Self-Knowledge and Discernment:
The Experience of Pilgrimage
PHIL/THEO 4495

Meetings:
7 meetings, select Thursdays, 1:00-3:00.
Additional 2-night weekend retreat: March 31 – April 2.
17-Day Pilgrimage: May 29 – June 14

Professor: Jeremy D. Wilkins
Office: Stokes Hall North 417
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-4pm
Contact: wilkinje@bc.edu (preferred)
Chaplain: Fr Robert van Alstyne, SJ
Graduate Assistant: Grace Agolia

Course Description:
This course surveys Christian theology of pilgrimage, in order to help students to grow in reflection, self-knowledge, discernment, and awareness of transcendence. The course culminates in a group experience of seventeen days of walking pilgrimage on the famous Camino to the shrine of St. James in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Only ten students will be selected for the course after an application and interview process. The course is taught from a Christian perspective, though students of any religious belief or none are welcome to apply.

Required Texts:

*All other course readings will be posted on Canvas.*

Course Policies:

*Academic Honesty:* Any plagiarism or cheating on any assignments or exams will result in an F for the assignment and, at the professor’s discretion, may result also in an F for the course. Read and understand the Boston College policies on academic integrity. [http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html](http://www.bc.edu/offices/stserv/academic/integrity.html)

*Gender Inclusive Language:* Standard practice in the course will be use inclusive language concerning human beings, and concerning God to use the metaphors and analogies of the texts we are studying.

*Students with Disabilities:* Please see the Disability Services Office website:
The instructor will make all reasonable accommodations when documented properly through this office.

Electronic Devices: Use of electronic devices when not specifically authorized by the professor is strictly forbidden, even during breaks.

Food: Food is not permitted in the classroom without explicit permission from the professor.

Grading:

1. 20% Active participation.

There are three exceptions: (a) the student must do the readings assigned and come to class prepared with questions and comments; (b) the student must actively participate, by being attentive to others’ comments and by sharing her own reactions to and considerations of the readings; (c) the student must do the assigned walks and the related journal entries for each class session. Journal entries are graded on timely and full completion. Students must begin walking significant distances early in the semester in order to be ready for the Camino.

2. 30% Papers.

Each student must complete two papers of 1000-1500 words. The paper topics will be assigned by the professor.

3. 20% Final Exam.

The exam will be oral or written at the discretion of the professor, and occur during the exam week.

4. 30% Final Paper.

There will be a final paper of 3000-4000 words on the experience and theology of pilgrimage. It must involve both personal narrative and some of the readings. It is due Monday, July 10, 2021, via email or Canvas upload.
Schedule of Probabilities
[tentative]

Part I
Meeting One: January 19, 2023

What is Theology? What is Pilgrimage? Who is God?


Exercise 1: What is God? Who is God for me?
Exercise 2: What is pilgrimage? Who am I as a pilgrim?

Meeting Two: February 2, 2023

Pilgrimage and Creation: God in Action
Bible: Genesis 1; Psalms 104, 139; John 1:1-18

Hopkins, Gerard Manley. “God’s Grandeur,” “As Kingfishers Catch Fire,” “Spring and Fall,” “Pied Beauty.”


Exercise 1: Bodily Awareness
Exercise 2: Creation Awareness

Meeting Three: February 16, 2023
Pilgrimage as Election: God Chooses (a) People for a Journey
Bible: Genesis 12-22; Exodus 1-24; First Letter of John

Exercise: Why did I choose to be in this course and to go on pilgrimage? What could it mean to think that God chose me to go on pilgrimage?

Meeting Four: March 2, 2023
Pilgrimage as Exile, Redemption, Return: God Saves
Bible: Jeremiah, chapters 1-5, and 30-33; Luke chapters 7-9, 15, 22-24

Exercise 1: What is exile? How does it connect to the concept of sin? Where do I notice exile and sin in the world most clearly?
Exercise 2: What is it to be redeemed? Why does redemption take time? Why would a pilgrimage help a believer encounter Christ’s redemption?

First Paper Due: March 16, 2023

Meeting Five: March 16, 2023
Pilgrimage and Memory: God in My Life
Augustine, Confessions, books 1-2 and 8-9


Exercise 1: Labyrinth Walk
Exercise 2: Examen, according to St. Ignatius Loyola

Interlude:
Retreat
March 31 – April 2, 2023
Toah Nipi Retreat Center, Rindge, NH. We will hike Mt Monadnock during this retreat. Plan accordingly.
Reading preparation: The Way of a Pilgrim.

Meeting Six: April 13, 2023
Pilgrimage, Providence, and Hope: Depending on God’s Help

Exercise: On whom do I depend? What control do I cling to? What is different about depending on God compared with depending on human beings?

Meeting Seven: April 27, 2023
The Goal of Pilgrimage: Journey to God
Thomas Aquinas. Summa Theologiae I-II.4.7-8


Exercise 1: Is God a destination? What does place have to do with God?

Exercise 2: What is happiness? What brings happiness?

**Walking, April 29, 2023:** We will take a long walk together as a class starting at St. Ignatius Church and going into the city of Boston and then returning by MBTA. Please bring a backpack, a full water bottle, and wear a good pair of shoes. If you have a Charlie Card, please bring it, or bring enough funds to purchase a train ride back from Boston.

**Exam week:** exams as determined. **Your second five-page paper must be submitted electronically before you arrive in Spain!**

**Part II**

**Pilgrimage to Santiago**

May 29 – June 14

*In Spain:* We will begin in Léon. Our first day in Leon will include a classroom preparation piece in the evening, and our walking will begin the following day. Planned arrival in Santiago June 12. June 13 summary/concluding class session. June 14 departure from Santiago.

**Part III**

**Final paper is due Monday, July 31, 2023, by noon,** Canvas. 3500-4500 words (approx. 10-12 pages). Class reunion in the Fall, tba.