



Chalmers Summer School 2007

March 13, 2007

Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and Donald Nicholl: Pilgrims of Wisdom and Peace

Dr. Michael Higgins

July 2 -6, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Course Description

This course is designed to look at the many points of convergence in the writing and witness of these three extraordinary twentieth-century spiritual figures. During the course of the week we will examine their ministry of prayer grounded in contemplation, their commitment as peace-makers, their role as spiritual diarists of compelling relevance, their deep and perduring ecumenical, indeed interfaith, appeal well into our own century and their personal integrity or holiness of life. In the process of examining their work, we will analyze various of their writings including correspondence, essays, journal entries, poetry, as well as representative published texts. All three were Roman Catholics – Thomas Merton was a Trappist monk, Henri Nouwen a priest of the Archdiocese of Utrecht, and Donald Nicholl a married layman and father and professor of History and Religious Studies – but their breadth of vision, their deep understanding of faith as the science of the heart, and their inexhaustible openness to the world all combined to make them genuinely extra-territorial spiritual figures.

Course Format

Class sessions include lecture and discussion.

Class Outline

Monday July 2

Biographical introduction to Thomas Merton, Henri Nouwen and Donald Nicholl (although the introductions will be discrete profiles there will be many points of obvious convergence.)

Tuesday July 3

The virgin point and sapiential living in the thought of Thomas Merton.

Wednesday July 4

The wounded healer in the psychology and spirituality of Henri Nouwen.

Thursday July 5

Scientia Cordis or the science of the heart in the thought of Donald Nicholl

Friday July 6

Integration, wisdom, and peace in the dying days of Merton, Nouwen and Nicholl.

Required Texts (Read these texts prior to course.)

1. Szabo, Lynn R. *In the Dark Before Dawn: New Selected Poems of Thomas Merton*. New Directions, 2005. ISBN 0-8112-1613-6
2. Higgins, Michael W.. *Heretic Blood: An audiobiography of Thomas Merton*. CBC Radio One Tapes, 1998. ISBN 0-660-17708-0
3. Nouwen, Henri. *Peacework*. Orbis Books, 2005. ISBN 1-57075-593-0

4. Nouwen, Henri. *Spiritual Direction: Wisdom for the Long Walks of Faith*. Harper SanFrancisco: 2006. ISBN 13-978-0-06-075473
5. COURESPACK – a selection of readings will be provided in the form of a custom course readings package through UBC Bookstore.

Course Requirements

1. All participants are required to attend daily and engage the learning process for classroom lectures and seminars.
2. All students will be expected to do pre-reading of primary texts for the course, and do limited reading of handouts between classes (approximately one hour per day). Attendance is mandatory and class participation is expected.
3. In order to receive credit for the course, Diploma, Certificate and Continuing Education students must read three of the assigned texts.
4. For those taking the course for degree credit, (Diploma, M.Div., M.A.T.S., M.A.R.E., Th.M., or D.Min.), see “**Summer School Degree Credit Evaluation Information**” handout for paper requirements.
5. For those taking the course for Chalmers Institute Summer School Continuing Education credit, see handout, “**Summer School Continuing Education Credit Information,**” for requirements.

For all credit students there will be an extra one-hour meeting with the course grading tutor, additional to class time, for each course, to review credit requirements and decide on an appropriate research topic.

Dr. Michael Higgins is President of St. Thomas University, author of *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton* and *Stalking the Holy: In Pursuit of Saint-Making*. He is a commentator, scriptwriter, narrator, researcher, as well as a monthly columnist for the Toronto Star since 1986.

**All books will be available from the UBC Bookstore by May 15th.
604-822-2665; Email: bkstore@interchange.ubc.ca**