Course Description

What’s Next? The Ignatian Way of Discernment

This class will introduce students to the Ignatian practice of discernment through selected readings, class discussion, and praxis. Students will draw upon their undergraduate experience and postgraduate aspirations in order to develop the skills to discern such as reflecting, listening, imagining, seeking the guidance of wisdom figures, and evaluating one’s orientation to questions of ultimacy. At the end of this class, students will be able to utilize Ignatian principles of discernment towards holistic vocational concerns including relationships, professional pursuits and social justice.

Syllabus

Weeks 1 - 2
What do we mean by vocation?
- Introductions
- Defining our Terms and Theological Foundations
- Michael Himes video: Three Key Questions, dvd produced by Intersections and Boston College.
- Writing Assignment
  - 2 page response to the 3 questions posed by Himes

Weeks 3 - 4
How do we listen? (Unplugging in a Plugged-in World)
- Praxis Assignment
  - Practice a daily Examen for a week, or practice a phone fast for a week, or design your own “sabbath.”

Weeks 5 - 6
Who is in your Chorus of Discernment?
Introduction to Benedict, Ignatius and Spiritual Direction
- St. Ignatius, Rules for the Discernment of Spirits
- Dennis Hamm, SJ, “Rummaging for God: Praying Backwards through Your Day” available online at IgnatianSpirituality.com
- Praxis Assignment
  - Interview a mentor whose decisions you have admired, or try spiritual direction.
Weeks 7 - 8
Writing our Own Story
- William Deresiewicz, “The Disadvantages of an Elite Education,” essay published online at AmericanScholar.org
- Writing / Praxis Assignment
  - Select and write about an object of discernment from your lived experience, or determine one way in which your conversation partners or cloud of witnesses is lacking.

Weeks 9 - 10
Learning How to Think
- Writing / Praxis Assignment
  - Articulate in writing the ways in which you are not “free” in an Ignatian sense.

Weeks 11 - 12
The Way to Love
- Writing / Praxis Assignment
  - Order your loves.

Week 13
Synthesis
- 1:1 Meetings / Portfolio Reviews
- Final Assignment: Students will create a 6-8 page “discernment portfolio” drawing upon their praxis assignments over the course of the semester. For example, students will identify who is in their “chorus of discernment” and be required to include concrete practices for the ways in which they will operationalize listening to their lived experience. Be sure to draw from the readings (cite at least 5 sources) and classroom discussions.

Attendance Policy: The strength of this course is the learning community that we form throughout our seven weeks together. Because each student is a vital participant in this community, attendance is mandatory. If an unavoidable conflict arises, the student is to meet with the instructor beforehand to discuss the conflict. If a student misses a class in addition to one previously excused absence, the student will not pass this course.