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Course ID:	Course Title:	Winter 2020
CS 661-1	Exploring the 'Desert/Wilderness' Experience in Christian Spirituality	Prerequisite: N/A
		Credits: 3

MODULE FORMAT CLASS

Class Information		Instructor Information		Important Dates
Days:	Tues. Feb. 18-Sat. Feb. 22/20	Instructor:	Charles Nienkirchen, PhD	First day of classes: Tues. Feb. 18/20
Time:	9:00 am -4:00 pm	Email:	cnienkirchen@ambrose.edu	Last day to add/drop, or change to audit: 4 pm, Tues. Feb. 18/20
Room:	A2131	Phone:	403-410-2000 ext. 5905	Last day to request revised exam: n/a
Lab/Tutorial:	n/a	Office:	L2064	Last day to withdraw from course: 3 pm, Fri. Feb. 21/20
Office Hours:	By appointment	Office Hours:	By appointment	Last day to apply for coursework extension: Mon. Mar. 30/20
Final Exam:	n/a			Last day of classes: Sat. Feb. 22/20

Course Description:

The course seeks to examine the theme of the 'desert/wilderness' experience in various traditions of Christian spirituality. An integrated biblical/historical/theological/formatational approach to the subject will be adopted with a view to helping the student to understand the nature and purpose of the 'desert/wilderness' experience in the spiritual life of the church and the individual. As a special feature the course will also include a one-day, guided retreat at the FCJ Centre. (Class limit – 20 persons)

When we find ourselves on a desert journey who better to turn to for guidance than the ancient disciples of the desert who have physically and/or spiritually entered into these barren areas, only to emerge with wisdom to share. They learned to live more simply, gratefully and completely. So too can we. With their guidance we can be released from unnecessary worries and tendencies to travel down fruitless paths.

We know them today as the fourth-century *abbas* and *ammās*. They were people who drew inspiration from Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, and Jesus, the desert dwellers who lived before them. These prophetic figures knew much about what lies at the core of life. *Abbas* and *ammās* were true spiritual apprentices who appreciated the need to let go of whatever may be squeezing the air out of life either spiritually or psychologically. They were also able to welcome that which would replenish one's soul and foster inner freedom...

The Desert Fathers and Mothers emerged at a time when Christianity was in danger of losing its prophetic character.

Robert J. Wicks, *Crossing the Desert*. (2007): 23-24, 25.

Learning Outcomes:

It is the aim of the course that the student acquires the following:

1. an exposure to the prominence of the 'desert/wilderness' theme in the Old and New Testaments;
2. an historical/theological understanding of the major themes of 'desert/wilderness' spirituality from the third to the mid-fifth centuries;
3. an inspiration to develop a deeper appreciation for the formational value of certain spiritual disciplines which derive from the desert tradition;
4. guidance in the interpretation of and response to 'desert' experiences in the student's life journey.

Textbooks:

Stephen Cherry, *The Dark Side of the Soul*. (Bloomsbury/2016)

Laura Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers*. (Paulist/2001)

Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, *The Gift of Peace*. (Image/1998)

Joan Chittister, *In God's Holy Light*. (Franciscan Media/2015)

Course Schedule:

Note: No electronic recording devices of any kind are to be used in the classroom without professorial consent. Failure to comply could result in expulsion from the course.

Day 1 - Surveying the Biblical Desert Landscapes

Day 2 - Surveying the Biblical Desert Landscapes cont'd/The Rise of the 'Desert Movement' in the Early Church

Day 3 - Wilderness Time at the FCJ Centre (retreat schedule to be distributed)

Day 4 - The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers/Silence and Solitude as a Call to the Desert Place

Day 5 - The Experience of 'Darkness' as Desert/The Potential of the 'Desert' for Spiritual Growth

Requirements:

1. a **review/response paper** (6-8 pages) based on Stephen Cherry, *The Dark Side of the Soul*, which incorporates the following:
 - a. an identification of the book's thesis and an explanation of its relationship to the title/subtitle (3/4 page-5 marks);
 - b. a discussion of the development of the book's thesis (2-3 pages-10 marks);
 - c. an identification of 4 points of contact between the book's contents and the student's own life journey (2-2 1/2 pages-8 marks);

- d. a critical assessment of the strengths (3) weaknesses (2) and overall value of the book (2-2 ½ pages-7 marks). Be specific and show your mastery of the book's content.

