceThread. It will be due at the time of the final exam, and will count for 20% of the final grade.
5. Assorted assignments, either written or on CANVAS, in class or outside of class, make up 25% of the final grade. These assignments may include reading reflections, online quizzes, conversation posts, and other homework assignments.

- 6. Extra Credit Opportunity.** Please note that, by and large, the work that is assigned is the work into which you should be investing your time and energy. I will not offer extra credit assignments besides this one: You may (and are encouraged to) sign up to initiate the class discussion based on assigned readings once during the semester.
- a. You must sign up for the session you hope to lead no later than one week in advance.
 - b. You must meet with your professor at least once regarding the reading and the plan for the discussion. You will collaborate with the professor so that you will be confidently prepared for presenting the topic and starting the discussion.
 - c. You will present to the class for about five minutes, during which you will:
 - i. Contextualize the reading/author
 - ii. Identify and highlight author's key arguments
 - iii. Frame the reading in terms of the broader issues at work in the class
 - iv. Propose 2-3 critical questions that help push the class into discussion, and
 - v. Propose a question to encourage consideration of the personal relevance of the material.
 - d. Your work will be graded on a three-point scale. You will earn up to three points to be added to your final semester grade.

Grading

Final Averages will be converted to letter grades in accord with university policy.

Letter Average	Grade Points	
A	100-93	4.00 grade points
A-	92-90	3.67 grade points
B+	89-87	3.33 grade points
B	86-83	3.00 grade points
B-	82-80	2.67 grade points
C+	79-77	2.33 grade points
C	76-73	2.00 grade points
C-	72-70	1.67 grade points
D+	69-67	1.33 grade points
D	66-63	1.00 grade points
F	(62 & below)	0.00 grade points

Topics and Readings

These topics, the resources, and the accompanying assignments will evolve over the course of the semester. All assignments and changes will be discussed in class and will appear on CANVAS. As course instructor I reserve the right to make adjustments in keeping with the needs and interests of the class.

Week 1: Self, Spirituality, and Ethics in a Secular Age

Taylor, *Ethics of Authenticity* and *A Secular Age*

Smith, *Soul Searching*
Haight, *Spirituality in Search of Theology*
Zanzig, *The Transformed Heart*
Chittister, *Heart of Flesh*

Weeks 2-4: True Self and Its Critics

Week 2: Finding a True Self

Martin, Ch. 1-3
Martin, Ch. 4
Keenan, "Moral Agency"

Week 3: Commodified and Curated Selves

Ostberg, "The Stockholm Syndrome of Advertising," TEDxStockholm 2015
Hidden Brain, "Our Brands, Ourselves" podcast
Turtle, "Connected But Alone?" TED 2012

Week 4: Christian Spirituality and the True Self

Luke 4: 1-13
Martin, Ch. 6
Richard Rohr, podcast interview
Quiz #1

Weeks 4-7: Augustine of Hippo

Week 5 and 6: Sin, Self, and Ethics

Augustine, Book I
Augustine Book II and Book III (16)

Week 7: Conversion and True Self

Augustine, Book VIII
Quiz #2

Week 8: Spirituality of the Family, Community

Wright, "Family Life as Spiritual Practice"
Chittister, "What is Benedictine Spirituality?"

Weeks 9-12: Dorothy Day

Week 9: Religion, Spirituality, and Ethics

Day, 1-36 (skim), 36-50; 63, 72

Week 10: Searching

Day, Part 2, “Natural Happiness”

Day, “Peasant of the Pavements”

Quiz #3

Week 11: Common Good, Common Humanity

Day, Part 3, “Love is the Measure”

Ana Maria Pineda, “Hospitality”

Week 12: Radical Christianity

Day, “The Scandal of the Works of Mercy”

Day, “Poverty and Precarity”

Week 13: Putting Concepts Together

Quiz #4

Week 14: Illustrating the Ethical Self

Final paper workshops

Week 15: Final Illustrated Essay Due