Course Description:

This course will explore the powerful synergy between mystic spirituality and social activism. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote, “Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit.” In the urgent and troubling context of current world events, we will look to the example of “mystic-activists” from diverse cultures and faith traditions for insight and inspiration. Readings and multimedia materials will include Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, and Indigenous sources.

The model of “mystic-activism” refers those individuals (whether self-identified as mystics or not) whose recognition of the unity of all life, and whose love for the Divine in all creation, compelled and sustained their work of peace and justice-making. Online class discussions will identify key principles, consider areas of common ground and uniqueness among those studied, and students will be encouraged to incorporate any practices and perspectives that may enrich their own lifework. The ethical implications of the mystic experience and worldview will be a focus throughout.

All of us who work and serve and struggle in the world require a regular discipline of, as Howard Thurman put it, “watering our roots” to replenish the inner spirit. Through a wholistic approach of both heart and head, we will engage specific practices to nourish and sustain an ongoing commitment to anti-oppression work and ministerial service.

Class Format & Technical Requirements:

Our virtual classroom will employ an array of resource modalities – readings, images, video, audio, and web links for further exploration. Students are encouraged to contribute to the evolution of our shared space as we journey together. There will not be formal lectures, but rather discussion, reflection, and elaboration in the classroom forums as we explore and unpack each week’s materials. Everyone is expected to actively participate via substantive original posts and interactive comments on the posts of other students and the instructor. Please see the rubric (p.6 of syllabus) for additional guidance.

If schedules and technical logistics permit, we will try to coordinate a couple of real-time class meetings with local folks in person and other classmates via skype, days/times to be arranged by group consensus.

In addition, each week (after the first three) a different pair of students will collaborate to provide a brief “devotional” for the group – a meditation, prayer, or spiritual practice to open that week’s convening. Sign-up for this is found in the introductory section of our Moodle page (required).

Successful participation in this course will require high-speed internet access (capable of watching online video) and sufficient technological literacy to navigate Moodle and ancillary technologies (such as VoiceThread, skype, google hangout, etc). Please make use of online tutorials and technical assistance available through SKSM and GTU prior to the start of class so you are ready to engage fully! If you have technical difficulties, please get help immediately so you do not fall behind. Your computer should support video-conferencing via skype or similar technologies.
Instructor Contact Information:
The best way to reach me is by e-mail to: rankow@onelifeinstitute.org. Please put “SKSM Class” as the subject line so I will be able to recognize it as coming from you. You may also leave a voice message on the OneLife Institute voice mail line (510.595.5598); I am the only one who receives those messages. From there we can arrange to meet by phone or skype on an individual basis, as needed. (For instructor bio visit: www.onelifeinstitute.org/meetourteam.html)

ECO / Thresholds:
This course supports the SKSM emphasis on educating to counter oppressions (ECO) by presenting a compassionate, empowered, and embodied approach to individual and social transformation. Course content intentionally de-centers whiteness, drawing on wide range of cultures and faiths. It encompasses several Threshold Areas, most notably those involving an interfaith and intercultural commitment, prophetic witness and work, and spiritual practice and care of the soul. Its concept and format provide for the integration of theory and application, inner communion and outward action, intellect and creativity.

Learning Outcomes:
Through full and committed participation students will:

- Deepen their understanding of engaged spirituality as it is found in diverse traditions
- Consider the ethical implications of a mystic (or unitive) worldview
- Discuss the synergy between personal and social transformation
- Reflect on the lives of individuals whose spirituality informs their work for peace and justice
- Examine the relevance and applications of course learnings to their own commitments & lifework

Course Expectations:

- Commit a total of 15 hours per week for a 3 credit hour course (including readings and other resource materials, forum participation, and additional course activities).
- Approximately 40-70 pages of reading per week, plus video, audio, and web resources. As in a traditional classroom setting, readings should be completed prior to the “meeting” date listed (Monday of each week), and the week itself used for posting and interaction.
- On Monday of each week make primary forum post (equivalent to a 1-2 pg thought paper). Make substantive comments on others posts during the week according to rubric (p.6 of syllabus)
- Praxis Project – the charge is to embody the principles studied in your own life through integrating your spiritual practice with the work of justice-making and social transformation in whatever form that uniquely takes for you. Students will make regular blog posts (in Moodle) to reflect on their process, write a final contextual essay, and make a final class presentation. Please consult the separate sheet on Praxis Projects for details (this is found in the ESSENTIALS folder on our Moodle page).

