

CAPSTONE

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS: THE DISCERNED LIFE ON PILGRIMAGE

UNCP556601

Fall 2024

Tuesdays, 4:30-6:50 p.m.

Stokes South, Room 286

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course proposes the consideration of human life as a pilgrimage. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus invites his followers to proceed through life as pilgrims. He says, “Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there and leave from there. And for those who do not welcome you, when you leave that town, shake the dust from your feet. Then they set out and went from village to village proclaiming the good news and curing diseases everywhere.” In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes himself as “the way, the truth, and the life.” And in an earlier translation of the Catholic Mass, the Eucharistic prayer asked that God would “strengthen in faith and love, your Pilgrim Church on earth.” For pilgrims who are believers, it seems that life provides an invitation to faithful trust in Divine Providence; a belief that the hand of God is directly at work in the adventure of human life.

This Capstone course will provide seminar members with the opportunity to pause during the final year of studies at Boston College in order to consider how the image of pilgrimage might assist in the interpretation of all of life as an act of *faithful trust*. The intention is that this might be accomplished through particular focus upon life experiences occurring before, during, and after matriculation at Boston College—especially regarding one’s engagement with relationships, society, work, and spirituality. We will attempt this through the careful pondering of selected *Spiritual Exercises* that highlight the pilgrim way of life in order to elicit greater desires for the future journey. What does one need to take for the journey of life? Especially with regard to committed relationships, how does one discern the type of fellow sojourners desired for companionship? What might it mean for a person to experience satisfaction and growth through the efforts and contributions of his or her labor? How does a person examine the journey of life in order to mine it for the great wisdom contained within it? And what contribution do companions, role models, conversation partners, and mentors make in assisting one through this particular kind of life examination? These are some of the questions the seminar intends to explore. The seminar will consult texts of biography, travel narrative, business practice, and prayer, along with excerpts from films, podcasts, and music.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through this course, each student will gain

- an understanding of life as pilgrimage which fosters exploration of an ever-deepening interiority through selected *Spiritual Exercises*
- an ability to articulate the importance and purpose of discerning a vocation for life
- a greater desire to value investment in a variety of diverse relationships along the way that promote love, challenge, and growth
- an affection for living as a contemplative in action dedicated to the pursuit of a more just and universal good, which leads to the greater good

COURSE READINGS

- Casey Beaumier, S.J., [*A Purposeful Path: How Far Can You Go With \\$30, a Bus Ticket, and a Dream?*](#)
(Text provided courtesy of the professor)
- Dag Hammarskjöld, [*Markings*](#)
ISBN 978-0-307-27742-8
- Paul Alexander, [*Three Minutes for a Dog: My Life in an Iron Lung*](#)
ISBN 978-1-525-525322
- Otto Kroeger, *Type Talk: The Sixteen Personality Types that Determine How We Live, Love, and Work*
(Selections, which will be available to you on the course Canvas site)
- Jim Collins, *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*
(Selections, which will be available to you on the course Canvas site)
- Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
(Selections, which will be available to you on the course Canvas site)
- William A. Barry, S.J., [*Praying the Truth: Deepening Your Friendship with God through Honest Prayer*](#)
ISBN 978-0-8294-3624-2

All required unless otherwise noted. These texts are available through the Boston College Bookstore or, in the cases of articles and excerpts, on the course's online [Canvas page](#). There will be some other supplemental readings that I will provide for you.

COURSE EVALUATION

- 25% Participation (Active attendance and quarterly one-on-one meetings with professor)
- 15% Paper One
- 15% Paper Two
- 15% Paper Three
- 15% Film Paper
- 15% Paper Four

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance at all seminar gatherings, especially because we convene only 13 times during our semester together. Each meeting will consist of some brief lecture by the professor, followed by more extended presentations by the professor and guided discussions that will be facilitated by seminar members.

Students *must* check their Boston College email accounts for communication from me. Email is the primary way that I will communicate information to you about our class and each student is responsible for checking her or his email regularly. Because we meet each day for a long period of time I will offer a short break during our class in order to stretch and recharge for the remainder of the meeting. You may bring something to drink but please don't bring something big to eat. Please don't be late for class. No cell phone use in the classroom as the cordless can serve as a distraction for me and for the other seminar members. A typical class period begins with a reflection based on the *Spiritual Exercises*, followed by a short break for personal reflection. The class reconvenes for a presentation, which is followed by a longer break. The class concludes with a case study, prayer processing, dyads and triads, and role playing. You will notice that there are fourteen films listed in the syllabus. I will facilitate one or two screenings of these. Students may screen films at their own convenience. The requirement is that each student view two of the fourteen, resulting in a short paper relating the two films to the course theme.

There will be no exams but there will be writing assignments that depend upon completed weekly course readings. The course grade will consist of these papers and active participation in the course, determined both by preparation for presenting and contributing to discussions at each meeting. Course writing consists of short papers (15% each) of approximately four pages (12 point font with standard margins, please) that make strong references to the readings while centering upon the topic themes that the course seeks to address and two of the recommended films. Paper due dates are marked on the schedule below. Papers should be printed and stapled, given to the professor before the end of class on their due date. The required group presentation will take the place of that unit's theme.

