

Paul G. Schervish

Office: 516 McGuinn Hall

Telephone: 552-4070

E-Mail: paul.Schervish@bc.edu

Office Hours: W: 1:30- 3 p.m.and freely by appointment, telephone
and email**Sociology of the Inner Life**

Sc523.01 / Un520.01

Fall 2005

McGuinn 508

M 6:30-9:00

**Capstone Course
Sc523.01 / Un520.01
The Sociology of the Inner Life**

This course is about you—your past, present, and future.

One way to summarize the college years is to speak about them as the discovery of knowledge. This knowledge is intellectual, emotional, and kinetic (physical). The fundamental purpose of this course is to discover more about what it is that you have discovered these past four years, to discover knowledge about others, and by drawing on the previous knowledges to till the ground for your future discovery of knowledge. The cultural and personal knowledge (intellectual, emotional, and kinetic [bodily]) that is emotionally deeply seated, is connected to ultimate origins and ultimate destiny, and is determinative of who we are, I call *spirituality*.

This course offers a novel theoretical and methodological framework for examining spirituality. I draw on my research on Christmas to explore with you a mode of analysis that takes people's spiritual experiences seriously. As such, the course offers you an opportunity to: (1) review your own and other's spiritual life-history; (2) understand the relation among cultural, communal, and emotional realms of experience; and (3) develop analytical and personal strategies for understanding and deepening your spiritual life and the quality of our culture.

The course ties together three discourses. The first is the Biblical and theological discourse represented in Chapter 30 of The Book of Deuteronomy and the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola. Such statements depicting the dynamics of spiritual life indicate what contemporary inquiry needs to add to its analytic arsenal in order to adequately interpret the profound meanings that animate people's lives. The second discourse revolves around the everyday narratives by which people tell themselves and others their stories. Here we will examine several transcripts drawn from among the sixty interviews we conducted in conjunction with the Boston College study, *The Contradictions of Christmas: Troubles and Traditions in Culture, Home, and Heart*. Students will write their own spiritual biographies by telling of the "troubles and traditions" they have experienced in their culture, home, and heart. They will also interview others on this topic. The third discourse is that of social-psychology. I will set out for the students the material I am currently developing which aims to chart the rudiments of a social-psychological theory of spirituality, emphasizing the elementary spiritual contradiction between nurturing *mysterium* and debilitating *onus*.

Organization of the Course

There are three sections to the course reflecting the theme of “Culture, Home, and Heart.” In each case, an examination of the issues as they apply to Christmas is the lens for examining their more general manifestations in “ordinary time.”

- (1) Heart: the biography and autobiography of spiritual life;
- (2) Home: the communal settings, experience, and practice of spiritual life, especially family and friends; and
- (3) Culture: the institutional settings, experiences, and practices of spiritual life as manifested in the media, business sector, church, music, art, etc.

Each of these sections is connected to a particular small-scale research project designed to investigate the social meaning of the sacred and teach the methods of sociological inquiry:

- (1) writing autobiographical narratives of one's personal history and Christmas memories;
- (2) carrying out personal interviews and observations of others; and
- (3) studying the institutional settings that frame and express spiritual life.

Along with sociological literature, a variety of literary prose and poetry, interview transcripts, and spiritual texts will be used to exemplify and apply the theoretical framework described in the preceding paragraphs. I will also offer you each week a set of key spiritual insights or meditation practices and ask you to discuss during class your insights and reflections.

Requirements

Every assignment will ask you to do three things: gather information from readings or research, analyze the meaning and implications of the information for society and culture; and draw out the meaning and implications for you personally.

- a. The assigned readings as designated for each class.
- b. Godric's and your spiritual autobiography. In this paper you will be expected to recount major themes from Godric's autobiography from youth to death and your life-story or spiritual journey from childhood to the present and to your death from the point of view of your spiritual journey. You should emphasize the significant personal and institutional forces that shaped your experiences, any especially consoling or debilitating experiences, any especially “holy” or “evil” persons you have encountered, and your personal philosophy or theology of God, spirituality, and religion. Seven pages.
- c. Short analytical essays. During the course of the semester, you will be expected to write three analytical essays in which you chart the logic and themes of the readings for the class. The papers should be three-four pages single spaced with margins set so as to have your writing cover the left 2/3 of the page. [margins set at L.5”; R 2.5”; thus text is 5”]
- d. Choice of a Christmas research topic: such as buying gifts and exchanging gifts, deaths at Christmas, family dynamics, food, drink, Christmas cards, the liturgy and services of

Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, the history of Christmas, the Christmas tree and decorations, representation of Christmas in popular and sacred art and iconography, the sacred and secular music and music patterns of Christmas, divorce, travel, children, theology, scripture, etc. In a word, choose something that you are interested in and see affecting how you and others experience Christmas as a holy day or season and a public holiday or season. You are to find four key academic articles from books on the topics, chapters of books, or journals and summarize the findings. When it comes to your interviews, you will cover all of Christmas with the respondents, but focus a good part on the topic you choose. 7 pages single spaced in usual format with references. I have several books I will put out that you must use here or copy here (during office hours) for 3 cents/page.

