



**NORTH PARK**  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

## **SPFM 5211 Intercultural Spirituality**

North Park Theological Seminary

2026 Fall Semester (August 24 - December 11, 2026)

Class Sessions:

September 15-17, 9 am - 5 pm

1 credit hour, Pass/Fail

### **Instructor Information:**

Juliet Liu, D.Min. in Spiritual Direction

Contact: [jlliu@northpark.edu](mailto:jlliu@northpark.edu)

### **Course Description**

This course invites students to recognize that spirituality is never culturally neutral. Our ways of praying, reading Scripture, worshiping, and relating to God are deeply shaped by our cultural formation. Rather than primarily analyzing “other” cultures, we will begin with awareness of our own formation and practice engaging difference with humility, curiosity, and openness to transformation. Through readings, shared practices, and communal reflection, students will develop tools for intercultural ministry that are both theologically grounded and pastorally sensitive.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of this course students will:

- Have a framework for interpreting cultural expressions of spirituality and identifying the values that shape them
- Recognize and name how their own cultural formation shapes their understanding of God, prayer, Scripture, and worship
- Describe how engaging cultural difference can challenge, deepen, and transform spiritual formation
- Interpret and reflect on corporate worship practices in light of cultural context and Christian spiritual traditions
- Articulate personal and ministerial goals for continued intercultural and spiritual growth

This course contributes toward the learning outcomes for all of North Park Theological Seminary’s Master’s degrees (MDiv, MACM, MACF, MATS), engaging diversity and exhibiting growth towards intercultural competence for ministry reflective of God’s global redemptive work.

### **Course Structure & Flow**

This course is designed as an intensive, participatory learning experience. Class time will emphasize:

- Student-led engagement with readings
- Small group dialogue
- Experiential spiritual practices across traditions

- Guided reflection and integration

## Required Texts

### 1) To Read Before In-Person Class Sessions Begin (approx. 280 pages):

#### Whole Books

- Lanier, Sarah. *Foreign to Familiar: A Guide to Understanding Hot- and Cold-Climate Cultures*. Hagerstown: McDougal Publishing, 2000. (128 pages)
- Lee, Cindy. *Our Unforming: De-Westernizing Spiritual Formation*. Fortress Press, 2022. (154 pages)

#### Reading Excerpts Available in Canvas as PDF files: Select TWO of the following excerpts...

You and an assigned small group will present key learning concepts and offer 2-3 discussion questions to the class for engagement.

- Armas, Kat. *Abuelita Faith: What Women on the Margins Teach Us about Wisdom, Persistence, and Strength*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2021.
  - Chapters 1-4
- Barton, Sarah Jean. *Becoming the Baptized Body: Disability and the Practice of Christian Community*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2022.
  - Chapters 5-7
- Law, Eric. *The Wolf Shall Dwell With the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1993.
  - Introduction, Chapters 1-4
- McCaulley, Esau, Janette H. Ok, Osvaldo Padilla, and Amy Peeler, eds. *The New Testament in Color: A Multiethnic Bible Commentary*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2024.
  - Intro + African American Biblical Interpretation
  - Turtle Island Biblical Interpretation
  - Majority Culture Biblical Interpretation: Reading While White
- Richards, E. Randolph, and O'Brien, Brandon J. *Misreading Scripture With Western Eyes*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013.
  - Introduction
  - Part 1, Chapter 2: The Bible In Color
  - Part 2, Chapter 4: Captain of My Soul—Individualism and Collectivism
  - Conclusion
- Yee, Russell. *Worship On The Way: Exploring Asian North American Christian Experience*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2012.



- Chapters 3-4, 7

**2) Purchase and Have Available for Use in Class** (You do not have to read this before class begins - we will consult it during class sessions)

- Wildman, Terry M. (editor). *First Nations Version: An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2021.

## **Course Requirements & Assignments**

### **1. Reading & Engagement (25 points)**

Students are expected to complete assigned readings as specified above and come prepared to engage. Students will **help lead portions of class discussion** based on reading.

### **2. Participation in Class Sessions (25 points)**

Includes:

- Full attendance (3 hours or more of absence from class will result in failure)
- Active engagement in structured class discussions, practices, small-group conversations, and group spiritual direction sessions
- Students will participate in **two group spiritual direction experiences during class**. These sessions will:
  - Attend to personal and cultural formation
  - Practice listening for God in self and others
  - Model intercultural spiritual attentiveness
- Respectful participation in intercultural dialogue

### **3. Intercultural Worship Engagement + Reflection Paper (25 points)**

Students will participate in a Christian worship service from a tradition or cultural context unfamiliar to them and reflect on the experience as an opportunity for intercultural and spiritual self-awareness.

