**Rocky Mountain School of Ministry and Theology**

**Graduate Course Syllabus**

**Introduction to Spiritual Formation**

**SF601**

**August 31st – December 7, 2025**

### **Fall 2025** Instructor

**Mountain Theological Seminary Robert Carrillo D.Min**

Arvada, CO 80004 Appointments available upon request

Email: RobertCarrillo@MTSEM.ORG

Cell Phone: 619-370-3916

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines the biblical, historical, and theological aspects of Christian formation with emphasis on both personal life and ministry contexts. Our course will examine principles, problems, and practices of spiritual growth in Christ, both personally and corporately, with an emphasis on the spiritual disciplines. This course will explore the stages of spirituality and spiritual development. This course will help the student determine where they have been, where they are, and where they want to go on their spiritual journey.

**COURSE RATIONALE**

The goal of spiritual formation is to form Christ in the heart and life of every apprentice of Jesus. Our approach will be; first, to understand the process and development of spirituality, Second, to explore the classic spiritual disciplines and finally, to develop an experiential knowledge base.

**MTS MISSION**

The mission of The Rocky Mountain School of Ministry and Theology is to equip disciples to take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world through evangelism, church growth, and church planting as well as to give disciples a solid biblical foundation and maturity in their walk with God.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

As a result of this course, students should accomplish the following objectives:

* Learners will sharpen their understanding of the theology and dynamics of personal transformation.
* Learners will develop important understanding of core stages in spiritual development.
* Learners will be exposed to classical and contemporary leaders in thought and practice of Spiritual Formation.
* Learners will explore the intersection of classic Christian disciplines with personal and community spiritual development.
* Learners will explore the personal leadership qualities and competencies necessary for initiating and leading a community in formation practices.

**COURSE TEXTBOOKS**

Required Reading:

1. Foster, Richard. *Spiritual Classics: Selected Readings on the Twelve Spiritual Disciplines,* 2007,ISBN 0060628723. 400

2. Hagberg, Janet O. and Robert A. Guelich. *The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of* *Faith*. Salem, WI: Sheffield Publishing Company, 2004. ISBN 1-879215-49-7. 268

3. Keating, Thomas. *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation*. New York: Paulist Press, 1999. ISBN 0-8091-3882-4. 56

4. Lawrence, Brother *The Practice of the Presence of God***,**Independently published (October 16, 2013)**ISBN-10 ‏ : ‎**1521299757, **ISBN-13 ‏ : ‎**978-1521299753. 96

5. Rohr, Richard. *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*St. John of the Cross.*Dark Night of the Soul.*Reprint ed, NavPress; 10th Anniversary ed. edition (June 14, 2012). 160

6. Willard, Dallas. *Renovation of the Heart: Putting On the Character of Christ,***ISBN-10: ‎**1615216324, **ISBN-13: ‎**978-1615216321. 320

**Total pages read 1300or 65 hours**

**Further recommended reading (Not required)**

Benner,David G.  *Surrender to Love: Discovering the heart of Christian Spirituality*.

Benner,David G.  *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*.

Benner,David G.  *Desiring God’s will*, Aligning our hearts with the heart of God.

DeGroat,Chuck. *Leaving Egypt: Finding God in the Wilderness Places*

Nouwen, Henri. *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*.

Scandrette, Mark. *Practicing the Way of Jesus: Life Together in the Kingdom of Love*.

Takle, David. *Forming a work of grace, pointing the way toward Kingdom Life*.

For Writing papers please use *Turabian* style and format: The following link is available for reference:

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/books/turabian/turabian_citationguide.html>

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS** (Total Time = 130 Hours)

**Please respond to the invitation to introduce yourself in week 1. Write a brief paragraph or two introducing yourself and your goal for the class. (2%)**

**1. Required Textbook Reading and Log** (20 %)

See assigned reading list in Course Syllabus above. Students are to keep a reading log (see document attached below) for each week. At the end of the course, e-mail the log to the instructor at robertcarrillo@mac.com placing “Introduction to SF” in the subject line) by December 7th.

**2. Video Class Lectures (20%)**

All video lectures must be viewed and recorded in your lecture log. Attendance is optional. Students may attend live class lectures via Zoom, followed by a discussion time of the lecture and the reading material.

