This course discusses the theological foundation of Christian life and explores how ministry is rooted in and gives expression to the minister's relationship with God. Students are invited to reflect on prayer, discernment, and spiritual growth in the context of finding God in the midst of ministry.

“This is a prayer we must pray every day: ‘Holy Spirit, make my heart open to the word of God, make my heart open to goodness, make my heart open to the beauty of God every day’.”

--Pope Francis (General Audience, 15 May 2013)

Think of this syllabus as a “Quick Start” guide with the basic information that you need to get going. Detailed information is available on Blackboard, so you’ll want to explore our Blackboard site as soon as it’s open.

IMPORTANT NOTE TO HELP YOU START SUCCESSFULLY:

I will send you an email when Blackboard is open (normally the week before class begins), so check your Loyola email account for instructions. When you receive this notification email from me, please respond right away and confirm that you are ready to begin the course. If you experience difficulties in finding your email address, please contact Diane Blair: dblair@loyno.edu.

Meanwhile, please order your books from an online bookseller as soon as possible--our reading begins immediately!
What does your relationship with God look like these days? How does that relationship affect, and how is it affected by, your ministry? *Spirituality for Ministers* is a graduate course that will give you a model for—and allow you to practice—deliberate, ongoing, reflection on that relationship, particularly within the context of your ministry.

What should you bring to this course?

Please come to our coursework in *Spirituality for Ministers* with these habits of mind and spirit:

Be willing to reflect deeply on your ministry, your role in it, and how God may be calling you to grow in that ministry and your life.

Be able to study and grow within our LIM intentional learning community, participating in its ongoing disciplined conversations.

Organize your time so that you are present online early and often, surveying each week’s work and completing tasks throughout the week instead of at the end (otherwise, there’s no “conversation” at all, let alone “disciplined conversation”).

Share your authentic ideas, insights, and questions. Arrive online prepared, ready to listen (or read!) carefully, and able to contribute meaningfully to the conversation.

What can you expect from this course?

By the end of this course, you will be able to do these things:

Deepen your theological understanding, professional competence, and practical ministerial skills in the area of spirituality;

Examine critically your own beliefs, attitudes, and practices in your relationship with God;

Integrate your religious experience and your ministry;

Explore the implications of creation, justice, beauty, and liturgy for your spirituality;

Practice critical, contextual theological reflection; and

Pray throughout the course.

We’ll get together:
The coursework for *Spirituality for Ministers* is completed almost entirely online and asynchronously (which means that we don’t need to be online at the same time). However, in the interest of forming community, we’ll have multiple chances to meet using a conferencing tool called GoToMeeting (free and provided by Loyola). I can also arrange for you to meet in your small groups using GoToMeeting, if you’d like. You’ll find the dates and times for these meetings on Blackboard.
What’s the course format?
We’re gathering to form an intentional learning community, but because we’re not all in the same physical location, the bulk of our work will take place asynchronously, meaning that apart from our video chats, you won’t have any required specific times to be “present” in class. You'll watch and respond to readings and viewings online, and you’ll participate in discussions on Blackboard’s Discussion Board as your schedule allows. When I say that we’re working asynchronously, however, I don’t mean that there aren’t any deadlines! A deep, reflective, helpful conversation requires everyone’s timely participation and engagement. Therefore, when I set up discussion items on Blackboard, I’ll specify deadlines by which you must post an initial item or any further-required responses. As a general rule, you’ll want to “attend” class online several times per week to complete your work, read postings, respond to postings, view instructor comments, and contribute your insights to our ongoing conversations. This participation is not merely key to your learning, it’s key to others’ learning as well—and key, by the way, to your grade.

What does the main coursework look like?
You’ll complete readings in our assigned texts and viewings online, and you’ll respond to those tasks on the Discussion Board. Everyone will complete some written work in the form of these Discussion Board postings and other course-related assignments, and graduate students will also write a theological reflection paper.