I want to see you for a one-on-one four times this semester. Please [schedule](#) these so that we meet each quarter of the semester for a half hour. These four meetings, along with your active contributions during the seminar, constitute the 25 percent Participation portion of your final grade.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

According to the University's Undergraduate Catalogue: "The pursuit of knowledge can proceed only when scholars take responsibility and receive credit for their work. Recognition of individual contributions to knowledge and of the intellectual property of others builds trust within the University and encourages the sharing of ideas that is essential to scholarship. Similarly, the educational process requires that individuals present their own ideas and insights for evaluation, critique, and eventual reformulation. Presentation of others' work as one's own is not only intellectual dishonesty, but it also undermines the educational process." Regarding the use of artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT. This is a course that seeks your reflection and the wisdom gained from that reflection. There ought not be any need for anything artificial—it's your life.

Any acts of cheating, plagiarism, collusion, or other acts of dishonesty in this course will not be tolerated and will be fully penalized. If you need help in the proper use of citations in your papers, please ask. For more information on academic integrity, please view the following [link](#).

SCHEDULE OF THEMES, LECTURES, AND READING ASSIGNMENTS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

THEME ONE SCHEDULE, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENT

Self-knowledge and the emergence of vocational identity.

- August 27—*introduction*,
- September 3—*purposeful*
- September 10—*markings*
- September 17—*unit summary and paper 1 due (theme one)*

This topic seeks to facilitate personal reflection upon the experiences of discovery regarding one's sense of purpose in order to promote deeper understanding of how pilgrimage contributes to the gradual revelation of personal identity. We will study the image of pilgrimage and its attributes in order to better understand the pilgrim experience of preparation, participation, and evaluation.

- Readings
 - *A Purposeful Path*
 - *Markings*
- Film
 - *Into the Wild*
 - *The Way*
 - *Darkest Hour*
- Writing Assignment
- Reflection Questions
 - *When in the journey of my life have I experienced personal flourishing because of my talents? What have been the significant experiences my college life has provided in terms of self-discovery and self-knowledge? When have I been energized or given purpose by a vision? How have I experienced my life as a pilgrimage?*

THEME TWO SCHEDULE, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENT

Reverence for the fellow sojourners encountered through personal relationships along the way.

- September 24—*type*
- October 1—*unit summary*

Through this topic the course hopes to explore the world of personal relationships. We will consider not only the self-knowledge that comes from understanding the key attributes of one's own personality but more importantly, the abilities needed to engage more effectively with others. We will study the differences in human personality while considering how these understandings influence the way people foster and maintain the essential long-term and committed relationships of the future.

- Readings
 - *Type Talk*
- Film
 - *The Purple Rose of Cairo*

- *Being There*
- *Pleasantville*
- *Millions*
- Reflection Questions
 - *How would I describe the positive and difficult experiences of my interactions with others, especially those who are significantly different from me? What unsuspected capacities have been released in me by friendship and what qualities do I see in others that have inspired me or aroused my admiration? How have my past relationships helped me to understand the kind of long-term relationship I desire for the future? How would I describe my own personality and its dynamic dimensions?*

THEME THREE SCHEDULE, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENT

Anticipation of future employment and the accompanying experiences of personal growth through one's work.

- October 8— *Feore Lecture on Jesuit Studies*
Murray Function Room at Yawkey Center
4:15 reception; 5:00 lecture
- October 22—*good to great* and **paper 2 due (themes two and three)**
Here the course turns to a best seller with regard to corporate America, the intention being to glean insight for upcoming experiences of walking the path of labor and collegueship. We will consider Collins' distinctive understanding of the leap one might consider in the move from the good and the great and his insight about the importance of good leadership.
 - Readings
 - *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap*
 - Film
 - *The Station Agent*
 - *Her*
 - *The Truman Show*
 - Writing Assignment
 - Reflection Questions
 - *In my past, what have I experienced as completely worthwhile that in pursuit of it labor and suffering have been easy to accept and even welcome? As I anticipate my future employment, how might the attributes of professional will and personal humility be of importance for continued motivation in the workplace? What role has social media played in my life and how do I feel about using it professionally and socially?*

THEME FOUR SCHEDULE, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENT

Cultivation of one's personal mission to contribute to and serve the common good with resilience

- October 29—*three minutes*
- November 5—*unit summary and paper 3 due (theme four)*

In this section of the course we will consider three different works that explore the aspects of vision, discovery, interaction, risk-taking, success, and failure—and the roles that one would expect these would play in the pilgrim’s pursuit of contributing to the common good of humanity. We will study Ignatius Loyola’s insights for discernment and how they enter into personal decision making.

 - Readings
 - *Three Minutes*
 - Film
 - *Man on Wire*
 - *Being There*
 - *Big Fish*
 - Writing Assignment
 - Reflection Questions
 - *What contribution to humanity do I imagine I might make through the gift of my life? What have I learned from my experiences of dealing with moments of failure and success? How has a Jesuit education contributed to my preparation for participating in the pursuit of the greater good for society? What does it mean for me to transcend circumstances in my life and what are the opportunities and challenges of doing so?*

THEME FIVE SCHEDULE, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENT

Facilitation of the human spirit of interiority through a life of contemplation in action.

- November 12—*pilgrim and praying*
- November 19—*praying and film paper due*
- December 3—*unit summary and paper 4 due (theme five)*

In this theme the seminar will consider the role of contemplation and the value of its presence in everyday life. We will study some practical elements of Ignatian prayer and how the fostering of a spiritual life assists a pilgrim in the pursuit of a fruitful and joyful future.

 - Readings
 - *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
 - *Praying the Truth*
 - Film
 - *Central Station*
 - Writing Assignment
 - Reflection Questions
 - *How has creation helped me in my desire to experience a deeper interiority? What role does sacred silence play in the way I live my life? In my circle of relationships where do I experience vulnerability and honesty and what has that been like for me?*