

HIST/SPIR 587: Spiritual Friendship

Cindy Aalders

May 22 – 26; 8:30 – 11:30 am

1 or 2 graduate credit hours; or 1 audit hour

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Bible uses a number of images to represent friendship, including the beautiful picture of the knitting together of souls (1 Sam. 18:1). This is a splendid image for spiritual friendship as it bears with it ideas of intimacy, loyalty, and intentional connection, a relationship undertaken in the presence of Christ. This course explores the ancient practice of spiritual friendship. While friendship is neglected as a subject for theological reflection these days, that has not always been the case. Set in a historical frame, the course traces chronological shifts and patterns of friendship, examines the cultural background and theology of friendship, and considers differing expressions and experiences of spiritual friendship. It also focuses on the actual living out of friendship. How would our churches and communities benefit from a more robust biblical and theological reflection on friendship, a better understanding of Christian friendship in history, and a reengagement with the practice of spiritual friendship today?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

1. Understand the meaning(s) and value of spiritual friendship throughout Christian history and for the church today,
2. Articulate shifts and continuities in the practice of spiritual friendship across time and faith communities, and think critically about friendship today,
3. Analyze case studies of spiritual friendship,
4. Engage in the practice of spiritual friendship themselves.

COURSE OUTLINE

Day 1 May 22 Biblical friendship

Day 2 May 23 Monasticism and late medieval friendship

Day 3 May 24 Protestantism and eighteenth-century friendship

Day 4 May 25 Modern friendship...and loneliness

Day 5 May 26 Friendship and the church today

REQUIRED TEXTS

Required Reading

Aelred of Rievaulx. *Spiritual Friendship*. Translated by Lawrence C. Braceland. Edited and with an Introduction by Marsha L. Dutton. Collegeville, MN: Cistercian Publications, 2010.

Cruickshank, Joanna. "Friend of My Soul': Constructing Spiritual Friendship in the Autobiography of Mary Fletcher." *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32, no. 3 (2009): 373–87.

Hill, Wesley. *Spiritual Friendship: Finding Love in the Church as a Celibate Gay Christian*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015.

Lewis, C. S. "Friendship." In *The Four Loves*, 55–84. London: Geoffrey Bles, 1960.

Lindman, Janet Moore. "'This Union of the Soul': Spiritual Friendship among Early American Protestants." *Journal of Social History* 50, no. 4 (2017): 680–700.

Soskice, Janet Martin. "Friendship." In *Fields of Faith: Theology and Religious Studies for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by David F. Ford, Ben Quash, and Janet Martin Soskice, 167–81. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Storkey, Elaine. "Friendship and Intimacy." In *The Search for Intimacy*, 140–63. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1995.

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