How do I know when I’m supposed to complete course tasks?
On Blackboard, click on the “Weekly Sessions” button. You’ll see that our course is divided into weeks. When you click on each week, you’ll see several icons, each of which represents part of that week’s work. Simply click on each icon (I recommend a quick look at all the icons before beginning so that you can plan most effectively) and complete the tasks assigned there. You’ll find that getting into the flow of the course is fairly intuitive, even if you don’t have much experience with online learning management systems like Blackboard. If you do get stuck, help is available.

How long should I spend?
Spirituality for Ministers is a three-unit graduate-level course. Adding up your time to read, watch videos, think, post on Blackboard, and complete your research and writing, you might estimate your course involvement at around 9 total hours per week, an amount of time comparable to any other three-unit university course.

How does the Discussion Board work?
I’ll post questions, plus instructions about deadlines for posting. If the conversation seems slow to get started, I may email one of you and ask you to launch the discussion. Please post early, and please help to create a conversation by responding to your colleagues’ postings—the Discussion Board will quickly become a Discussion Bored if everyone simply "speaks" without "listening" to everyone else! When you post, please write in a clear, correct style (that is, with proper punctuation, spelling, and grammar) so that nobody need work to decipher your comments.

What should my Discussion Board posts look like?
Your posts should always be substantive, meaning focused, succinct, specific, clearly written, and worth reading. Keep in mind that we all have to read these posts! Your posts should bring your own experience into conversation with our course materials and with what the other members of the learning community are saying, and they should always directly address the question at hand. Your responses should also be critical, meaning that the conversation should also generate questions, requests for clarification, and other methods of deepening the discussion. As you can see, remarks like “I loved your post” or “I agree wholeheartedly” are NOT substantive posts! In addition to being substantive, our online conversations should also be authentic—that is, anything that you say online should be something that you would say if we were all sitting around a table in a physical room. Finally, in your posts, please cite any course materials that you use: Alert your readers by including a parenthetical reference with at least the name of the material or the author and, if possible, a page number (e.g., Course Book, 15; Johnson, 17; Session 3 video). Please also alert your readers when you refer to other outside sources, such as other books or websites.

In terms of assessment, regular and substantive participation on the Discussion Board makes up 50% of your grade for this course—and basically 100% for CEU students. To help you understand the specific grading standards that I will use to assess your Discussion Board posts, I’ve provided a rubric and a one-page handout on Blackboard for you to review. Please read both of these documents before you post!

CAUTION: To avoid losing any work, you may wish to compose your posts in a word processing program and then copy and paste them into a discussion board post. How do I know this? Painful personal experience!
How will I be evaluated?
Whether you’d like to earn CEU or graduate credit for Spirituality for Ministers, you must complete the assigned work for all of our course sessions. CEU students earn course credit based on successfully meeting this standard. If you’re seeking graduate credit, you must successfully complete the assigned work that I just mentioned, plus write a reflection paper that explores your ministry and your own developing understanding of the course material. You can find a detailed description of all these assignments on Blackboard. The graduate student paper is also described under “Week One Assignments,” because you’ll want to begin thinking about it early in the term. For help with style and formatting requirements for reflection papers, consult the LIM Guide to Written Theological Reflection, which you’ll find on Blackboard (“Resources” > “General Resources” > “Writing”). I won’t accept papers that don’t follow the LIM guidelines.

Grading breakdown for graduate students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grade Breakdown</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1 “Looking Around” paper</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>A = 93-100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>A- = 90-92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual formation</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>B+ = 87-89.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final paper (graduate students)</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>B = 83-86.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion board</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>B- = 80-82.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Discussion board is 100% of CEU students’ grades)</td>
<td></td>
<td>C+ = 77-79.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C = 70-77.9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F = below 70</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How does the professor feel about late work?
Short answer: Yuck!
Slightly more nuanced answer: Please submit your work on time. If you post late to a discussion forum, for example, you won’t be able to participate in the back-and-forth of the conversation, and nobody else will likely see your posts (your colleagues will have moved on to the next topic), which detracts from your learning and impoverishes everyone else’s learning as well. If you submit a late assignment or paper, I’m not able to grade your work in the same cycle that I do everyone else’s—I’ve moved on, too. It’s difficult to respond to a single “Assignment X” when my head is full of your colleagues’ “Assignment Y,” which drastically increases the time that it takes me to look at your work. That said, sometimes life does get in the way of our best-laid plans. If you know ahead that you’ll be out of town, for example, let me know, and if you need an extension because of some truly unforeseen circumstance, we can work that out, too. Late assignments that I don’t approve in advance will generally decrease in value by 10% per day.

