

# **Sustainability and Resilience Practices for Spiritual Leaders**

RSFT-8416

3 Units

Starr King School for the Ministry / Graduate Theological Union

Fall 2017

**Instructor:** Betty Jeanne Rueters-Ward, MASC  
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**Availability:** My office hours vary, as I try to be as flexible as possible to students' diverse schedules each week. Please don't hesitate to reach out via email or phone to request a meeting (via phone or video chat), and indicate available days/times including time zone.

## **Course Description**

How do those called to bless the world – to engage with the suffering and healing of others, and of the planet – ground and sustain themselves? Students will link theory, practice, and personal experience to develop their personal theologies for sustainable, resilient leadership – and learn practical tools to more effectively serve their vocations “for the long haul”. Together, we will explore concepts including compassion fatigue, measuring emotional and spiritual health, vocational burnout, trauma stewardship, boundary setting, and care for self and community. Participants will also explore how to positively influence organizational culture and build healthy, sustainable congregations and other organizations. This interactive, multi-faceted course combines multimedia, readings, class discussion, a praxis (action/reflection) component, and more, and is open to all interested in spiritual leadership for social change.

Inspired by the educational philosophy of Starr King School for the Ministry, this course will:

- Invite students to bring their full, authentic selves to the learning experience.
- Draw knowledge and wisdom from both academic sources and personal experience.
- Embody an ongoing practice weaving together inquiry, study, action and reflection.
- Permeate the walls of the academy and build a global learning community.
- Center the unique learning goals and needs of each student.
- Further Starr King's commitment to education that counters oppressions, creates just and sustainable communities, and fosters multi-religious life and learning.

## **Learning Objectives**

During this course, students will:

- Explore the theological foundations for their vocational call
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities re: sustainability and resiliency
- Draw on diverse spiritual traditions and social movements for insight and inspiration
- Reflect on emotional and psychological aspects of spiritual leadership

- Provide and receive peer/collegial support for leadership development

## Learning Outcomes

In completing of this course, students will:

- Articulate their personal theology/philosophy of sustainable, resilient spiritual leadership
- Develop concrete strategies for supporting and sustaining their long-term leadership
- Research, create, and present diverse learning resources on topics of personal interest
- Engage in ongoing learning via a self-designed praxis (action/reflection) project

## Course Policies

This course relies on the thoughtful and consistent engagement of each participant. All are expected to participate actively and promptly in discussions, activities, reading and written assignments. Students are leaders and co-creators of this graduate-level learning experience, generating learning materials for each other, and proactively building a culture of peer support. In the case of missing or late assignments or inconsistent participation, students must notify the instructors as soon as possible, and work out a plan for completion.

## Course Assignments

*Each week,*

- Review any written or recorded announcements and instructions for the week.
- Complete reading, viewing, interactive activities, and other posted assignments.
- Post (written, or via video) in an online discussion.
- Comment on at least two postings by peers.
- Engage in praxis (action/reflection component).

*During the first month,*

- Begin praxis experience.
- Begin planning student-led presentation.
- Draft a preliminary personal theology/philosophy of spiritual leadership.

*At the mid-semester point,*

- Submit an update on your praxis project.
- Complete a self-evaluation of your participation, and an evaluation of the course itself.

*During the final month,*

- Complete a self-evaluation of your praxis experience.
- Lead presentation, and complete a self-evaluation of your planning and delivery.
- Revisit and update your theology/philosophy of spiritual leadership
- Complete a self-evaluation of your participation, and an evaluation of the course itself.

*Once during the course,*

- Provide leadership in facilitating an engaging discussion in the week's forum.
- In-depth consultation with instructor on personal goals and vision for spiritual leadership.

Detailed instructions are available in supplementary documents for the following assignments:

### Praxis Project

Students will develop a tailored praxis (action/reflection) opportunity, engaging directly in individual or collective spiritual practices, and drawing insights from their experiences.

### Presentation

Students are responsible for a multimedia presentation that brings course topics of interest to them to life for their peers/colleagues.

### Paper

Students will develop a personal philosophy/theology and action plan for their own long-term spiritual leadership.