- e. Intensive interviews with one or more respondents about their Christmas experiences autobiographies, but especially about the topic you have focused on for your research. You should inquire about the same kinds of issues you have written about in your autobiography and we discussed in class to date. You will transcribe the interviews and write a twelve-page essay analyzing the interviews in the light of the readings and lectures. More specific directions about content and themes will be provided.
- f. Writing a Christmas “memoir”: Christmas past, present, and yet to come. This is an extended personal essay recounting your Christmas experiences from earliest childhood through the present, and with a projection about Christmas to come, next year, in five years, and in 20 years. Emphasize the issues of contradiction, mysterium, onus, discernment, and daily life as a spiritual exercise--as well as other material covered to date. Ten pages.
- g. Final take home exam. This will be a 7-10 page synthesis of what you have learned about culture, home, and heart during the course of the semester.

Additional Information

All papers must be typed. Grammar and spelling will be evaluated along with the content of the papers. Papers should be handed in on time. Late papers will lose 1/3 of a grade for each day they are late, up to one full grade. Some papers will be handed in at class; other assignments should be slipped under my office door (McGuinn 516) by 4:30 p.m. on the day they are due).

Familiarize yourself with the university rules on plagiarism. They will be strictly enforced. See below for a summary.

I encourage each of you to drop in during office hours for a visit during the early weeks of the semester. Keep in contact. You do not need a crisis or a low grade to be welcome. If the office hours prove impossible because of your schedule or because I am out of town, simply make an appointment. I

There will be a copying charge to cover the cost of various photocopied materials that will be passed out in class.

Attendance at all class meetings is required.

Evaluation

Spiritual autobiography of Godric and self	10%
Analytical papers	30%
Research project and intensive interviews and analysis	20%
Christmas memoir	15%
Final exam synthesis (due date and time of final)	15%
Class attendance and participation	10%

The following books are available in the bookstore:

Buechner, Frederick. *Godric*. Harper and Row.

Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol*. Airmont Publishing: New York. 1963.

The following is part of the academic integrity policy that is from the Boston College Catalogue, pp 33-32. The entire policy is described in the Catalogue and at:

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/enm/stserv/acd/univ.html#integrity

see also the Political Science web page for examples and exercises to learn more about what constitutes plagiarism:

<http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/polisci/integrity/quiz/>

Academic Integrity

Policy and Procedures

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 also undermines the educational process.

Standards

Academic integrity is violated by any dishonest act which is committed in an academic context including, but not restricted to the following:

Cheating is the fraudulent or dishonest presentation of work. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

- the use or attempted use of unauthorized aids in examinations or other academic exercises submitted for evaluation;
- fabrication, falsification, or misrepresentation of data, results, sources for papers or reports, or in clinical practice, as in reporting experiments, measurements, statistical analyses, tests, or other studies never performed; manipulating or altering data or other manifestations of research to achieve a desired result; selective reporting, including the deliberate suppression of conflicting or unwanted data;
- falsification of papers, official records, or reports;
- copying from another student's work;
- actions that destroy or alter the work of another student;
- unauthorized cooperation in completing assignments or during an examination;
- the use of purchased essays or term papers, or of purchased preparatory research for such papers;
- submission of the same written work in more than one course without prior written approval from the instructors involved;
- dishonesty in requests for make-up exams, for extensions of deadlines for submitting papers, and in any other matter relating to a course.

Plagiarism is the deliberate act of taking the words, ideas, data, illustrations, or statements of another person or source, and presenting them as one's own. Each student is responsible for learning and using proper methods of paraphrasing and footnoting, quotation, and other forms of citation, to ensure that the original author, speaker, illustrator, or source of the material used is clearly acknowledged.

Other breaches of academic integrity include:

- the misrepresentation of one's own or another's identity for academic purposes;
- the misrepresentation of material facts or circumstances in relation to examinations, papers, or other evaluative activities;
- the sale of papers, essays, or research for fraudulent use;
- the alteration or falsification of official University records;
- the unauthorized use of University academic facilities or equipment, including computer accounts and files;
- the unauthorized recording, sale, purchase, or use of academic lectures, academic computer software, or other instructional materials;
- the expropriation or abuse of ideas and preliminary data obtained during the process of editorial or peer review of work submitted to journals, or in proposals for funding by agency panels or by internal University committees;
- the expropriation and/or inappropriate dissemination of personally-identifying human subject data;

- the unauthorized removal, mutilation, or deliberate concealment of materials in University libraries, media, or academic resource centers.