I’m asking you to be timely, and I will do the same. Again barring unforeseen circumstances, I’ll read all Blackboard posts within three days of the end-of-posting deadline, and I’ll return all papers within a week of the due date, even if I have to stay up all night drinking Diet Cokes and eating Snickers bars to make it happen.

Anything else I really, really need to know?
Yes. See below:

Academic Honesty: Please don’t even consider submitting anyone else’s words, thoughts, or ideas as your own. Academic dishonesty is incompatible with personal, professional, and ministerial ethics. Whether you paraphrase (put material into your own words) or quote directly (use the actual material in the form that its originator presents it), it is still your responsibility to cite the source of any material that is not your own or is not common knowledge. Students who plagiarize or who help others to do so may fail the course (first offense) or be expelled (second offense). I have provided resources on Blackboard to help you appropriately use and cite others’ work. If you have any doubts about what constitutes academically honest work, contact me before you submit the work so that you don’t find yourself open to charges of plagiarism.

Disability Accommodations: If you have a disability and believe that you may need accommodations in order to successfully complete our course, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 504-865-2990 right away. To meet any request for accommodations, I need an official Accommodation Form from Disability Services.

Incomplete Grades: If you receive a grade of “incomplete” (“I”) in a LIM course, you must resolve the “I” by the sixth week of the following term (unless the following term is summer), or the grade automatically changes to an “F.”
You will find the full schedule on Blackboard, but this tentative version can serve as a general planning guide. I will also provide an updated version of the schedule once our course actually begins, and I will notify everyone if I make any changes thereafter. If you monitor Blackboard at the beginning of each course session, you will have no difficulty following the assigned readings and work. I strongly encourage you to “click through” the entire list of tasks at each session start so that you can plan your work (and your life!) accordingly.

Session 1, May 29-June 4:
Read: Nouwen Prologue, Chs. 1, 2
Do: Video, introductions
“Looking Around” paper; annotated bibliography

Holiday May 29

Session 2, June 5-11
Read: Focus area handouts, Fagin Ch. 2, Rakoczy (all on Blackboard)
Cunningham/Egan Introduction, Chs. 1, 3; Nouwen Chs. 3-5
Do: Video, audio, discussion, spiritual formation
Synchronous meeting online!

Session 3, June 12-18
Read: Conn, Fagin (both on Blackboard)
Gula Introduction, Chs. 1, 2; Cunningham/Egan Ch. 3; Nouwen Chs. 6-8
Do: Audio, discussion, spiritual formation

Session 4, June 19-25
Read: Eggemeier (on Blackboard)
Cunningham/Egan Chs. 2, 4, 5, 6, 7; Nouwen Chs. 9-11
US Bishops (Building Intercultural Competence), Modules 2-5
Do: Audio, discussion, journal

Session 5, June 26-July 2
Read: Rakoczy or Vacek (on Blackboard)
Gula Chs. 3, 4; Nouwen Chs. 12-14
Do: Audio, discussion, discernment experience, spiritual formation
Synchronous meeting online!

Holiday July 4

Session 6, July 3-9
Read: Rodriguez or Ashley; Tucker or Power (all on Blackboard)
Gula Ch. 5; Nouwen Chs. 15-17
Do: Audio, discussion, spiritual formation, review and draft (grad students)
Synchronous meeting online!

Session 7, July 10-16
Read: von Balthasar, Saliers, Goizueta (all on Blackboard)
Nouwen Chs. 18-20
Do: Audio, discussion, spiritual formation

Session 8, July 17-23
Read: Hedt or Williams (on Blackboard)
Nouwen 21-23, epilogue
Do: Audio, discussion, journal
Final reflection on spiritual formation; colleague review (grad students)
Synchronous meeting online!

Session 9, July 24-30
Read: Whatever reading you need to complete that final paper!
Do: Spiritual formation, course evaluation
Submit final paper