Video Class 1 – The Spiritual Journey – How We Grow and Attain Perfection

Video Class 2 – Walls, Plateaus, and Dark Nights of the Soul – Growing Through Adversity

Video Class 3 – Healthy Theology – Detoxifying Unhealthy Religion with Scripture

Video Class 4 – The Spiritual Disciplines – Sails, Not Oars: Living a Spirit-Led Life

Video Class 5 – Disciplines for Healthy Religion – Living by the Power of the Spirit

Video Class 6 – Shalom, Rest, and Renewal – God's Advice to Not Lose His Rest

Video Class 7 – Spiritual Rhythms for a Full Life – Living Life Intentionally and Strategically According to Our Priorities

**3. Daily Praxis.** Every week students will practice four meditations as presented in *Spiritual classics* by Richard Foster and Emilie Griffen. Please document your daily praxis in the reading log at the end of this document. (8%)

**4. Discussion Assignments** (5%)

Students are given discussion questions in the syllabus for each week for which he or she is to post on Canvas totaling at least 250 words per post. These will be due at midnight on Thursdays of that corresponding week. Total time along with responses = 12 hours or 30min per discussion including responses.

**Discussion #1**- What are the two halves of life?

**Discussion #2**- What is spiritual maturity?

**Discussion #3** What is the wall or the dark night of the soul? Is there a difference? If so what is the difference?

**Discussion #4** What is the value of practicing the presence of God? How might this apply on a personal level or ministry level?

**Discussion #5** What is your spiritual stage. Is there a stage that the majority of your ministry is passing through. “Your ministry can be considered a Bible Talk, Sub-ministry or the Church.

**Discussion #6** In what ways have you grown or been transformed in the last 11 weeks?

**5. Discussion Responses** (5%)

Students are to briefly respond to, interact with, and constructively engage in dialog with two other students the same-week as the discussion-question-postings on Canvas. The responses are to contribute ideas that help to inform and enrich the postings he or she interacts with. These will be due at midnight on Saturday of that same corresponding week. Total time with questions= 12 hours or 30 min per week.

Each discussion week, students will turn in their responses by Thursday midnight (PST) and then will respond to each other by Saturday midnight (PST)

**6.** **Spiritual Autobiography** (10%)

I am inviting you to share your story in a 10-15-page paper. Based on the instructions in the handout using course content to reflect on your story of spiritual development and relationship with God. Using personal experience and content offered both in class and the readings, tell your story. Please conclude the paper by reflecting on your hopes and aspiration for future growth and maturation.

**7.** **Reflection Paper (20%)**

Using the material covered in the course, write an 10-page reflection paper where you analyze and address the importance and relevancy of spiritual formation in today’s world. Address why Spiritual Formation is important to Christianity in the 21st century, what is its relevancy to your ministry? and its impact on your own life. Due December 7th

**Write according to the following:**

A. Write your paper, paying attention to spelling, grammar, and style according to Turabian.

B. Begin with an introductory paragraph or two. In your introduction state the thesis of your paper (i.e. the main point of the paper) in one or two sentences and include the conclusions you have come to and will explain in the body of the paper.

C. The body of the paper should include the following:

(1) Introduction.

(2) A clear thesis.

(3) Use of reading, classes, videos and personal experience.

(4) The use and teachings from scripture.

(5) Special focus on any particular passages that pertain to your thesis.

(6) Conclusions from your study.

D. Reflection Paper Grading Rubric:

Minimum pages 20 points

Cogency of Argument 20 points

Cogency of Contemporary Application 20 points

Citations and usage of Scholarly Sources 20 points

Grammar and Neatness 20 point

**Overall course grading determination**

Introduction 2%

Daily Devotions 8%

Required Textbook Reading 20%

Class Attendance/Viewing 20%

Reflection Paper 20%

Discussions 10%

Biography 10%

Praxis 10%

**Course Workload:**

Introduction.

Reading 1300 pages or 65hrs

Daily Praxis - 35hrs

6 Classes - 9hrs.

Reflection paper 10 pages. – 15hrs.

