

## SII 330-13: Epic Stories

### Contact Information

Room: Kalmanovitz Hall, K144

Time 4:35 – 6:20pm, Thursday

Instructor: Stephen Pitts, SJ

Office Hours: SII Office Thursdays 3-4pm and by appointment

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### Epic Stories: Finding Heroes in Everyday Life and Spirituality

Often times the stories of others, whether of superheroes who amaze us or famous people who inspire us, leave us wishing for a different life from what we have. Yet Ignatian spirituality invites us to "find God in all things," even in the most mundane moments of our ordinary days or in the ho-hum events of our everyday lives. In this class, we will use inspiring movie clips, poetry, pop music, autobiographies of saints, and more to deepen our sense of mystery, wonder, and gratitude so we can really appreciate how "Epic" our own stories are. (No prior knowledge of Ignatian spirituality required).

### Required Texts (Available in physical or electronic format)

Gallagher, Timothy. *The Examen Prayer: Ignatian Wisdom for Our Lives Today*.

Martin, James, SJ. *My Life with the Saints*.

Tylenda, Joseph. *A Pilgrim's Journey: The Autobiography of Ignatius of Loyola*.

### Course Requirements

1. Attendance
2. Homework (10%)
3. Examen Reflection Journal (20%)
4. Personal Saint (20%)
5. Class Presentation (20%)
6. Spiritual Autobiography (30%)

### Attendance

Students are expected to attend class regularly and to be punctual in arrival. Any absence will result in one-third of a letter grade being deducted from the student's final grade. To avoid the grade penalty, a student must turn in a three-page summary of the readings by the next class. If a personal situation affects a student's ability to participate in class, the student should consult with the professor to make alternate arrangements.

### Homework (10%)

Before the starred classes, students will answer a question about the readings on an online forum. These responses should be about one paragraph and will help the students to begin thinking about the material before the seminar discussion itself. These assignments cannot be made up.

### **Examen Reflection Journal (20%)**

As a first assignment, students will practice the examen prayer for a month and keep a log using the provided template or something equivalent. They will write a two-page reflection paper about the experience. The assignment will be due by **noon on March 4**.

### **Class Presentation (10% x 2 = 20%)**

Students will work in pairs to lead the seminar twice: once for *My Life with the Saints* and the second time for *The Pilgrim's Journey*. Each time, they will provide either a handout or an electronic presentation with the pertinent themes from the chapter and speak for about ten minutes. Then, the students will guide the seminar discussion for another twenty minutes. These presentations will be graded on how effectively the students present the themes and elicit class discussion. After the presentation, the students will meet with the professor in his office hours.

### **Personal Saint (20%)**

As a midterm assignment, students will write a three-page essay about a saint or other historical figure who has influenced them, in the style of one of the chapters of *My Life with the Saints*. This assignment will be due by **noon on April 8**. Students will share their essay in small groups in class.

### **Spiritual Autobiography (30%)**

Students will write a five-page spiritual autobiography in the style of St. Ignatius. On the last day of class, they will present a portion of it. This assignment will be due by **noon on May 12**.

### **In-Class Behavior**

The seminar format of this class requires that we be present—to the text, to each other, and ultimately to ourselves—as we engage in the ancient discipline of the communal search for truth. Cell phone use is prohibited during class. In extraordinary circumstances, students may leave class to take phone calls or return text messages. Tablets and laptops may be used for academic purposes only. Disruptive students may be asked to leave the classroom.

### **Student Writing**

All assignments for the course should be written in standard academic English as described in Kate Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. Mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization will affect grading. All students concerned about their writing ability should contact the Writing Center in Cowell Hall, Room 215 (422-6713). Additional inquiries and training regarding study habits may be directed to the Learning Center (422-6715).

## Class Schedule

### Part I: The Examen Prayer

- Jan 28 Ch 1: "Discovering the Examen." Ch 2: "A Day with Ignatius." Pp 19-53.
- Feb 4 Ch 9-10: "The General/Specific Setting of the Examen." Pp 113-136.
- Feb 11 Ch 3-5: "Gratitude," "Petition," "Review." Pp 54-86.
- Feb 18 Ch 6: "Forgiveness." Pp 75-94.  
Ch 11-12: "Examen and the Courage/Surrender to Love." Pp. 139-156.
- Feb 25 Ch 7: "Renewal." Ch 8: "Flexibility." Pp 95-109.  
Ch 13: "Examen and the Community."  
Ch 14: "Examen and Choices." Pp 159-176.

### Part II: My Life with the Saints

- Mar 3 MLS Ch 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (pp 1-102).  
Introduction, Joan of Arc, Therese of Lisieux, Thomas Merton, Ignatius Loyola
- Mar 10 MLS Ch 6, 7, 8, 9 (pp 103-208).  
Pedro Arrupe, Bernadette Soubirous, Mother Teresa, Pope John XXIII.
- Mar 17 Spring Break (no class)
- Mar 24 Holy Thursday (no class)
- Mar 31 MLS Ch 10, 11, 12, 13 (pp 209-296).  
Dorothy Day, Peter, Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi.
- Apr 7 MLS Ch 14, 15, 16, 17 (pp 297-392).  
Joseph, The Ugandan Martyrs, Aloysius Gonzaga, Mary, Conclusion.

### Part III: A Pilgrim's Journey.

- Apr 14 PJ Introduction – Ch 3 (pp 7-85).  
Introduction, Preface, Pamplona, Loyola, Montserrat, Manresa.
- Apr 21 PJ Ch 4 – 7 (pp 86-135)  
Jerusalem, Cyprus, Genoa, Barcelona, Alcalá, Salamanca.
- Apr 28 PJ Ch 8 – 11 (pp 136-188). Paris, Spain, Venice, Rome.
- May 5 No class. Work on final project.
- May 12 Final Project Presentations