

MF4301: Spiritual Formation – Rev. Jim Paraboschi
Monday, 8:05 – 10:00pm; 3 credits
Hybrid (online option for VA, MD, and PA students)

DESCRIPTION: Spiritual Formation is a foundational course for Leland’s Master-level programs. While Intro to Theological Studies prepares students intellectually for the study of theology with the necessary concepts and perspectives for doing theology, Spiritual Formation prepares students more holistically in terms of relational and character formation. We will examine and apply spiritual disciplines in and outside of class. But we will also be informed by recent studies in brain science that stress the importance of *attachment* for one’s growth in character. Attachment to God and attachment to others will be seen as essential for character and spiritual formation.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR LIFE AND MINISTRY: At the heart of a “successful” spiritual leader in a church or in some other setting is *who the person is*. Success, from a theological perspective, cannot be measured by worldly terms. Success, from a biblical and theological perspective, is about faithfulness to God, the ability to love and to hope, the ability to empathize, the ability to grow as a person and as a follower of Jesus. Prayer life, Scriptural study, friendships are important in this journey of growth. Before you are a pastor, a student, or a professional in some field, you are a person who is called into relationship with God and others. Relational health and character formation (sanctification) into the image of Christ is of ultimate concern for any Christian leader – indeed for any follower of Jesus.

LEARNING OUTCOMES: Through the successful completion of this course a student will be able to:

- Understand *how we change into the image of Christ* as a result of the Holy Spirit and our attachment to God and others.
- Understand the role and power of the spiritual disciplines to shape our thinking, feeling, and relating as followers of Christ.
- Design a church curriculum or seminar to help others in the area of spiritual formation or investigate deeper in an area of spiritual formation as a term paper.
- SLO’s: 1.1.1-2, 1.3.1, 1.6.1, 2.1.1-2, 2.3.1, 2.5.1, 3.1.1, 3.3.1, 3.5.1-2

COURSE FORMAT: This course will meet weekly. Class time will be a combination of lecture and discussion. Students will write up weekly responses based on readings for this course. A term paper or a project will be due two weeks after the last day of class.

REQUIRED READING:

James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016. ISBN 158743380X, Pub. Price \$24.99

Jim Wilder and Michel Hendricks, *The Other Half of Church: Christian Community, Brain Science, and Overcoming Spiritual Stagnation*. Chicago: Moody, 2020. ISBN 0802419631, Pub. Price \$14.99.

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. New York: HarperCollins, 2018 (Special Anniv. Edition). ISBN 9780062803887, Pub. Price \$25.99.

Note: This extended course description is a reliable guide but is subject to modification. Textbook prices are set by publishers and are subject to change.