The title of the assignment should be: ***A Review/Response: The Dark Side of the Soul***

(30 % of the final grade)

- 2. **a review/response paper** (6-8 pages) based on Laura Swan, *The Forgotten Desert Mothers*, which incorporates the following:
 - a. an identification of the book's thesis and an explanation of its relationship to the title/subtitle (3/4 page-5 marks);
 - b. a discussion of the development of the book's thesis (2-3 pages-10 marks);
 - c. an assessment of the book's strengths (3) and weaknesses (2) (2-3 pages-10 marks). Support your arguments with specific references to the book! Show your mastery of the book's contents!
 - d. An identification of 5 key issues raised by the book which require further study/analysis. Be specific! Think both within and beyond the book. (2 pages-5 marks)

The title of the assignment should be: ***A Review/Response: The Forgotten Desert Mothers***

(30% of the final grade)

- 3. **an autobiographical essay** (6-8 pages) using Joseph Bernardin, *The Gift of Peace*, as a prompter, on a personal desert experience which does the following:
 - a. describes the circumstances whereby the experience entered your life (5 marks);
 - b. explains how the experience progressed/intensified in your life (5 marks);
 - c. reflects on the self-knowledge gained as a result of the experience (5 marks);
 - d. reflects on how both your knowledge of God and your life journey were affected by the experience (5 marks).

(To be eligible for an 'A' range grade your essay must make significant and specific references to the relevance of Bernardin for understanding your 'desert experience' in each of the sections.)

The title of the assignment should be : ***An Autobiographical Essay***

(20% of the final grade)

- 4. **a reading report** on 4 scholarly, peer-reviewed articles of the student's choice on the subject of desert spirituality which includes the following:
 - a. a full bibliographical citation and a summary of the thesis of each article (1 mark);
 - b. a brief discussion of the main themes developed in each article (2 marks);
 - c. an identification of 3 issues/subjects related to the content of the article which require further research/study on your part (2 marks).

Note : Each article can be reviewed in approximately 1 1/2 -2 pages. **If you have any doubt about whether or not the article qualifies as a peer reviewed article check with the professor so as not to run the risk of the article being disqualified for evaluation.**

The title of the assignment should be: **A Reading Report: Scholarly Articles**

(20% of the final grade)

The due date for all assignments is Tues. April 7th/20.

- a. All assignments must be completed and turned in to be eligible to pass the course.
- b. Any late assignment which has not been professorially approved on the basis of extenuating circumstances will be given the highest possible failing grade.
- c. Any student who is absent more than one day from the course without professorial approval on the basis of extenuating circumstances will not be eligible to pass the course.
- d. All assignments must be submitted in hard copy to Reception, the professor's office or faculty mailbox. Do not submit electronic copies of assignments.

Attendance:

Any student who is absent more than one day from class for reasons unapproved by the professor will not be eligible to pass the course. .

Grade Summary:

The available letters for course grades are as follows:

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>	
A+		96-100
A	Excellent	91-95
A-		86-90
B+		82-85
B	Good	75-81
B-		72-74
C+		68-71
C	Satisfactory	63-67
C-		60-62
D+		56-59
D	Minimal Pass	50-55
F	Failure	<50

Please note that final grades will be available on student registration system. Printed grade sheets are not mailed out.

Selected Bibliography:

Abbey, Edward. *Desert Solitaire*. (1968).

Auson, Peter F. *The Call of the Desert*. (1973).

Beisner, Calvin E. *Where Garden Meets Wilderness: Evangelical Entry into the Environmental Debate*. (1997).

Belisle, Peter-Damian. *The Language of Silence: The Changing Face of Monastic Solitude*. (2003).

Bill, J. Brent. *Holy Silence: The Gift of Quaker Spirituality*. (2005).

Bonacci, Richard. 'Blurring the Boundaries: Paradox in the Spirituality of the Desert Mothers and Fathers.' *Presence*, 23 no. 4 (Dec. 2017): 31-39

Bratton, Susan Power. *Christianity, Wilderness and Wildlife*. (1993).

Burton-Christie, Douglas. *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism*. (1993).

_____. *The Place of the Heart: Geography and Spirituality in the Life of Antony*. (1999).

_____. 'Vision Becoming Joy: The Desert in History and Imagination.' *American Benedictine Review*, 58 no. 2 (June 2001): 172-81

Cain, Susan. *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking*. (2012).

Chitty, Derwas. *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire*. (1995).

Chryssavgis, John. 'Fire and Light in the Egyptian Desert: Aspects of Desert Spirituality.' *Cistercian Studies Quarterly*, 34 no. 4 (1999): 455-67

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Coats, George W. *Rebellion in the Wilderness: The Murmuring Motifs in the Wilderness Traditions of the Old Testament*. (1968).

