The following syllabus is the teaching and learning guide for the last time this course was taught. It will give you a good idea of the descriptions of the course, how it was taught, the reading, the papers and other assignments, the intended outcomes, and the workload. By examining this syllabus and others, you will be able to form an impression of what graduate theological education at Phillips Theological Seminary requires of students.

Due to periodic curriculum revisions, course names and/or numbers may be different on this syllabus than what the name and/or number of the current offered course may be.

This syllabus is provided for your information only. The faculty reserves the right to revise the curriculum, and each professor reserves the right to decide how best to meet the learning goals of the curriculum. Therefore, the following syllabus is an historical artifact rather than a promise of how the course will be taught in the future, or that the course will be taught again.

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Format: This course meets in two seven-hour sessions: February 19 (from 8:30 a.m. to 12 and 1:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m.) at the PTS Tabbernee Conference Center, and April 2 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at Turtle Rock Farm, near Billings, OK. You will be given driving directions and encouraged to carpool, if possible. Turtle Rock Farm is about 1 ½ hours from PTS. To find out more about the work of Turtle Rock Farm: www.turtlerockfarmretreat.com and www.turtlerockfarm.wordpress.com
In addition, there are weekly readings, Blackboard postings and reflection assignments.

Purpose of the Course:
This class is an experience of reflection on spirituality and ministry, with opportunities to focus on how the spiritual life inspires, supports and affects the work of ministry in the church and community and to consider how to conceive of practical work specifically, as spiritual work, through the lens of living simply.

Objectives of the Course:
To experience personal support in spiritual growth.
To build community among members of the class
To become aware of and understand the spiritual practice of simple living as a perspective for the spiritual life, as an individual and in community

Required Text
Simple Living Compassionate Life, A Christian Perspective, Michael Schut, ed.

Required Article
“Simplicity & Sanity” chapter in A Conservationist Manifesto by Scott Russell Sanders - on Blackboard under “Content” tab.

Other Reading
Adventures in Simple Living, A Creation-Centered Spirituality, by Rich Heffern
Freedom of Simplicity, by Richard J. Foster
A Sand County Almanac, by Aldo Leopold

Course Requirements:
Class attendance is crucial; there is no way to make it up. Only one hour of absence will be allowed for a grade of A in the class. PTS attendance policy reads: “Class attendance and participation are important. Any student who misses 20 percent or more of the class contact hours for a course, for any reason, cannot
pass or successfully audit that course. The intention of the policy is not to be punitive, but to recognize that students should retake courses for credit if they miss a significant number of the class contact hours."

You cannot pass this class with 3 or more hours of absence.

Participation in class discussions is vital, because every class member is teacher and learner.
Investment in the subject is critical. Each person in the class is expected to take the subject of simple living seriously and choose to be challenged in her/his lifestyle.
All assignments shall be completed and turned in by the dates due. Assignments will only be accepted after the due date with permission from the instructor.
All written work must be typed and double-spaced. All students are expected to have access to a computer with email and internet capabilities.

Grades
Final grades are based on class participation, including Blackboard postings as well as on your attitude toward the class process and assignments. You will not be graded on your spirituality.
To receive an A: No more than one hour of absence, regardless of reason
Complete all reading, writing and posting assignments
Demonstrate a willingness to invest in the subject of simple living
A grade less than A will be determined by the instructor’s judgment if the expectations listed above are not fulfilled.

Habitual tardiness on assignments, lack of participation, or an uncooperative attitude can lower your grade. If you need to turn in an assignment late and/or know you will be late to class or need to leave early, please notify me ahead of time.

Personal Reflection papers
+ are designed to elicit personal responses and theological reflections
+ are not research papers or assessments of the authors’ work. Search yourself and discover what inside you is responding to the author’s writing.
+ are subjective – about your thoughts and feelings in your own words, in reflection on how this assignment impacts your relationship with and/or perceptions of God, humanity, creation and your concept of ministry. The papers tell me who you are and where you are in your spiritual journey, as if we are in conversation.
+ go into depth; reflect the soul level
+ less intellectual, more spiritual, emotional
+ have no right or wrong things to say but there is a right way to say what you say: your personal thoughts and feelings and ownership of those.
If I perceive a particular paper to be other than a “personal reflection” paper, I may ask you to work on the assignment again in a timely manner. Working again on a paper will not result in a penalty for your grade, but not resubmitting the paper will count as not having done the assignment in the first place.

When prepare to write a reflection paper, consider:
+ What feelings did you have while reading or participating in the assignment?
+ What was the thing the author said or that happened in your reflection that most grabbed you?
+ Where did your mind take you in relationship to something in the assignment?
+ What in the assignment brought you to a different way of thinking or feeling about a particular issue?

