

Personal Calling and Social Conscience

Values & Vocation Seminar, Section 3

Chicago Semester Program

Spring 2008

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Course Description and Objectives

This course will be an ecumenical, interdisciplinary exploration of the psychology, spirituality, and ethics of vocational discernment and social responsibility. Drawing widely on insights from modern psychology, scripture, liberation theology and the mystical traditions of the world, we will examine the relationship between personal calling and social conscience, exploring the criteria for distinguishing between the authentic voice of our true calling and all of the other distracting, competing, counterfeit voices in ourselves and in our culture that tend to get us on the wrong track. Topics will include: the psychology and spirituality of vocational self-discovery; the dynamics of vocational discernment; stories of calling of notable historical figures and contemporary persons; dream, vision, and vocation in ancient and modern cultures; and vocation in relation to authenticity, passion, talent, suffering, social justice, and service. In addition to reading and scholarly reflection, class members will be expected to engage in self-examination of issues and questions related to their personal calling, to participate in class discussions, to do an oral presentation, and to write papers applying concepts and insights from class and readings to their own lives.

Required Readings

John Neafsey, *A Sacred Voice is Calling: Personal Vocation and Social Conscience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006).

Robert Ellsberg, *The Saints' Guide to Happiness: Practical Lessons in the Life of the Spirit* (Doubleday: 2005 paperback edition).

Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion: Why Faith is Always Personal But Never Private* (HarperSanFrancisco: 2005 Revised Edition)

Course Requirements

- ***Attendance & Participation:*** Because of the personal and experiential nature of the learning process for this class and the rich potential for learning from the insights and experiences of others, class members are expected to attend all class sessions for the entire class period. Being here and participating is an essential part of work for this class. There are a total of 13 scheduled class sessions during the semester. Attendance will count *12 points* towards the final grade (1 class session can be missed without penalty). Verbal participation (asking relevant questions, making comments or sharing insights or personal examples that contribute to class discussions) will count for a total of *10 points* toward the final grade. Attendance & participation will together count for a total of *22 points* toward the final grade.
- ***Preparation:*** Class members are expected to prepare for class by reading all assigned readings prior to each class meeting (see *Course Schedule*). Please bring all readings to class with you so that we can refer to them in class.
- ***Weekly Reflection Papers:*** Each week a one-page reflection paper will be required to help you prepare for class by reflecting on the readings for the coming week and applying insights from them to your own life experience. These are to be handed in at the beginning of class on the date they are due (see *Course Schedule*). *Do not email papers to the instructor. Only hard copies of papers will be accepted.* There are 10 assigned dates for reflection papers, but only 9 of these papers will be counted toward your grade. Students may choose to skip one of these papers at their own discretion (e.g., during the week of their oral presentation) or to drop the lowest grade if they complete all 10. Each paper is worth *2 points*, counting for a total of *18 points* toward the final grade. Reflection Papers will be graded as follows:

2 points = Good Work (evidence of both thoughtful reflection on readings and thoughtful personal application of ideas and insights from readings to one's own life, good quality writing)

1 point = Needs Work (less evidence of scholarly thinking or serious personal reflection, significant problems with sentence structure, grammar, organization & clarity of writing, typos) or *Late*

0 points = Not Handed In

Reflection Papers should follow the following structure:

- They should consist of *three* solid paragraphs (3-5 sentences per paragraph) and should be approximately one, typed, double-spaced page in length (not much more or less).
- In your first paragraph, summarize the central concern or theme of *one* of the required readings, e.g., "The central concern of the author is"
- In your second paragraph, focus in on a particular insight or passage that sparked your interest, e.g., "The idea/passage that most sparked my interest is...." What is it about this idea or passage that struck you? Why? Make sure to correctly identify the author (e.g., Is the passage from the author of the book or is it a quotation from another author?).
- In your final paragraph, make a personal connection between an issue or insight from the reading and your own life experience. Apply the theme or issue to your search for a sense of life direction or purpose. Be specific and personal.

- *Mid-Term Paper:* Consider the “Three Key Questions” that Michael Himes suggests should be examined in the process of vocational discernment and apply them to your own life. (The questions can be found in Ch. 3 of the *Sacred Voice* book). Guidelines:
 - Include a solid introductory paragraph or section that creates a context for your reflections on the 3 questions.
 - You should address both the personal and professional/career implications of the questions for your life (i.e., not only writing about what kind of work you are called to do but about what kind of person you are called to be).
 - You should quote from, or make reference to, *each* of the three main authors *at least once*.
 - This paper should be 4-5 pages long and will count *20 points* toward the final grade.
 - Include a *References* list (author, title, publisher, date of publication) at the end.

- *Oral Presentation:* Each class member is required to do an oral presentation on a topic of his/her choice relevant to calling/vocation during the latter part of the semester. Your oral presentation will count *15 points* towards your final grade. You will be required to hand in a 1 page, typed *Summary/Critique* of your oral presentation the week following your presentation (should include a brief summary of your presentation, what you think went well, & what you think you could have improved). Presentations should be 7-8 minutes in length (not much more or less) and should follow the following structure:
 - Introduce your topic and explain why it is of interest to you.
 - Make reference to, or quote from, at least *two* of the main authors *at least once* during your presentation.
 - Apply the insights to an issue or question related to discernment of your personal calling using specific examples or stories from your own life experience.
 - Make sure to address both the *personal* and *social* dimensions of your topic (i.e., not just personal fulfillment but relevance to the common good, justice, service, etc.).