Course Evaluation:
Assessment will be based on the quality and depth of your engagement with the material and learning community, as evidenced by class participation and contributions, preparation, forum posts, final
project and final contextual essay. Please let me know within the first two weeks if you will need a letter grade for your particular program of study, otherwise the course will be conducted on a pass/fail basis, with narrative evaluations as required for SKSM students.

Course Materials:
All course materials will be available on or linked via GTU Moodle. This will include PDF format readings, web-based, and multimedia resources. Students will be required to indicate their agreement to respect Copyright laws in accessing and using these materials. Please complete the copyright agreement found in the introductory materials on our Moodle page (above Week One) as one of your first orders of business for the course. Thank you.

Course Outline:
This course outline is a living document. It provides a rough map of the terrain we will cover together. I have included a list of authors for each week’s study, but may add to or amend resources as we go, if I think it will enhance your learning experience. Similarly, I will be posting key teaching points and developing forum discussion questions as we journey together. Ultimately, the Moodle page itself will become our final syllabus by the time our semester is complete.

• UNIT ONE: INTRODUCTIONS AND DEFINITIONS

Week 1 / Sept 2
Introduction to the course and one another. Defining key concepts. Logistics. Please review all the items in the introductory space of our Moodle page (below the SKSM logo bar, above Week One).

Readings: Evelyn Underhill, William James, Dorothee Soelle, Janet Ruffing, and brief mystic narratives

Introductions: Please post your self-introductions on or before the first day of class. These will be in two formats, both found in the introductory space of the Moodle page:

1) A short personal essay posted to the forum: Please introduce yourself and share something about your life journey and spiritual walk. Also include your reasons for taking this course, what you bring to it, what you hope to receive, and what might get in the way...

2) A short video posted in response to the VoiceThread, sharing: Your full name and preferred name; Where you grew up and where you live now; Where your grandparents are from; What school/ program you are in and where you are in that process (what year, etc); and finally, in acknowledgement of Howard Thurman's quote (below), “What makes you come alive?”

“Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive.” ~ Howard Thurman

Technical Note: VoiceThread (www.voicethread.com) is a learning technology which allows for audio and video comments to a central post. You will find detailed instructions on the Moodle page for the VoiceThread introductions. Be brave. This “assignment” is not for evaluation, but in hopes of allowing us to connect with one another despite the limitations of an online course!
• **UNIT TWO: INTERFAITH PARADIGMS OF ENGAGED SPIRITUALITY**

**Week 2 / Sept 8 ~ Indigenous Traditions & Judaism**
- Indigenous – Worldview of oneness, all is part of the sacred (no “secular” division)
  Readings: Jeannette Armstrong, Oren Lyons, 13 Grandmothers, Coumba Toure, Carol Jacobs
- Judaism – Tikkun olam & tikkun ha’nefesh, Tzaddikim
  Readings: Estelle Frankel, Abraham Joshua Heschel (plus Ellsberg on Heschel), Tzaddikim
  Videos: Heschel interview; Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers / Audio: Estelle Frankel

**Week 3 / Sept 15 ~ Christianity**
- Christianity – Peacemakers
  Readings: Neil Douglas-Klotz, Henri Nowen, Vincent Harding, Dom Helder Camara, Jean Zaru (2)
  Video: Barrio de Paz (about Nelsa Curbelo)

**Week 4 / Sept 22 ~ Islam & Buddhism**
- Islam – Peacemakers
  Readings: Ibtisam Mahmeed, M.R. Bawa Muhaiyaddeen; Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons
- Buddhism – Bodhisattvas
  Readings: Diana Winston, Joanna Macy, Sulak Sivaraksa; Bodhisattva vow
  Video: Unit Two Summary

• **UNIT THREE: MYSTICISM AND ETHICS**

**Week 5 / Sept 29 ~ Mysticism & Ethics**
  Readings: Liza Rankow, Howard Thurman (plus Harding on Thurman & MLK), Mohandas Gandhi
  Video: Conversations with Howard Thurman

**Week 6 / Oct 6 ~ Mysticism & Ethics**
  Readings: Beverly Lanzetta, Barbara Holmes, John Mohawk
  Short videos: Nirmala Deshpande, Juila Esquivel, Rangimarie Turuki Rose Pere, Aung San Suu Kyi

