



WCCM ACADEMY

Course descriptions for the first year

Contemplative Christianity



The revelation of God as Father

Prof. Ivana Noble

The course will explore relations between mystery and revelation, present in the desires for naming God in biblical and patristic traditions. Then we discuss how naming God changes in a world that has lost interest in doctrinal religion but not in spiritual practices. We will consider how belief in God as Father and Creator influences our perception of the world as the visible and the invisible creation; what does it mean that people are created to be and to become the image of God; the stories trying to make sense of the ambivalence of the world and of human character, experiences of being alienated from the good, lost and broken; and what theology calls the new creating and re-creating energies of God that bring healing and renew desires for the transcendent and the holy. In the final part, we will seek for the links between beliefs in the grounding beginning and hopeful end of all that is, as we study and discuss the ecological and the eschatological vision of creation.



The revelation of God as Son

Laurence Freeman, OSB

What's the basic inspiration for this course? The idea of the divine or ultimate reality as a threesome is present in most ancient traditions. Its appearance in creation myths and philosophical systems over millennia maybe even reflects the human brain's triadic structure. The Second Person of the Christian Trinity, the Son or Logos, is distinct in many ways but most powerfully in the uncompromising totality of Incarnation, Jesus as the Christ in whom the 'fullness of the Godhead dwells embodied' (Col 12:9) God's complete self-emptying in a dimension of reality forever inaccessible to the dualistic mind is nevertheless perfectly translated into the human condition through the kenosis of Jesus. It is also the dynamic of our life-path to divinisation. The divine-to-human translation is made in the medium of silence. So, as meditation, the work of silence, opens the eye of the heart, we begin to glimpse the sensible wisdom of the human divine, Creator/Creation paradoxes. This is certainly more than an abstract concept, just as the conception of a child in the womb is not abstract. As the contemplative glimpse of the Word made flesh widens to a gaze, our life in its entirety becomes even more amazing.



The revelation of God as Spirit

Cynthia Bourgeault

This course will consider the Holy Spirit from the perspective of the greater dynamic unity in which it is enfolded: the Holy Trinity. Topics to be considered include Unity and Particularity; Grasping Relationship Directly; Trinitarian Personhood; Threeness as a Cosmogonic Principle; Kenosis (self-emptying) as the driveshaft of divine love; Trinitarian Personhood; Faces of the Holy Spirit (Wisdom, Paraclete, Fire); The Holy Spirit and the Divine Feminine; The Trinity as Unitive Force in a Fragmented World.

Contemplation and world



Science

Prof. Marco Schorlemmer

Over the last centuries, scientific research and technological development have been the prevalent instrument and symbol of human liberation, bringing forth increasing creative freedom to individuals and societies to decide how to conduct their affairs in life. This course will focus on the ultimate source of our technoscientific practice, on the quality of the intelligence that lies at the origin of scientific inquiry; we shall argue that this focus is necessary to tackle the crises that our societies are facing today. We will highlight the intrinsic liberating dimension of technoscientific practice and the importance of nourishing this dimension. We will discuss the problems that arise when there is an imbalance in the degree to which the different dimensions of intelligence are developed in human societies, and what this means for technoscientists carrying out their work in the context of today's socio-economic systems. We will also reflect on how to lay the foundations for a contemplative technoscience, to make certain that the fruits of science and technology become a true witness of human well-being and of great respect for all life forms and the environment. And for this, we will consider what experiential wisdom practices can offer to scientists and engineers to ensure that human quality shines through scientific research and technological development.



Work

Prof. Sean Hagan

The course will explore how a contemplative practice enables one to experience work as an expression of service. While the approach will be secular, we will discover that the fruits are imbued with a spiritual quality, particularly as it relates to the development of othercenteredness. We will begin the course with an exploration of how contemplative practice can give us professional stability and enhance our ability to exercise better judgement. We will then discuss how meditation can enable us to develop stronger professional relationships that enable us to become more effective leaders. Finally, we will explore how a sustained contemplative perspective can ensure that our work is adequately aligned with our ethical values.



Politics and democracy

Herman van Rompuy

Our democracies are in crisis, but it is actually our societies that are in crisis. I look for the reasons for this. There are socioeconomic factors that play a role in this, such as growing inequalities in a number of countries, but, in addition, there is a general loss of belonging and meaning. The resulting anxiety and insecurity reinforce individualisation and the erosion of social capital (associational life, families) in society. This also translates politically into a fragmentation of the political landscape with many smaller parties, making good governance and reform (including on climate issues) more difficult. Political differences often become hate relationships. This lack of hope is politically exploited by populists and extremists, partly with the help of social media. How to respond to this? First of all, there is still an underestimated potential for solidarity that becomes visible in pandemics and disasters. We also need to strengthen our democracy from the bottom up so that there is more 'faith' in our political system. Despite everything, political leaders need to put people's concerns at the forefront of their agenda and protect citizens from old and new forms of threats. Strong political resistance against extremism is also needed, including against authoritarianism in the world. It is a conflict of values. Finally, spirituality and ethics should empower people more and make them resilient in the face of adversity so that they can better turn fear into hope. Meditation can help with this.