- *Final Paper:* The final integration paper should be 5-6 double-spaced, typed pages in length (not much more or less) on a topic of your choice that applies insights from class and readings to an issue or question relating to your own calling. The final paper will count *25 points* toward your final grade. *This paper is due on April 30. No late papers will be accepted.* Guidelines for the Final Paper:
 - You may choose to do a more in-depth exploration of a personal issue or question from one of your reflection papers or your oral presentation.
 - You should quote from, or make reference to, *each* of the three main authors (Ellsberg, Wallis, Neafsey) *at least once*.
 - Make sure to address both personal *and* social dimensions of vocation in your final paper.
 - Include a *References* list (author, title, publisher, date of publication) at the end.

- *Office Hours:* I will generally be available each week after class from 10:00 to about 10:30 AM. Feel free to check in with me if there is something you wish to discuss. If you are unable to talk after class, or if you need to reach me at another time, call or email me, and I will do my best to arrange an appointment at a mutually convenient time. All grading issues and feedback on papers must be discussed *in person*, including after the end of the semester.

Do not email papers or leave them anywhere else.

- *Classroom Behavior:* Appropriate & respectful behavior is expected at all times. Behavior that distracts other students or the instructor from the learning process will result, at the minimum, in deduction of participation points.
- *Academic Integrity:* Students are, of course, expected to adhere to the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work. Any findings of dishonest academic behavior will be reported to Chicago Semester administrative staff, and may result in an “F” for the course.

Grading

- Relative percentages of the final grade will be weighted as follows:

<i>Attendance</i>	12 points
<i>Class Participation</i>	10 points (5 pre-MT, 5 post-MT)
<i>Reflection Papers</i> (9 X 2 points each)	18 points
<i>Mid-Term Paper</i>	20 points
<i>Oral Presentation</i>	15 points
<i>Final Paper</i>	<u>25 points</u>
	<i>Total</i> = 100 points

Grading Scale

The final course grade is the letter grade corresponding to the numerical value of all grades received throughout the course, adjusting each for their percentage weight, according to the scale below:

- A*** 92 or higher
- B*** 82-91
- C*** 72-81
- D*** 62-71
- F*** 61 or below

Course Schedule

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic/Readings</i>
Week 1 Feb. 13	Personal Vocation & Social Conscience <i>*Reflection Paper # 1</i> <i>Readings:</i> 1) Neafsey, Preface & Ch. 1 2) Wallis, Ch.1, “The Call” 3) Ellsberg, Preface & Ch. 1, “Learning to Be Alive”
Week 2 Feb. 20	The Voice <i>*Reflection Paper #2</i> <i>Readings:</i> 1) Neafsey, Ch. 2 2) Wallis, Ch. 2, “The Betrayal” 3) Ellsberg, Ch. 2, Learning to Let Go”
Week 3 Feb. 27	Discernment: The Inner Compass of the Heart <i>*Reflection Paper # 3</i> <i>Readings:</i> 1) Neafsey, Ch. 3 2) Wallis, Ch. 3 “The Peril” 3) Ellsberg, Ch. 3, “Learning to Work”
Week 4 March 5	Authenticity: To Live as Though the Truth Were True <i>*Reflection Paper # 4</i> <i>Readings:</i> 1) Neafsey, Ch. 4 2) Wallis, Ch. 4, “The Vision” 3) Ellsberg, Ch. 4, “The Peril”
Week 5 March 12	Passion and Compassion: The Heart’s Calling <i>*Reflection Paper # 5</i> <i>Readings:</i> 1) Neafsey, Ch. 5 2) Ellsberg, Ch. 5, “Learning to Love”
Week 6 March 19	Mid-Term Papers <i>**Mid-Term Paper due</i>

- Week 7**
March 26
Vision: The Quest for a Worthy Dream
***Reflection Paper # 6*
Readings:
1) Neafsey, Ch. 6
2) Wallis, Ch. 5, "The Vision,"
- Week 8**
April 2
Suffering: The Call of the Wounded Healer
***Reflection Paper # 7*
***Oral Presentations (2)*
Readings:
1) Neafsey, Ch. 7
2) Ellsberg, Ch. 6, "Learning to Suffer"
- Week 9**
April 9
Conscience: The Morality of the Heart
***Reflection Paper # 8*
***Oral Presentations (2)*
Readings:
1) Neafsey, Ch. 8
2) Ellsberg, Ch. 7, "Learning to Die"
- Week 10**
April 16
Conclusion: A Still and Quiet Conscience
***Reflection Paper # 9*
***Oral Presentations (2)*
Readings:
1) Neafsey, Ch. 10
2) Wallis, Ch. 6, "The Roots"
3) Ellsberg, "Conclusion"
- Week 11**
April 23
Oral Presentations
***Reflection Paper # 10*
***Oral Presentations (5)*
- Week 12**
April 30
Oral Presentations
Oral Presentations (5)
***Final Paper due*
- Week 13**
May 7
Final Class
Wrap-up