Collusion is defined as assistance or an attempt to assist another student in an act of academic dishonesty. Collusion is distinct from collaborative learning, which may be a valuable component of students' scholarly development. Acceptable levels of collaboration vary in different courses, and students are expected to consult with their instructor if they are uncertain whether their cooperative activities are acceptable.

Assignments

Life Stories as Moral Biography: Making Myth of One's Life

Week 1 (during class)

- "The Islanders" from Idries Shah, *The Sufis*
- The Truman Show
- Deuteronomy Chapter 30

Assignment: Read the novel *Godric* by Frederick Buechner and do first assignment

Week 2: To make a myth of one's life is to discover the deeper layers of inner life and to enter into the sacred dynamics of daily biography in the realms of time, space, nature, worship, and all aspects of our relationships.

- Arnold Van Gennep: *The Rites of Passage* (pp. 88-115)
- Victor Turner: *The Ritual Process* (pp. 94-108)
- Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (complete book)

Writing Assignment: Short Paper 6 pages.

Write 1 page on the following 6 topics. First define the topics according to the author and then describe an example in your life or experience.

1. A rite of passage and which model it followed: initiation, gnosis or knowledge, healing, or forgiveness
2. The contrast between liminality (a transitional threshold) and communitas (everyday life)
3. Sacred (vs. Profane) Space and Making the World Sacred
4. Sacred (vs. Profane) Time and Myths
5. The Sacredness (vs. Profanity) of Nature and Cosmic Religion
6. Human Existence and Sanctified (vs. Profane) Life

The Inner Life of Mysterium and Onus

Week 3:

- Rudolf Otto: *The Idea of the Holy* (Forward and Chapters I-IX)
- Ignatius Loyola: *Spiritual Exercises* on consolation and desolation

- Schervish, “Christmas and the Elementary Forms of the Spiritual Life.” In *The Church and Popular Culture*, Vol. 14. Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs: Philadelphia, 1995.

Come prepared in class to discuss four questions:

1. What is consolation (mysterium) and desolation (onus)?
2. How do you know the difference?
3. How are they two potential faces of every reality you experience?
4. What are the strategies you use to advance mysterium and deter onus?

Week 4:

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, Personal Writings, translated by Joseph A. Munitz and Philip Endean (New York: Penguin Classics, 1996)

- “Reminiscences” (“Autobiography of Ignatius Loyola”)

Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola (handout from last week)

Toner Spirit of Light or Darkness (handout)

pp. 1-4 of Jules Toner, *Spirit of Light or Darkness?*

“Rules for the Discernment of Spirits”

pp. 5-10 of Jules Toner, *Spirit of Light or Darkness?*

“Explanatory Notes on the Ignatian Rules for Discernment of Spirits”

pp. 11-30 of Jules Toner, *Spirit of Light or Darkness?*

“Case 13”

pp. 50-53 of Jules Toner, *Spirit of Light or Darkness?*

“Responses to Questions for Case 13”

pp. 81-82 of Jules Toner, *Spirit of Light or Darkness?*

“The Three Classes of Souls”

Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola (Ganss, George E., S.J.)

distributed in class

Assignment

5 pages single spaced as directed previously

Take five examples from the biography of Ignatius Loyola and apply the appropriate rule (s) for the discernment of spirits as Toner does for Case 13. One page for each of the five examples.

Week 5

A Christmas Carol—please use the edition ordered in the bookstore so we can all be “on the same page” in class.

Read this novel by Charles Dickens

Assignment:

As you read, consider how each character in the novel is a current or latent (hidden) dimension of Scrooge.

Take seven of these dimensions and tell briefly how they are an aspect of Scrooge and then write a little more in detail about each of these seven dimensions is an aspect of your life and the dilemmas you face in your life.

Week 6 and Week 7

Christmas in America: A History by Penne L. Restad

Read Chapters 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11 add chapter 8 if 2 weeks spent on this in future and for each chapter write one page on the salient thing you learned and how it applies to your experience of Christmas.

Week 8**Advent: The Longing for the Coming of God into Our Life**

Mariann Burke: *Advent and Psychic Birth*: Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, Conclusion

Read these chapters and write a very thoughtful, meditative paragraph on each of Chapters 1-4 and the Conclusion that answer the following questions:

- Chapter 1: What do you anticipate at the deepest archetypal level?
- Chapter 2: What do you long at the deepest archetypal level?
- Chapter 3: What is your hope at the deepest archetypal level?
- Chapter 4: What is your fear at the deepest archetypal level?
- Conclusion: What is happening to the divine child within you? What is your aspiration for your divine child?