- The purpose of the assignment is NOT to critique or evaluate another community's worship practices. Rather, students are invited to notice their own *internal responses* as they encounter a different expression of Christian worship.
  - Students should approach the experience with:
    - Curiosity over judgment
    - Awareness over assumption
    - Hospitality over critique
    - Transformation over comparison
  - Students are encouraged to approach unfamiliar practices not as observers evaluating others, but as participants attentive to how God may be present beyond their own cultural norms.



**Reflection:** After attending, write a Reflection Paper on the following questions, integrating reading from this course into your reflection (1000 words or less) – **submit on Canvas, due November 20:**

1. What did you notice in the worship environment, practices, tone, or participation? Utilize the cultural frameworks and tools from assigned reading or class lectures as you share your observations.
2. What felt unfamiliar, surprising, beautiful, confusing, or uncomfortable?
3. What emotions arose in you (comfort, resistance, admiration, anxiety, curiosity, detachment, joy, etc.)?
4. What happened in your body during the experience (ease, tension, energy, withdrawal, openness)?
5. What do your reactions reveal about your own cultural formation, preferences, assumptions, or spiritual habits?
6. Where might God have been inviting you during this experience?
7. What might this encounter teach you about worship, community, hospitality, or ministry?
8. How might this experience shape the way you lead, pastor, or participate in Christian community moving forward?

#### **4. Two Sessions of Individual Spiritual Direction (25 points)**

- Each student will participate in two sessions with a spiritual director.
- The purpose of these sessions is twofold:
  - First, the learnings and challenges of this class are best explored in a safe and sacred place, which spiritual direction provides. Encountering difference, understanding its impact on us, and seeking to expand our frameworks for spirituality can lead to profound questions. Spiritual Direction is an appropriate place in which to explore these things;
  - Second, this course contributes toward the learning outcomes for all of North Park Theological Seminary's Master's degrees (MDiv, MACM, MACF, MATS), all of which place a high value on the spiritual formation of students. Spiritual Direction is recommended as a concrete, ongoing practice for seminary students and those in ministry. This course is an opportunity to encounter that practice.
- Spiritual Direction may have been a requirement for previous formation classes you have taken, or you may already meet with a Spiritual Director; if so, you can use your previous director for the requirements of this course, if they are available.
- You are responsible for contacting your director, scheduling these sessions, and covering payment for them.
- **These sessions must be completed by the last day of the semester, Dec 11<sup>th</sup>.** (Spiritual direction is commonly a monthly meeting. Please keep this in mind when scheduling. To have two sessions completed by the end of the semester, you will need to schedule them ahead of time).
- If you do not have a spiritual director, you can find a list of possible directors by contacting Emily Wagner at [eawagner@northpark.edu](mailto:eawagner@northpark.edu) for referrals.

#### **Grading Scale**



This course is pass/fail. Each of the above “course assignments” is worth 25 points, for a total of 100 points. 75 points is required to pass.

### **Additional Course Guidelines**

- All students are expected to come prepared for active, informed participation.
- Attendance: 3 hours or more of absence from class will result in failure.

### **Academic Honesty**

In keeping with our Christian heritage and commitment, North Park University is committed to the highest possible ethical and moral standards. Just as we will constantly strive to live up to these high standards, we expect our students to do the same. To that end, cheating of any sort will not be tolerated. Students who are discovered cheating will receive a failing grade on the assignment and are subject to discipline up to and including failure of a course and expulsion. Our definition of cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Plagiarism – the use of another’s work as one’s own without giving credit to the individual. This includes using materials from the internet.
2. Copying another’s answers on an examination.
3. Deliberately allowing another to copy one’s answers or work.
4. Signing an attendance roster for another who is not present.
5. Use of ChatGPT or other AI composition software to impersonate individual assignments.

For additional information, see the Seminary Academic Catalog.

### **Accommodations**

Your experience in this class is important to me. North Park is committed to creating inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already established your accommodations, please share your accommodation letter with me so we can discuss how your accommodations will be implemented in this course. If you have not yet established services and have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations, please email the Disability Access Specialist or contact by phone (773-244-5737). Student Engagement facilitates the interactive process that establishes reasonable accommodations.

### **TITLE IX & EQUITY**

In accordance with Title IX and Equity policies, North Park employees who become aware of any incident of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on sex, gender—including pregnancy or related medical conditions—and other protected classes are required by policy to notify North Park University's Title IX & Equity Team by submitting a report [here](#). The Title IX coordinator will respond and manage concerns about students. The senior director of Human Resources will respond to and manage concerns about employees. You can obtain more information at the [Title IX](#) and [Equal Opportunity](#) web pages.