**Week 7 / Oct 13 ~ Mysticism & Ethics**
  Readings: Rabia Teri Harris, Valdina Pinto, Thich Nhat Hanh
  Short video: Ubuntu
  Note: Check in re praxis projects; mid-term course evaluations
Week 8 / Oct 20 ~ GTU READING WEEK ~ no class

• UNIT FOUR: PERSONAL & SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Week 9 / Oct 27 ~ Transformative Change
Readings: US Social Forum Statement on Transformative Change, Vimala Thakar, SGI Poison Into Medicine, Martin Luther King Jr
Audio: angel Kyodo williams interview

Week 10 / Nov 3 ~ Personal & Social Transformation
Readings: Rangimarie Turuki Rose Pere, Alice Walker, Aung San Suu Kyi, Claudia Horwitz
Short video: Tonglen meditation

• UNIT FIVE: LIVING THE VISION

Week 11 / Nov 10 ~ Living the Vision
Readings: Desmond Tutu, Dolores Huerta, Zalman Schacter-Shalomi, Rachel Naomi Remen
Multimedia: short videos: Reb Zalman; podcast: Desmond Tutu; audio: Liza Rankow

Week 12 / Nov 17 ~ Living the Vision
Readings: Donald Rothberg, Howard Thurman, Starhawk, Clarissa Pinkola Estes; Claudia Horwitz & Jesse Vega-Frey; Burnout resources
Videos: A Warrior Prays (spoken word piece); Idle No More

Week 13 / Nov 26 ~ Final Project Presentations
Final Project presentations – ideally during a real-time class session (logistics TBD)

Week 14 / Dec 1 ~ Life Visioning / Class Closing
Michael Beckwith & Life Visioning exercise
Course summary questions; final course evaluations
Virtual closing circle (VoiceThread)
Short video: Wangari Maathai

Week 15 / Dec 8 ~ Final papers due by Friday, Dec. 12, 2014
Rubric for Discussion Forums • Mysticism & Social Change • Dr. Liza Rankow

Discussion Forum participation provides an opportunity for members of the class to learn from each other based on the readings, different life experiences, and unique perspectives gained from studying course materials. It also assists adult learners in learning how to effectively convey ideas to a group in a professional and respectful manner. Please use this rubric as a guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Not Yet There</th>
<th>Not There At All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Timeliness of original substantive post</td>
<td>Makes original post on the Monday of each week</td>
<td>Makes original post on Tuesday</td>
<td>Makes original post Wednesday or later</td>
<td>Does not make original post each week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful responses to posts by other students and the instructor</td>
<td>Substantive responses at least 3 times each week to posts by other students and/or instructor</td>
<td>Less frequent or less substantive interaction</td>
<td>Infrequent or insubstantial interaction</td>
<td>No substantive interaction with other’s posts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timely discussion contributions</td>
<td>Interactive postings well distributed throughout the week</td>
<td>Postings somewhat distributed throughout the week</td>
<td>Postings not distributed throughout the week</td>
<td>Does not interact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration of knowledge and understanding gained from readings</td>
<td>Very clear that readings and other materials were understood and incorporated well into posts</td>
<td>Readings were understood and incorporated into posts</td>
<td>Postings have questionable relationship to reading material</td>
<td>Not evident that readings were understood &amp; incorporated into discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
<td>Posts are well articulated, clear, and easy to follow</td>
<td>Posts are clear and understandable</td>
<td>Posts are understandable, but some effort is required to follow</td>
<td>Posts are unclear or difficult to follow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Development of Ideas</td>
<td>Well-developed ideas; introduces new ideas, and stimulates discussion</td>
<td>Developing ideas; sometimes stimulates discussion</td>
<td>Poorly developed ideas which do not add to the discussion</td>
<td>Posts are confusing or do not relate to the subject at hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence of critical thinking and insight</td>
<td>Clear evidence of critical thinking – application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Posts demonstrate depth of insight, originality, and relevance. Points made are clear and well-supported.</td>
<td>Posts generally accurate, but could be improved with more analysis and creative thought. Tend to recite facts rather than explore issues.</td>
<td>Posts are peripheral to the subject and/or do not demonstrate insight, critical thinking or creative thought</td>
<td>Does not enter the discussion</td>
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</tbody>
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