

SPIR 235: The Art of Spiritual Direction and Ministries of Accompaniment Fall Quarter, 2024

William J. Dohar, PhD



COURSE SYLLABUS (tentative)

Note: Like life, this syllabus is a thing in progress. Most of what students will encounter in SPIR 235 is in these pages; closer details (mostly precise dates but also a few new readings) will appear in the final version of the syllabus. Meanwhile, what follows will give the reader a clear sense of the course, its shape and content.

Course Description: This course on ministries of spiritual accompaniment emphasizes spiritual direction while considering other contexts for presence and listening in pastoral situation. The course meets every Tuesday evening through Fall Quarter from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Because the course is about spiritual direction, it's about a core ministry in the life of the Church. Spiritual direction has deep roots in the pastoral tradition, but it emphasizes one (if very broad) type of accompaniment; other ministries are included in this course as well that involve 'walking' with people, offering a ministry of presence and a willingness to attend deeply to what another person is communicating. While students will learn a lot about—and practice—the art of

contemplative listening, the course itself is not a training program for spiritual directors.

Learning Outcomes: SPIR 235 focuses on two particular learning outcomes for the GPPM:

LO 1: Theological Foundation: Knowledge of the broad intellectual foundation for ministry in the areas of scripture, systematic and contextual theology, and spirituality; and incorporate theological reflection to enrich their ministerial practices across varying contexts.

LO 4: Diversity Fluency: Awareness of and critical engagement with how one's own culture influences ministry, and then to engage in ministries that build the community of Christ and are sensitive to and respectful of all cultures and traditions, and individuals who vary by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and dynamics of wealth, poverty, and power.

Spiritual direction isn't simply listening but attending to another with all the garnered theological and spiritual wisdom and insight available to the director. To that extent, **LO 1** references the theological breadth required in ministry (scripture, spirituality, contextual theology) as well as the fruits of the life-long process of learning. And since spiritual direction should not discriminate between seekers, the prospects of *who* the director encounters can be vast depending on a host of circumstances (**LO 4**). Certainly, this ministry emphasizes inclusivity modeled in the life and teachings of Jesus.

Course Requirements: This course combines the style of a seminar (shared learning) with elements of a practicum. We analyze and discuss readings and other kinds of sources for spiritual direction and accompaniment. Thus, regular and robust attendance is presumed. Please be sure that your Tuesday evenings are free from mid-September to early December. But the course also encourages the appropriation of spiritual presence and listening skills, so we'll have occasions in small groups to more fully appreciate the 'art' of spiritual direction and companionship.

In SPIR 235, participation is based at least in part on **weekly readings** drawn from a variety of theological and spiritual genres. Each student will be asked to choose one of the reading assignments from the syllabus and facilitate a discussion with the rest of the

class. Participation also comes into play during the **film-based online discussion** scheduled for Week 6.

As a way of giving expression to a developing understanding of contemplative listening, students will write five short **journals** (2-3 pages), reflective pieces on topics announced before the due date.

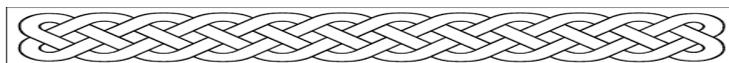
The final written component to the course is a concluding ‘pastoral essay’ on a course theme of the student’s choosing. The purpose of this final project is twofold: **1)** to serve as **a modest synthesis of some theme(s)** in spiritual direction and accompaniment observed in the range of sources used in the course. For instance, some skill or attitude of contemplative listening that the student noticed appear in a number of articles, handouts, class discussion, film, etc. **2)** The second purpose of this assignment is to describe, even in modest terms, how that particular theme chosen by the student might be applied to any pastoral setting. The latter could include the obvious (parishes, parish groups, various chaplaincy settings) or the non-conventional (ministries with under-served communities, unhoused persons, children, persons with disabilities, etc.). Further details about this project will be shared in Weeks 2 and 3.

Course Credit Apportionment:

Journals (5)	35%
Discussion leadership	10%
Participation	25%
Online discussion	10%
Pastoral Essay	20%

Course Structure: SPIR 235 is a module-driven course, so students will want to enter the Camino course through its ‘Modules’ function. All reading (except the main course text) and viewing materials for the course, along with the online discussion in Week 6 will be uploaded in Modules.

Course Readings: Only one book is required for the course: Diane Millis’ *Conversation—the Sacred Art: Practicing Presence in an Age of Distraction* (Woodstock, VT, 2013).