If you want to write a poem, draw something, create a sculpture, plan a discipline, take a photograph or in some way respond in a different kind of creative process rather than writing a reflection, please feel free to do so. Include an interpretation of the created piece. You must be able to email the work (in the case of a three-dimensional piece, email a photo of it and bring the original piece to the next class meeting.)

Late reflection papers or creations will only be accepted with prior approval. Late assignments, even with permission, may affect your grade.

Inclusive Language
Please see the student handbook for the seminary’s inclusive language policy. Please do not use any gender for humans or God exclusively. All people need to hear that they are created in the image of God.

Assignments

Email or call the first week of class if you want to set up a time to talk about the expectations for this class. If you have any questions, be sure to let me know.

An explanation of the assignment in general:
1. A short reading.
2. A practice from the suggestions or one you develop yourself, in light of the reading, to use as you go about your daily life each week. The first and last week’s practices are specific and everyone does the same thing.
3. A reflection on both the reading and the practice. Options for the form your reflection and response takes each week, except the first and last weeks. Include a short description of your practice at the beginning of your reflection:
   a 1 ½ to 2 page personal and theological reflection paper OR
   a creative reflection, with a short explanation of your creation OR
   a combination of the two
Email your written reflection or creative work to me by 6 p.m. each Saturday at pathoerth@gmail.com. If you have done a three-dimensional piece, email a photo of it and bring the original to the next class gathering.

4. Two short weekly postings on Blackboard:
   Early in the week, express, in a sentence or two, a new awareness related to simple living.
   Later in the week respond to someone else’s first posting.
5. A week for this class is Sunday to Saturday.

All but one of the reading assignments (in random order) are in the text, Simple Living Compassionate Life, A Christian Perspective, by Michael Schut, ed. The reading assignment “Simplicity and Sanity” is posted on Blackboard.

Please read your assignment by Sunday each week, decide on your practice and carry it out for 5 days then write/create what you will turn in on or before the following Saturday.

Saturday, January 22
Introductions – Go on Blackboard and post a message introducing yourself to the others in the class. Tell us your name, your interest in this class, what you think it would mean for you to live more simply and reflect on how you imagine simple living to be a spiritual discipline.

Week ending Saturday, January 29
1. This week’s reading is the Introduction by Michael Schut, p. 10-17 and Epilogue from The Simple Life, p. 144-148.
2. Practice:
   Reflectively write about or create something in response to these questions; Do you really want to live simply? Are you choosing to live simply, or, somehow, is living simply choosing you? List or illustrate and reflect on the trappings and traps in your life.
   Trappings – Things/behaviors which enable your living and don’t get in the way of your connecting with God.
   Traps – Things/behaviors to which you are addicted or with which you go overboard and which do get in the way of your connecting with God.

Week ending February 5
1. Read “The Good Life and the Abundant Life,” Michael Schut, p. 23
2. Choose a practice for this week:
   Be aware of and make note of the ways you allow the culture to determine your choices about how you spend your time and money.
   Be aware of what things you can and are willing to do without and those things which you can’t and/or aren’t willing to do without
Be aware of what things, behaviors, relationships, etc., you would feel less secure without. Where is your security found?

Be aware of what you have or make use of at the expense of creation. Can you do without it now? Will you be able to do without it in the future?

Be aware and make note of the balance between your doing and your being. What choices can you make to create the balance you wish?

Be aware of ways you put human beings before other aspects of creation.

Be aware of ways you put yourself before other aspects of creation.

3. Reflection and response.

Week ending February 12
1. Read “Simplicity Among the Saints,” Richard Foster, p. 180
2. Choose a practice for this week:
   Change something to make your life less complicated.
   Use only essential items.
   Every time you use something, note your attachment to it.
   Identify the possession to which you are too attached. What fear undergirds those attachments?
   What spiritual practices and/or religious symbols have become idols for you?
   Listen, keep silence, open yourself to seek first to trust God.
   Give things away.
   Go “shopping” with no means to purchase and take on a “museum attitude”: these things are here to look at and admire, not to buy.
   Slow down and use all senses (touch, smell, sight, hearing, taste, and intuition) to experience creation.
   Speak plainly with honesty and integrity or don’t speak at all.
   Do nothing that leads to oppression of creation.
   Identify what distracts you from right relationship with God.
3. Reflection and response.

Week ending February 19
2. Possible practices:
   Observe your attitude toward time – is it a commodity or a sacred gift?
   How do you feel about your attitude about time?
   Observe how you allow others/the culture to determine your choices/decisions about time.
   Observe how the amount of sleep/rest you receive affects other aspects of your life.
   Observe the balance between school time, work time, family time, self time, God time, friend time. What choices do you have to make to bring you to a healthier balance?
3. Reflection and Response
4. Attend class. (Bring a sack lunch and we will share lunch together.)