Cody, Aelred. 'What the Desert Meant in Ancient Israel.' *Studia Missionalia*, 28 (1979): 29-42

Davies, Graham I. *The Way of the Wilderness*. (1979).

_____. 'The Wilderness Itineraries and Recent Archaeological Research.' *Vetus Testamentum Supplement*, 41 (1990): 161-75

Dent, Barbara. *The Cleansing of the Heart*. (1973).

_____. *My Only Friend is Darkness: Living the Night of Faith*. (1988).

Doherty, Catherine de Hueck. *Molchanie: The Silence of God*. (1982).

Dozeman, Thomas B. 'The Wilderness and Salvation History in the Hagar Story.' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 117 (Spring 1998): 23-43

Farag, Lois. *Balance of the Heart: Desert Spirituality for Twenty-First-Century Christians*. (2012).

Funk, Robert. 'The Wilderness.' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 78 (September 1959): 205-14

Gannon, Thomas M.; Traub, George W. *The Desert and the City: An Interpretation of the History of Christian Spirituality*. (1984).

Gibson, Jeffrey B. 'Jesus' Wilderness Temptation according to Mark.' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 53 (March 1994): 3-34

Harel, Menashe. 'Desert Landscapes in Isaiah.' *Interpretation*, 17 no. 3 (July 1963): 319-23

Harmless, William. *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of the Early Monasticism*. (2004).

Jones, W. Paul. 'In Wait for My Life: Aging and Desert Spirituality.' *Journal of Religious Gerontology*, 12 no. 2 (2001): 99-108

Kelly, Henry Ansgar. 'The Devil in the Desert.' *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 26 no.2 (April 1964): 190-220

Killigrew, Anna. 'Desert Spirituality.' *Presence*, 19, no. 1 (Mar. 2013): 56-62

Kwon, Hyeokil, 'Is Desert Spirituality Viable in the Twenty-First- Century City? The Legacy of the Desert Fathers in Thomas Merton.' *The Merton Annual*, 25 (2012): 144-53

Kraft, William F. *Ways of the Desert: Becoming Holy Through Difficult Times*. (2000).

Lane, Belden C. 'Desert Attentiveness, Desert Indifference: Countercultural Spirituality in the Desert Fathers and Mothers.' *Cross Currents*, 44 no. 2 (Summer 1994): 193-206).

_____. *The Solace of Fierce Landscapes: Exploring Desert and Mountain Spirituality*. (2007).

- _____. *Backpacking with the Saints: Wilderness Hiking as Spiritual Practice.* (2015).
- _____. *Desert Spirituality and Cultural Resistance: From Ancient Monks to Mountain Refugees.* (2018).
- _____. *The Great Conversation: Nature and the Care of the Soul.* (2019)
- Leal, Robert Barry. *Wilderness in the Bible: Toward a Theology of Wilderness.* (2004).
- Lemeni, Daniel. 'Shining Face and White Body: Holy Flesh and Holiness in the Spirituality of the Desert,' *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, 7 no. 4 (2016): 382-53
- Louth, Andrew. *The Wilderness of God.* (1991).
- MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Silence: A Christian History.* (2013).
- Mackay, Frances. *The Idea of Wilderness in the New Testament.* (1993).
- Markides, Kyriakos. *Gifts of the Desert: The Forgotten Path of Christian Spirituality.* (2005).
- Mauser, Ulrich W. *Christ in the Wilderness: The Wilderness Theme in the Second Gospel and its Basis in the Biblical Tradition.* (1963).
- Miller, David M. 'Seeing the Glory, Hearing the Son: The Function of the Wilderness Theophany Narratives in Luke 9: 28-36.' *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 72 no. 3 (July 2010): 498-517.
- May, Gerald G. *The Wisdom of Wilderness: Experiencing the Healing Power of Nature.* (2007).
- _____. *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth.* (2005).
- Mayers, Gregory. *Listen to the Desert: Secrets of Spiritual Maturity from the Desert Fathers and Mothers.* (2014).
- Moore, Christopher C. *Solitude: A Neglected Path to God.* (2001).
- Moses, John. *The Desert: An Anthology for Lent.* (1977).
- Nouwen, Henri. *The Way of the Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry.* (1981).
- Oochs, Carol. 'The Presence in the Desert.' *Cross Currents*, 43 (Fall 1993): 293-306
- Oropeza, B.J. 'Apostasy in the Wilderness: Paul's Message to the Corinthians in a State of Eschatological Liminality.' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament.* 75 (September 1999): 69-86