### **INCOMPLETE GRADES**

If, due to extenuating circumstances (specifically, pregnancy, illness, personal and family issues, military assignment, etc.), a student anticipates they will be unable to complete course work



within the allotted time, that student may request a grade of incomplete from the course instructor before the last week of class clearly stating the reason(s) for this request. Overscheduling and/or lack of self-discipline are not considered extenuating circumstances. If the request is timely and meets the criteria, student and instructor will submit the incomplete grade form and the grade for that class will be listed as “I” until the last day of the following semester. If coursework is not submitted by the last day of the following semester the listing of “I” will automatically be changed to “F.” For the full policy, see the Seminary Academic Catalog.

### **Course Schedule & Session Overview**

This course is structured as an intensive, participatory learning experience. Class sessions will include teaching, student-led engagement with readings, small group dialogue, spiritual practices, and guided reflection.

| <b>Date</b>                         | <b>Session Overview + Assignments</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Monday, August 24: Semester Begins  | <p><b>Begin Assigned Readings</b> (See “Required Texts” Section Above)</p> <p><b>Begin Exploring Spiritual Directors</b> and scheduling your two required sessions for the semester</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Tuesday, Sept 15, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | <p><b>Required Reading Due Today (Fill Out Completion Quiz on Canvas)</b></p> <p>9:00 Opening Contemplative Practice<br/>9:30 Lecture / Discussion: <i>Introduction and Key Course Themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Course description, objectives, structure</li><li>• Discussion guidelines</li><li>• Introductions: Why did you sign up? What location are you speaking from?</li><li>• Working definition of spirituality</li><li>• Simon Chan's vestigia Dei concept</li><li>• Intercultural spirituality: encounter with difference as spiritual formation</li><li>• What History Teaches Us Today about the Need for Intercultural Spirituality</li></ul> <p>10:30 Break<br/>10:45 Lecture / Discussion: <i>continued</i><br/>12:00 Lunch<br/>1:00 Lectio Divina Meditation on First Nations Passage (Individual)</p> |



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|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                       | <p>1:30 Intercultural Competency Scales of Growth: Lecture / Personal Reflection Handout / Discussion</p> <p>3:00 Break</p> <p>3:15 Group Spiritual Direction Circles</p> <p>4:30 Re-Gather for Closing Reflections</p> <p>5:00 Class Dismissed</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Wednesday, Sept 16, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM | <p>9:00 Opening Contemplative Practice</p> <p>9:30 Lecture / Discussion: Cindy Lee's book, <i>Our Unforming</i></p> <p>10:30 Break</p> <p>10:45 Lecture / Discussion: Sarah Lanier's book, <i>Foreign to Familiar</i></p> <p>12:00 Lunch</p> <p>1:00 Lectio Divina Meditation on First Nations Passage (Group)</p> <p>1:30 Guided Personal Reflection on Lee and Lanier's books (Handouts for Reflection Provided)</p> <p>2:00 Small Group Sharing</p> <p>2:30 Break</p> <p>2:45 Break into Working Groups for Group Presentations</p> <p>4:45 Regather</p> <p>5:00 Class Dismissed</p>                                                                                                                      |
| Thursday, Sept 17, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM  | <p>9:00 Opening Contemplative Practice</p> <p>9:30 Group Presentations (3)</p> <p>10:30 Break</p> <p>10:45 Group Presentations Continued (3)</p> <p>11:45 Class Reflection: What has emerged across these presentations?</p> <p>12:00 Lunch</p> <p>1:00 Group Spiritual Direction Circles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lectio Divina on First Nations passage</li><li>• Listening Circles</li><li>• Reflection/Journaling</li></ul> <p>3:00 Break</p> <p>3:15 Closing Class Session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Integrating This Awareness Into Ministry</li><li>• Intercultural Engagement Project</li><li>• Other Course Requirements</li></ul> <p>5:00 Class Dismissed</p> |



|                     |                                                                                 |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friday, November 20 | <b>Intercultural Engagement Project<br/>Reflection Paper Due on Canvas</b>      |
| Friday, December 11 | <b>Spiritual Direction Sessions Due: Fill Out<br/>Completion Quiz on Canvas</b> |

**Note on Student Participation**

Students are expected to:

- Actively engage in class discussions and experiential practices
- Contribute to a learning environment marked by curiosity, humility, and respect
- Participate fully in small group and spiritual direction experiences
- Come prepared to present and lead discussion when assigned