

Ignatian Discernment and Christian Decision-Making

SP2612
Spring 2005
Monday/Thursday 11:10-12:30pm
CDSP 116

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

By means of a careful reading of Ignatius' texts and guided by contemporary interpretations of Ignatius' teachings on discernment, we will explore the theory and practice of Ignatian discernment. It is helpful, but not necessary, to have some prior experience with or knowledge of *The Spiritual Exercises*. Discernment is first a gift and then a skill. As we move through the semester, we shall assist each other in discerning our gifts and developing our skills along the lines of Ignatius' rules.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- v To introduce students to Ignatian discernment of spirits and discerning God's will.
- v To explore personal and ministerial applications of these teachings through commentaries, case studies, classroom discussions, and private reflection.

A NOTE CONCERNING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Throughout the semester, we will encounter spiritual materials that by their very nature are self-implicating. Even as we consider the theory and practice of Ignatian discernment, you may discover that course readings and class discussions give rise to personal reflection and prayer, perhaps even an invitation to discern something in your own life. For this reason, if you are not already so engaged, I encourage you to explore the possibility of entering into a spiritual direction relationship with a qualified and experienced spiritual director.

If you already have a spiritual director, even if he or she is not trained in Ignatian Spirituality, I encourage you to stay with that director. If you do not have a spiritual director, I invite you to explore this possibility. Here at the GTU, the options are many. If you are a JSTB student, the school's "Director of Formation

Programs maintains a listing of qualified spiritual directors whose work is known to the school, and makes recommendations to interested students," (JSTB webpage). Other GTU schools offer similar opportunities.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Ganss, George E. ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*. The Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. Bernard McGinn. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1991.
- Lonsdale, David. *Eyes to Hear, Ears to Hear: An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality*. Traditions of Christian Spirituality, ed. Philip Sheldrake. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Mueller, Joan. *Faithful Listening: Discernment in Everyday Life*. Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1996.
- Sheldrake, Philip. *Befriending Our Desires*. Toronto: Novalis, 2001.
- Toner, Jules J. *A Commentary On St. Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A Guide to the Principles and Practice*. St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982.
- _____. *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching On Christian Decision Making*. St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991.
- _____. *Spirit of Light or Darkness?: A Casebook for Studying Discernment of Spirits*. St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995.
- _____. *What Is Your Will, O God?: A Casebook for Studying Discernment of God's Will*. St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995.
- Recommended

SOME RECOMMENDED WEB RESOURCES

[HTTP://WWW.JESUIT.ORG/](http://www.jesuit.org/)
[HTTP://WWW.LUC.EDU/JESUIT/SHELDRAKE.HTML](http://www.luc.edu/jesuit/sheldrake.html)
[HTTP://SFTS.EDU/LIEBERT/SPIRITUALEXERCISES/LINKS.CFM](http://sfts.edu/liebert/spiritualexercises/links.cfm)

EVALUATION AND GRADING

40% Weekly Papers
 40% Final Paper
 20% Class Participation

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- ÿ Written assignments must be brought to class on the date they are due.
There is no such thing as a late paper!
- ÿ Complete all reading assignments before each class (auditors included).
- ÿ Participate actively in class discussions (auditors included).
- ÿ Collaborate with other students in preparing and presenting case studies (auditors included).
- ÿ **Final Papers**
 - Due **May 20**, 2005, a hard copy to instructor's JSTB mailbox by 5:00 p.m. If you cannot meet this deadline, you must petition for an incomplete before the end of the semester.
 - **Students in pastoral degree programs** (M.Div.) compose two original and comprehensive discernment case studies. Include with each case your own Ignatian Discernment analysis. Both cases must be grounded in "real life experience" and show evidence of an appropriate level of complexity.
 - o **May 2, 6, 9, and 12**, students will lead a 30-minute discussion on their case studies.
 - o Exactly one week before this class discussion, please email the rest of the class a near-final version of your case studies. While this is not a final, perfect edition of your cases, neither should it be a first draft. In any case, late submissions of this draft result in daily grade reductions.
 - **Students in academic degree programs** (M.A.) write a research paper (10-15 pages, inclusive) on some topic in Ignatian discernment and decision making. For example, a paper entitled "Good and Evil Spirits in Ignatian Discernment: A Contemporary Approach" or "Desolation in Ignatian Spirituality: Bridging the Divide between Toner and Buckley."
 - o Due **March 31**, a thesis statement, brief explanation of paper topic, and annotated bibliography of at least five (5) references (excluding course materials).
 - o **May 2, 6, 9, and 12**, you will lead a 30-minute discussion on your paper. Exactly one week before this class discussion, please email the rest of the class a near-final version of your paper. While this is not a final, perfect edition of your paper, neither should it be a first draft. In any case, late submissions of this draft result in daily grade reductions.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Week One: January 31 & February 3

Introductions and Spiritual Direction

Monday: Introductions; Syllabus; Spiritual Direction; Case Study

Thursday: **Read** in Lonsdale, *Eyes to See, Ears to Hear: An Introduction to Ignatian Spirituality*, chapter 7, "Spiritual Direction," pages 142-154. [Hereafter, referenced as "Lonsdale."]

Read chapter one, "A Need for A Guide" in Jules J. Toner, *A Commentary On St. Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: A Guide to the Principles and Practice* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1982). [Hereafter referenced as "Discernment of Spirits."]