Schedule of Meetings

MODULE I: An Introduction to SPIR 235 and the Art of Spiritual Direction

Week 1: topics include an introduction to the course, the graduate course as a 'community of learners'; spiritual direction in a broad context (a long history); on learning to listen; and the spirituality of the spiritual listener.

Readings: Course Syllabus
'Contemplative Listening' (from the journal *Weavings*)

Week 2: topics include spiritual direction and the times in which we live; spiritual direction as a ministry of accompanying transformation.

Readings: Susan Phillips, 'Navigating Depths: Spiritual Direction in a Shallow Culture' (*Presence*, vol. 21, no. 2): June, 2015.

Margaret Guenther, 'Midwife to the Soul' from *The Art of Spiritual Direction*

Handouts (tba)

Journal 1

MODULE 2: History and Theology of Spiritual Direction

Week 3: topics include Celtic spirituality and the *anam cara* ("soul friend"); spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Reconciliation; post-Vatican II Catholicism and variations in spiritual direction and accompaniment

Readings: Diane M. Millis, *Conversation—the Sacred Art* (Parts I, II or pp ix – 61)

'Images and Models of the Spiritual Director' (from *Writings on Spiritual Direction by Great Christian Masters*), ed. Jerome M. Neufelder & Mary Coelho (pp 16-34).

Journal 2

Week 4: Spiritual Direction, Accompaniment, and the Experience of God

Readings: Janet Ruffing, 'Panning for Gold: Attending to Theological Themes in Spiritual Direction' (from *Spiritual Direction: Beyond the Beginnings*): 57-94

Margaret Guenther, 'Welcoming the Stranger' (from *Holy Listening*): 8-39

Celia Deane-Drummond and Severine Deneulin, 'Accompaniment: Exploring its Meaning and Implications'

Handouts: Learning to Listen
Cultivating Contemplative Awareness

Journal 3

MODULE 3: The Experience of Spiritual Direction

Week 5: The Experience of Spiritual Direction (I); topics include: the slow and patient process of direction; discernment in decision-making and as a way of life; the nature and direction of 'interior movements'; considerations of the 'true self' and 'false self' in spiritual discernment.

Readings: Diane Millis, *Conversation* (Part III and Conclusion, pp 65-109)

Carol Gratton, 'Life Keeps Happening' (from *The Art of Spiritual Guidance*): pp 39-54

Handouts

Journal 4

Week 6: The Experience of Spiritual Direction (II). We will not meet as a class this evening, but students will meet (come and go) in a Camino-based discussion with reference to these two sources:

Readings: Thomas Hart, 'Establishing an Orientation' (from *The Art of Christian Listening*): 16-25

View:

'Buck' (a documentary available on YouTube)

Discuss:

on Camino (times and prompts to be determined)

MODULE 4: Spiritual Accompaniment and Prayer

Week 7: topics include prayer and prayer forms; God images and the journey to the Divine; exploring prayer with another (in direction); the prayer life of the spiritual director

Readings: Joseph Driskill, 'Prayer and Spiritual Direction'

Mary Kate Morse, 'The Art of Asking Spiritual Questions: Noticing the Duck' (Presence)

View:

Centering Prayer: the Spirituality of Restorative Justice (Ray Leonardini); YouTube video

Journal 5

MODULE 5: Issues of Culture and Community in Spiritual Direction and Accompaniment

Week 8: spiritual direction in a world of contrary voices; culture and different approaches in direction: one size does not fit all; spiritual direction and aspects of race, age, sexuality, poverty, and imprisonment

Readings: Thomas Hart, 'The Helper as Sacrament' (this article is found with the same author's 'Establishing an Orientation' – see Week 6)

Carol Gratton, 'Challenges and Practices for Today's Spiritual Guides'

Week 9: topics include accompanying Nones ("spiritual but not religious is an okay place to start"); facilitating spiritual direction in groups

Readings: Matthew Halbach, 'Going Out to the Peripheries: Accompanying the 'Nones'' (US Conference of Catholic Bishops)

Rose Mary Dougherty, 'The Practice of Group Spiritual Direction'
(from *Group Spiritual Direction*): 35-55

Week 10: topics include spiritual direction and accompaniment in retrospect; the charism of spiritual direction and discernment; informal descriptions of the course's final 'pastoral essay'

