

HIST/SPIR 513: THE WALKING WITH GOD PURITAN PRACTICES AND SPIRITUALITY

Tom Schwanda

June 6 – 10; 8:30 – 11:30 am

1 or 2 graduate credit hours; or 1 audit hour

In-person, live online & Recorded

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the nature and dynamics of Puritan spirituality through a careful reading of Puritan devotional manuals. Walking with God was a primary metaphor used to describe their daily and life-long practice of cultivating intimacy with God. Puritans were known for their intensity in using spiritual disciplines because they had experienced the joy of knowing God. The biblical principle of union with Christ, often called spiritual marriage, was combined with a strong desire to deepen their communion and enjoyment of God. The book of Song of Songs and the writings of Bernard of Clairvaux were influential in developing this spirituality that combined a rigorous use of the mind with an affective emphasis upon personal experience.

While Puritan ministers created high expectations for all people they were also realistic in addressing the barriers and obstacles to spiritual maturity. A visit to the Rare Book Room of the Regent College Library will introduce students to a sampling of these devotional guides and assist us in learning the potential strengths as well as any limitations. Above all our goal is more than just a historical journey into the past but a desire to discover how we might be challenged and encouraged in our spirituality today.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:

1. Recognize the genre of devotional manuals and how they addressed the Puritan emphasis on deepening one's relationship with God.
2. Develop the skills of reading and interpreting the primary texts of Puritan devotional manuals.
3. Discover the Puritan principle of union with Christ and how it framed and encouraged their desire for contemplation and enjoyment of God.
4. Recognize the barriers and hindrances that created spiritual dryness for the Puritans and how they sought to address God's perceived absence in their lives.
5. Demonstrate the potential wisdom and limitations of Puritan spirituality and how that can challenge and encourage our personal and corporate spirituality today.

COURSE OUTLINE

Day 1 June 6 Overview to Puritanism and the Importance of Puritan Devotional Manuals

Historical Roots and Sources of Puritan Devotional Manuals. Comparative Study of the Themes in Puritan Devotional Manuals

Day 2 June 7 Biblical and Theological Foundations for Growing in Intimacy with God (i.e. union with Christ, desire for God, etc.)

Guidelines for Reading and Interpreting Puritan Texts (visit to the Rare Book Room in the Regent College library)

Day 3 June 8 Spiritual Duties (i.e. means of grace or spiritual disciplines)

Day 4 June 9 Hindrances and Obstacles to Spiritual Maturity

Day 5 June 10 Deepening Communion and Enjoyment of God and Evaluation of the Strengths and Weaknesses of Puritan Spirituality.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Required Text (all students should buy the edition below)

Bayly, Lewis. *The Practice of Piety: A Puritan Devotional Manual* (orig. pub. C. 1611, republished. Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria, n.d. ISBN 9781601786685)

Please Note: This Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses. The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. A full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details is available on Moodle for registered students: moodle.regent-college.edu/login