Week 9**The Holy Scripture of Christmas and the Scripture of Holiness**

- The Gospel Texts:
 - The Infancy Narratives of Matthew and Luke ([copies](#))
 - John's Gospel Prologue ([below](#))
 - Paul's letter to the Philippians ([below](#))
- *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* on the Infancy Narratives and John's Prologue ([copies](#))
- Raymond E. Brown. An Introduction to the New Testament: 171-176 (Matthew), 225-235 (Luke) , 333-338 (John) ([copies](#))
- The Book [Gospel] of Thomas. The Gnostic Bible, edited by Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer ([copies](#))
- "Gospels in Conflict: John and Thomas." Elaine Pagels. *Beyond Belief: The Secret Gospel of Thomas* ([copies](#))

John's Gospel 1 (1-18)

[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[2] He was in the beginning with God;

[3] all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

[4] In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

[5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[6] There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

[7] He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him.

[8] He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

[9] The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world.

[10] He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.

[11] He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.

[12] But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God;

[13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

[14]And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

[15] (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, `He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'")

[16] And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.

[17] For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

[18] No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

Paul's Letter to the Philippians 2 (1-13)

[1] So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,

[2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

[3] Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.

[4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

[6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

[7] but emptied [*kenosis*] himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

[8] And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

[9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,

[10] that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

[11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;

[13] for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

(Review of Forthcoming Assignments)

1. Spiritual Autobiography in the form of a Christmas Memoir

The assignment is to tell your spiritual story in the form of your memories. The autobiography should cover Christmas past, Christmas present, Christmas future (one year from now), and Christmas future 7 years from now. Please incorporate throughout the memories the insights we have discussed concerning the sacred and profane, the holy, mysterium and onus, the contradictions of Christmas, the religious and spiritual meaning of Christmas, psychic birth, liminality and archetypes.

This 12-15 page paper is due November 28 at class.

2. Christmas Interview

Please carry out a 45 minutes interview with someone of your choice. The goal is to ask them about the contradictory spiritual/material experiences they have around all the topics we discussed from music to meals, from the religious meaning to the mystical dimensions, that is, about the troubles and pleasures in culture, home, and heart. Record the interview and transcribe it. I look at this as a warm and personal experience for you and the person interviewed. Don't be afraid to "follow the emotion" and ask follow-up questions on the topics that the interviewee seems to find deeply meaningful as a trouble or pleasure.

At the end of the interview, write a 5 page thematic analysis of interview: again use the concepts and issues we have covered in class as you did for your autobiography.

This is due on the December 5th in class.

3. **Final Take Home**

7 pages (single spaced)

Write the 7 major insights you garnered from the readings, discussions, and lectures and assignments. If you need a little more room, you may write more than one page on each topic.

This is due under my door at my office at the end time of the final exam on the date designated for the final exam for this course: Monday, December 19, 9:30 p.m.—extended to 9 a.m. on Tuesday, December 20.

Week 10

Karl Rahner, S.J., “Thoughts on the Theology of Christmas”
Outline this article and spend some time doing what it says:

Read the following articles and answer each question with one paragraph:

Karl Rahner, S.J., “Christmas, the Feast of Eternal Youth”

Question: How is Christmas the feast of eternal youth?

Karl Rahner, S.J., “Holy Night”

Question: What is holy about the Night?

Karl Rahner, S.J., “Peace on Earth”

Question: What is the relation between peace on the global earth and peace in our psychic earth?

Week 11

The Archetypal and Psychic Meaning of Christmas in Poetry

- T. S. Eliot, *Journey of the Magi*
- W. H. Auden, *For the Time Being*

Karl Rahner
 -Chapter 3 of *The Trinity*

Daily Life as Spiritual Exercise

- Schervish, the Moral Biography of Wealth
 Schervish, Paul G., "The Sense and Sensibility of Religion: Retrieving Spiritual Experience as an Authentic Sociological Variable." Readings to be assigned

The Spiritual Path

The Sufis

- Week 1
 Introduction, Chapters beginning on p: 1,12,38,63,130,155
- Week 2
 Chapters beginning on p:254,257,265,281,294,347,357,389

The Contradictions of Christmas: Troubles and Traditions in Culture Home and Heart

Schervish, "The contradictions of Christmas: Troubles and Traditions in Culture, Home, and Heart"
 Transcripts of Christmas Interviews

Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*

See Caplow AJS Vol 89, no 6 1984 for example of setting out the rules of Christmas gift giving but without a touchstone to spirituality or to the basic content meaning Christmas as a spiritual event. It is an example of the dismissal and silence of religion in much modern social science.

Karl Rahner, S.J., "Thoughts on the Theology of Christmas"

Karl Rahner, S.J., "Christmas, the Feast of Eternal Youth"

Karl Rahner, S.J., "Holy Night"
Karl Rahner, S.J., "Peace on Earth"

Wee k 11**The Archetypal and Psychic Meanings of Christmas**

W. H. Auden, *For the Time Being*

T. S. Eliot, *Journey of the Magi*

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Christmas Eve: Dialogue on the Incarnation*