Week ending February 26
2. Possible practices:
   - Observe and make note of the language you use about time. How can changing your language change your attitude?
   - Observe your lifestyle in light of how you can do less and live more abundantly.
   - Consider a way and practice a way to more fully embody your spirituality in your life.
   - Observe the percentage of time and the energy you focus on production or accomplishment. How do you feel about that?
     If you rush from one thing to the next, one place to the next, one project to the next, reflect on what that is about. Does it give you a sense of importance? Does it help you avoid something? Is there a fear that undergirds this behavior?
   - Observe how your attitudes and behavior related to time affect the way you consume.
3. Reflection and response.

Week ending March 5
1. Read “The Pleasure of Eating,” Wendell Berry, p. 105
2. Possible practices:
   - Cook from scratch
   - Reflect on the “agricultural drama” of what you eat.
   - Research one of the seven possibilities Berry sets out on pp. 108-109.
   - Reflect on food and eating and the spirituality of nourishment.
3. Reflection and response.

Week ending March 12
1. Read “Money,” William Sringfellow, p. 67
2. Possible practices:
   - Every time you deal with/spend money, reflect on how you connect money and morality.
   - Every time you use/spend money, reflect on how you connect money and mortality.
   - Reflect on how materialism/idolatry interfere with your dependence on God’s grace.
   - Develop a strategy for challenging the church to identify with the Rich Young Ruler and to respond differently to Jesus.
   - Reflect on how you misuse money sacramentally.
   - Reflect on how you encourage or don’t challenge your congregation on the misuse of money sacramentally.
   - Free yourself to do without money. Embody the acknowledgement that money is not your own, but God’s.
3. Reflection and response.

March 14 – Reading Week
March 21 – Concentrated Course Week

Week ending April 2
1. Read “The Big Economy, the Great Economy,” Michael Schut, p. 73
2. Possible practices:
   - Recycle
   - Reuse
   - Rebirth
   - Reclaim
   - Waste nothing.
   - Clean your environment.
   - Eat no meat.
   - Spend money in your local community.
   - Preach a sermon against a consumerist behavior.
   - Begin a relationship with someone you seldom recognize as a neighbor.
3. Reflection and response.
4. Attend class

Week ending April 9
2. Possible practices:
   - Reflect on the elements of sufficiency for you personally and what is surplus.
   - Alter your present lifestyle to a level of sufficiency.
   - Use your money differently.
   - Reflect on how you are willing to lower your standard of living.
   - Research groups working for the redistribution of wealth.
   - Communicate your concerns about economic justice with people in the political process.
   - Talk with a person who lives below the level of basic sufficiency (see definition on p. 133) and ask her/him what s/he needs to live at a level of sufficiency.
   - Research U.S. companies with policies that support the sustenance of all creation.
   - Do something in the company of others that nurtures community and supports a sufficient lifestyle.
   - Laugh and play with others.
3. Reflection and response.

Week ending April 16
1. Read “Healing Ourselves and the Earth,” Shantilal Bhagat, p. 196
2. Possible practices:
   - Observe yourself: How do you express and experience a dualistic view in your own language, thoughts, actions, etc.?
   - Observe aspects of the culture: How do you hear, see and experience a dualistic view in language, thoughts, actions, media, etc.?
Create a concept model of reality, different from the ladder, that illustrates what you believe to be the natural order of creation.

What anthropocentric behaviors and attitudes do you observe about yourself? How can you change them?

Complete this theological idea: For me, the evidence that God’s intention is to save and restore the whole creation is…

3. Reflection and response.

April 18 – Christian Holy Week

Week ending April 30

1. Read “Simplicity & Sanity” chapter in A Conservationist Manifesto by Scott Russell Sanders - on Blackboard under “Content” tab.
2. Possible practices:
   - Notice what you say in emails, facebook, twitter or other social media. Are you saying things “worth saying?”
   - Notice how nature is “always on,” the non-stop spectacle that is the natural world.
   - Observe in what ways your life has been organized to accommodate technology instead of the other way around.
   - Consider the difference between needs and wants. Are your needs being met? Needs are nutritious food, adequate shelter, durable clothing, useful tools, medical care, companionship, intellectual stimulation and art. Are these the things you want?
   - Use the word “devourer” instead of “consumer.”
   - Choose one thing to do this week to “clear the ground” so that you might have a life that is “gathered, meaningful and joyful” – a life lived more “worthily and profitable.”

3. Reflection and response.

Week ending May 7

1. Read “Winter Solstice at the Moabl Slough,” Terry Tempest Williams, p. 213.
2. Practice:
   - Reflectively write about or create something that expresses for you what love has to do with living simply.

Week ending May 14

Post a paragraph or two on Blackboard regarding how your new awareness of simple living has made or will make changes in your lifestyle, and a paragraph or two regarding how you now understand simple living to be a spiritual discipline.