## **Grading and Evaluation**

Regular, active class participation constitutes most of the grading rubric. Also required are three additional items of equal weight: the praxis project, presentation, and personal statement paper. Components are designed to enrich the online experience, and equip students with hands-on experiences, theological reflection, and collaborative ethos to build and sustain social change. Your final grade +/or evaluation will be determined by the following components:

Class Participation - 40%

Praxis Project - 20%

Presentation - 20%

Paper (Personal Theology/Philosophy of Spiritual Leadership) - 20%

## **Required Texts**

“Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others”

by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky

ISBN-10: 157675944X, ISBN-13: 978-1576759448, current cost on Amazon: \$16.57

This book is written for those doing work with an intention to make the world more sustainable and hopeful— a better place—and who, through this work, are exposed to the hardship, pain, crisis, trauma, or suffering of other living beings or the planet itself. It is for those who notice they are not the same people they once were, or are being told by their families, friends, colleagues, or pets that something is different about them. This book is a navigational tool for remembering that we have options at every step of our lives. We choose our own path. We can make a difference without suffering; we can do meaningful work in a way that works for us and for those we serve. We can enjoy the world and set it straight. We can leave a legacy that embodies our deepest wisdom and greatest gifts instead of one that is burdened with our struggles and despair.

“Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal and Delight in Our Busy Lives”

by Wayne Muller

ISBN-10: 0553380117, ISBN-13: 978-0553380118, current cost on Amazon: \$11.55

In today's world, with its relentless emphasis on success and productivity, we have lost the necessary rhythm of life, the balance between work and rest. Constantly striving, we feel exhausted and deprived in the midst of great abundance. We long for time with friends and family, we long for a moment to ourselves. With wonderful stories, poems, and suggestions for practice, this book teaches us how we can use sacred Sabbath practice to refresh our bodies and minds, restore our creativity, and regain our birthright into inner happiness.

In addition to these three texts, the course will incorporate a variety of other materials (readings, videos, online resources, and more) including resources generated or suggested by students themselves.

## **Course Schedule**

*For complete listings of each week's book reading assignment, see the supplementary document.*

Weeks One to Three:

- Welcome and Introduction
- Getting Oriented to the Course
- Reflecting on Leadership, Personal Sustainability, and Resiliency
- Self-Care and Community Care: A Counter-Oppressive Call to Action

Weeks Four to Seven:

- Engaging "Sabbath" and other learning resources

Weeks Eight to Eleven:

- Engaging "Trauma Stewardship" and other learning resources

Weeks Twelve to Fourteen:

- Student Presentations
- Finalizing Personal Theologies/Philosophies on Sustainable, Resilient Leadership
- Closing and Celebration

## **About the Instructor**

Betty Jeanne Rütters-Ward serves as the Visiting Assistant Professor for Transformative Leadership at Starr King School for the Ministry, where she has taught and mentored Graduate Theological Union students and spiritual leaders around the world since 2007. Her courses examine leadership, community organizing, education, social change theory, multigenerational ministry, and more. Betty Jeanne's teaching approach is distinguished by:

- Linking theory, reflection and action – within and beyond the classroom
- Curricula that respond to students' unique passions, interests and goals

- Multi-faceted, interactive online courses that bring virtual learning to life
- Holistic academic advising, vocational counseling, and personal coaching

Betty Jeanne is a social change practitioner whose work has included ministry, community organizing, writing, public speaking, teaching and training, coaching, organizational and campaign management. She holds a Master of Arts in Social Change, combined with over ten years of leadership in the non-profit, educational, religious, philanthropic, and socially responsible business sectors. Betty Jeanne drives social change through capacity building and by developing effective, sustainable leaders of all ages, with the goal of activating people, organizations and communities in pursuit of the common good.

Betty Jeanne's passion for social change is fueled by her experiences in spiritual communities. She supports people – of any or no religious affiliations – to develop as leaders, make meaning of their lives, build community, reflect on and enact their values. Betty Jeanne has supported thousands of leaders in achieving success, maintaining balance and developing emotional resiliency amid the often fast-paced, high-stakes, stressful environments in which social change efforts happen. On a larger scale, Betty Jeanne has built powerful religious-secular coalitions for civil and human rights, universal healthcare, youth empowerment, and racial justice.

Betty Jeanne's reflections on "Rethinking Work Culture and Self Care in the Nonprofit Sector" have been featured by Idealist.org and the Young Nonprofit Professionals Network. Her graduate research centered on "Personal Sustainability and Social Movements" and "Constructive Theologies for Mental and Spiritual Health", exploring the successes and struggles of social change leaders, and strategies for long-term success. More about her professional background can be found at [www.linkedin.com/in/bruetersward](http://www.linkedin.com/in/bruetersward) or <https://www.sksm.edu/2015/04/17/i-am-starr-king-interview-with-betty-jeanne-rueters-ward/>.