6 Discussions & responses – 6hrs

Biography – 7hrs

Total 137hrs

**Course Grading Scale Used:**

Below is the RMSMT grading scale for this class:

**A                           Excellent      94–100                                       4.00**

**A-                                                 90–93                                         3.67**

**B+                                                87–89                                         3.33**

**B                            Good            83-86                                          3.00**

**B-                                                 80-82                                          2.67**

**C+                                                77-79                                          2.33**

**C                            Average       73-76                                          2.00**

**C-                                                 70-72                                          1.67**

**D+                                               67-69                                          1.33**

**D                           Passing         63-66                                          1.00**

**D-                                                60-62                                          0.67**

**F\*                          Failing           0–59                                            0.00**

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: August 31 – September 7**

Please introduce yourself on canvass

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional, 4 Meditations

**Readings:**

Rohrs *Falling Upward*, Introduction and Chapter 1-6

Hagberg & Guelich, The *Critical Journey,* Intro - chapters 1 and 2

**Discussion #1**- What are the two halves of life?

**Assignment:** Begin writing your “Spiritual Biography”

**Praxis assignment**

**Week 2: September 7 – 14**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Prayer

**Read:** Rohr’s, *Falling Upward*, Chapter 7-9

Hagberg & Guelich, *The Critical Journey,* Chapters 3 and 4

**Class #1** – The Spiritual Journey: Transformation

**Praxis:**

**Week 3: September 14 - 21**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Fasting

Read: Rohrs *Falling Upward*, Chapter 10 -13

Hagberg & Guelich, *The Critical Journey,* Chapters 5 and 6

Work on Spiritual Biography

**Discussion #2**- What is spiritual maturity?

**Praxis:**

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week )

**Week 4: September 21- 28**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Study

**Read:** St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk 1

Hagberg & Guelich, *The Critical Journey,* Chapter 7

**Class #2**- Stages in Spiritual Development

**Praxis:**

Journal, Breath & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week)

**Week 5: September 28 – October 5**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Simplicity

**Read:** Read: St. John of the Cross, *Dark Night of the Soul,* Bk 2

Hagberg & Guelich, *The Critical Journey,* Chapter 8-9

**Discussion #3** What is the “wall” or the “dark night of the soul”?

**Praxis:**

**Week 6: October 5 – October 12th**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Solitude

**Read:** Thomas Keating *The human condition*.

Hagberg & Guelich, *The Critical Journey,* Chapter 10-11

**Class #3** - Wall, Deserts, and Dark nights

**Praxis:**

**Week 7: October 12th – October 19th**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Submission

**Read:** Hagberg & Guelich, *The critical Journey,* Chapter 12-13

**Discussion #4** What is the value of practicing the presence of God ?

**Praxis:**

**Week 8: October 19th – October 26th**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Service

**Read:** Dallas Willard’s, *Renovation of the heart,* Intro – Chapter 2

Brother Lawrence: Pt1 *The practice of the presence of God.*

**Class #4** Debrief Spiritual Biographies

**Praxis:**

**Week 9: October 26th – November 2nd**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Confession

Read: Dallas Willard’s, *Renovation of the heart,* Chapter 3-7

**Discussion #5** What is your spiritual stage and why?

**Praxis:**

**Week 10: November 2nd - November 9th**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Worship

Read: Dallas Willard’s, *Renovation of the heart,* Chapters 8-10

**Class #5** – Spiritual Disciplines

**Praxis:**

**Week 11 November 9th - November 16th**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Guidance

**Read:** Dallas Willard’s, *Renovation of the heart,* Chapters 8-10

**Discussion #6** Major lessons

**Praxis:**

**Week 12 November 16th - November 23th**

*Spiritual Classics,* Devotional: 4 Meditations on Celebration

**Read:** Dallas Willard’s, *Renovation of the heart,* Chapters 11-13

**Class #6** Rhythms of life

**Praxis:**

**Week 13 November 23rd - November 30th**

Brother Lawrence: *The practice of the presence of God.*

**Praxis:**

**Week 14. November 30th – December 7th**

**Reflection paper due Dec 7thth**

Submit reading Log

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**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Given the importance of classroom participation (*onsite and online*) in the adult learner model ***and given new federal regulations***, MTS has adopted the following policy on attendance for any non-audit students. Please note that attendance for *online* class sessions is equivalent to completing all required work on time for a given weekly session.

1. Students who fail to see *one class session* may have their final course grade lowered by one

letter grade increment (e.g. A to A-), provided they complete any required compensatory work.  If they do not, their final course grade may be lowered by up to one letter grade (e.g. A to B).

2. Students who fail *two class sessions* may have their final course grade lowered by

two letter grade increments (e.g. B+ to B-), provided they complete any required compensatory work.  If they do not, their final course grade may be lowered by up to two letter grades (e.g. A to C).