Write 1-2 pages (typed, double spaced) on an experience of discernment in your life. Write on an instance that you feel comfortable sharing with others. What was the discernment? What was your process? What was the outcome of your discernment? After the fact, was the choice confirmed? Looking back today, do you believe you made a good discernment?

February 7 & 10

Ignatian Spirituality: Ignatian Spirituality: A Spirituality of Desire.

Monday: **Read** Philip Sheldrake's *Befriending Our Desires* (Toronto: Novalis, 2001), 1-76.

Thursday: **Finish** reading Sheldrake, 77-145.

Write: Bring to class either Monday or Thursday a 1-2 page response paper on the Sheldrake reading (no quotations, only your comments), organized around these three topics:

- (1) Points of clarification (unfamiliar terms, references, etc.);
- (2) Major issues raised (what are the author's main points?);
- (3) Your own questions/comments on the reading (how do you respond?).

February 14 & 17

Ignatian Spirituality: *Autobiography*.

Monday: **Read** "Images of Ignatius" in Lonsdale, pages 35-57 and begin reading Ignatius' *Autobiography*, pages 65-111 (about half of this), in George E. Ganss, ed. *Ignatius of Loyola: The Spiritual Exercises and Selected Works*. The Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. Bernard McGinn (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1991) – hereafter referred to as "Ganss." Also begin reading Ganss' General Introduction, pages 9-63.

Thursday: **Finish reading** Ignatius' Autobiography and Ganss' General Introduction.

Write: As you read Ignatius' Autobiography, pay attention to instances of discernment in his life. Bring to class either Monday or Thursday a one- page commentary of your own noting and explaining instances of discernment in Ignatius' autobiography.

February 21 & 24

Ignatian Spirituality: Themes in Ignatian Spirituality.

Monday: **Presidents' Day: No Class Meeting**

Thursday: **Finish Reading** Lonsdale, chapters 2-6; 8-10 (excluding chapt. 11).

Write: Bring to Thursday's class a 1-2 page response paper on the Lonsdale reading (no quotations, only your comments):
 (1) Points of clarification (unfamiliar terms, references, etc.);
 (2) Major issues raised (what are the author's main points?);
 (3) Your own questions on the reading (how do you respond?).

February 28 & March 3

Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: Text and Fundamental Principles

(Assignments from this point forward are for the entire week.)

Read *Discernment of Spirits*, chapters 2-3, as well as Appendix I.

Read in Jules J. Toner, *Spirit of Light or Darkness?: A Casebook for Studying Discernment of Spirits* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995) – hereafter referenced as "*Spirit of Light*" – pages 1-4 and 11-17.

Note: From this point forward, read appropriate sections of Joan Mueller's *Faithful Listening: Discernment in Everyday Life*.

Write one-page response to case study [T.B.A.]. Please bring to class your typed response to this case study, refer to it in the class discussion, and then submit it at the end of class. Please note where you agree and disagree with Toner's proposed response.

March 7 & 10

Ignatius' Rules for the Discernment of Spirits: Spiritual Consolation and Desolation

Read *Discernment of Spirits*, chapters 4-6, and Appendix III.

Read *Spirit of Light*, 17-23.

Write responses to assigned cases – TBA.

March 14 17

The Good Spirit in Time of Desolation.

Read *Discernment of Spirits*, chapters 7-9.

Read *Spirit of Light*, 24-27.

Write responses to assigned cases – TBA.

March 21, 24 and 28 (Reading Week/Holy Week & Easter Monday)
No Classes

March 31 (Thursday)

The Evil Spirit in Time of Consolation.

Read *Discernment of Spirits*, chapter 10-11 and Appendix IV.

Read *Spirit of Light*, 27-30.

Write responses to assigned cases – TBA.

Please Note: Students in academic programs submit initial materials Thursday.

April 4 & 7

Ignatius' Teaching on Christian Decision Making: "Introduction to God's Will."

Read Jules J. Toner, *Discerning God's Will: Ignatius of Loyola's Teaching On Christian Decision Making* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1991) – hereafter referenced as "*Discerning God's Will*" – Introduction and chapters 1-5.

Read Jules J. Toner, *What Is Your Will, O God?: A Casebook for Studying Discernment of God's Will* (St. Louis, Missouri: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1995) – hereafter referenced as "*What Is Your Will, O God*" – at your own pace through these next weeks, read pages 1-31.

Write responses to assigned case studies [TBA]

April 11 & 14

Ignatius' Teaching on Christian Decision Making: "Essential Conditions" and "Times for and Modes of Seeking God's Will"

Read *Discerning God's Will*, chapters 6-8.

Write responses to assigned case studies [TBA].

April 18 & 21

Ignatius' Teaching on Christian Decision Making: "Times for and Modes of Seeking God's Will." (Cont.)

Read *Discerning God's Will*, chapters 9-12.

Write responses to assigned case studies [TBA]

April 25 & 28

Ignatius' Teaching on Christian Decision Making: "Times for and Modes of Seeking God's Will." (Cont.) and "Finding God's Will"

Read *Discerning God's Will*, chapters 13-16

Write responses to assigned case studies [TBA].

May 2 & 6

Student Papers, Cases, and Presentations

May 9 & 12

Student Papers, Cases, and Presentations