3. Students who fail *three class sessions* are assumed to have withdrawn from the

course and will immediately be given a grade of WF (Withdraw Failing).

4. Students who anticipate not being able to follow this attendance policy should contact

Dr. Kinnard during the first week of class to request an official, voluntary withdrawal (W, not WF) to avoid any academic penalty and to be eligible for a 50% refund (100% refund before the first week).

5. Students who are doing well in a course but begin to lag behind for legitimate reasons

may request permission to withdraw with a grade of W (not WF), which carries no academic penalty but is granted only for extenuating circumstances after the first week of class (see #4 above). To make any of these requests, please contact the course instructor.  Permission should be sought as soon as possible, but no later than one week before the course ends.

**LATE WORK/RETURN POLICY**

All work is due when listed in the course syllabus, unless otherwise stipulated by the instructor. No work may be accepted later than one week after the course concludes, since ***final grades for all classes are due two weeks after the last class session.*** The only exception to this policy is for students who request and are granted an official course extension. All such extensions are granted only for extreme circumstances (extended illness, death in family, etc.), and the extension may not exceed 30 days from the last day of class. Assignments may be accepted up to one week late at the discretion of the instructor. All late work will receive a one-letter grade reduction. Assignments will be graded and returned to the student within 10 days of reception of the work by the instructor.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY**

As noted in the Catalog, “as a Christian university that places a high priority on honesty, integrity, and a Biblical commitment to truth, RMSMT will treat incidents of cheating, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty very seriously. Penalties may include failure of the assignment involved, requirement of additional work, failure of the course, academic probation, suspension from school, or dismissal from school... Examples include submitting someone else’s work as one’s own, failing to document appropriately quoted material or others’ unique ideas, using sources not permitted, lying, or other types of unethical behavior in fulfilling academic requirements.”

**INSTRUCTOR/STUDENT COVENANT**

As instructor of this course, I covenant with each student that I will model Christ-like behavior, value and respect each student as a fellow disciple/learner, be prepared, interact with students online regularly, make appropriate assignments, grade all assignments fairly, return all graded assignments promptly, and be available as needed. In return, I expect each student to model Christ-like behavior, value and respect fellow students and me as the instructor, be prepared for each week’s online discussions, and complete assignments in ways that demonstrate integrity.

**ONLINE ETIQUETTE**

Most of the online or hybrid courses in RMSMT require students to interact with each other and with the instructor on a regular basis (per syllabus instructions, usually several times per week). Most of that interaction is done through online comments posted in the Blackboard Discussion Forums. Due to the constraints and unique nature of online communication, students should be aware of the tone of any comments they post. Comments can often be misinterpreted when non-verbal cues such as facial expression and voice intonation are not present. Excessive punctuation, such as repeated exclamation points, could be construed as overly emotional or angry. Students need to consider how remarks might be interpreted from someone who does not know them personally and can only take their words at face value. Students should compose his or her comments per instructions under the syllabus assignments, paying careful attention to proper grammar and spelling. In all cases students should demonstrate respect and fairness.

**STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

MTS provides “reasonable accommodation” for any student with special needs, provided the student self-discloses that information to the instructor sufficiently in advance and supplies official documentation of his/her need. “Reasonable accommodation” ranges from giving extended deadlines to allowing for special tutors.

MTS itself does not offer any tutorial services, but can provide recommendations of entities that do. For further information, contact either the instructor or the Academic Dean of RMSMT.

**LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES**

The best search engine for biblical article research is EBSCO ATLA Religion with Serials search engine which can be found at all of the above libraries.

Please also visit any theological or university library in your area to see if they have access to ATLAs Religion search engine. In Colorado, you may also check with local libraries for the availability of EBSCO *Academic Search Premier* search engine. It searches many well respected academic religious journals also. RMSMT students can also access *Academic Search Premier* through our RMSMT website at [www.rmsmt.org](http://www.rmsmt.org).

**READING & DAILY PRAXIS LOG**

Course **SF601/CSF1**

Student \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

(Please list Author, Title, and number of pages read for each book read. If you skimmed part of the book, distinguish between the pages you read and those that you skimmed.)

**AUTHOR TITLE #PAGES**

Week 1

Week 2

Week 3

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Week 4

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Week 5

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Week 6

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Week 7

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Week 8

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Week 9

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Week 10

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

Week 11

Journal & Habit tracking (15min a day/4days per week) Yes\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

NOTE**: Total pages read \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**