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Pettipiece, Timothy. 'Eremos: The Desert as a Space of Transfiguration in Early Christian Spirituality.' *Diakonia*, 35 no. 2 (2002): 113-26

Plummer, Robert L. 'Are the Disciplines of 'Silence' and 'Solitude' Really Biblical?' *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care*, 2 no. 1 (Spring 2009): 101-12

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Stegner, William Richard. 'Wilderness and Testing in the Scrolls and in Matthew 4: 1-11.' *Biblical Research*, 12 (1967): 18-27

Romer, Thomas. 'Israel's Sojourn in the Wilderness and the Construction of the Book of Numbers.' in *Reflection and Refraction: Studies in Biblical Historiography in Honour of A. Graeme Auld* (2006): 419-45

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Schwartz, Joshua. 'John the Baptist, the Wilderness and the Samaritan Mission.' in *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography: Presented to Zecharia Kallai* (2000): 104-17

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Zecher, Jonathan. 'The Angelic Life in Desert and Ladder: John Climacus' Reformulation of Ascetic Spirituality.' *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 21 no. 1 (Spring 2013): 111-36

Ambrose University Academic Policies:

Communication

All students have received an Ambrose e-mail account upon registration. It is the student's responsibility to check this account regularly as the Ambrose email system will be the professor's instrument for notifying students of important matters (cancelled class sessions, extensions, requested appointments, etc.) between class sessions. If students do not wish to use their Ambrose

accounts, they will need to forward all messages from the Ambrose account to another personal account.

Registration

During the **Registration Revision Period** students may enter a course without permission, change the designation of any class from credit to audit and /or voluntary withdraw from a course without financial

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or academic penalty or record. Courses should be added or dropped on the student portal by the deadline date; please consult the List of Important Dates. After that date, the original status remains and the student is responsible for related fees.

Students intending to withdraw from a course after the Registration Revision Period must apply to the Office of the Registrar by submitting a "Request to Withdraw from a Course" form or by sending an email to the Registrar's Office by the **Withdrawal Deadline**; please consult the List of Important Dates on the my.ambrose.edu website. Students will not receive a tuition refund for courses from which they withdraw after the Registration Revision period. A grade of "W" will appear on their transcript.

Students wishing to withdraw from a course, but who fail to do so by the applicable date, will receive the grade earned in accordance with the course syllabus. A student obliged to withdraw from a course after the Withdrawal Deadline because of health or other reasons may apply to the Registrar for special consideration.

Exam Scheduling

Students, who find a conflict in their exam schedule must submit a Revised Examination Request form to the Registrar's Office by the deadline date; please consult the List of Important Dates. Requests will be considered for the following reasons only: 1) the scheduled final examination slot conflicts with another exam; 2) the student has three final exams within three consecutive exam time blocks; 3) the scheduled final exam slot conflicts with an exam at another institution; 4) extenuating circumstances. Travel is not considered a valid excuse for re-scheduling or missing a final exam.

Electronic Etiquette

Students are expected to treat their instructor, guest speakers, and fellow students with respect. It is disruptive to the learning goals of a course or seminar and disrespectful to fellow students and the instructor to use electronics for purposes unrelated to the course during a class session. Turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices during class. Laptops should be used for class-related purposes only. Do not use iPods, MP3 players, or headphones. Do not text, read, or send personal emails, go on Facebook or other social networks, search the internet, or play computer games during class. Some professors will not allow the use of any electronic devices in class. The professor has the right to disallow the student to use a laptop in future lectures and/or to ask a student to withdraw from the session if s/he does not comply with this policy. Repeat offenders will be directed to the Dean. If you are expecting communication due to an emergency, please speak with the professor before the class begins.

Academic Policies

It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with and adhere to academic policies as stated in the Academic Calendar. Personal information (information about an individual that may be used to identify that individual) may be required as part of taking this class. Any information collected will only be used and disclosed for the purpose for which the collection was intended. For further information contact the Privacy Compliance Officer at privacy@ambrose.edu.

Extensions

Although extensions to coursework in the semester are at the discretion of the instructor, students may not turn in coursework for evaluation after the last day of the scheduled final examination period unless they have received permission for a course Extension from the Registrar's Office. Requests for course extensions or alternative examination time must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by the deadline date; please consult the List of Important Dates. Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise "due to circumstances beyond the student's control."

Appeal of Grade

An appeal for change of grade on any course work must be made to the course instructor within one week of receiving notification of the grade. An appeal for change of final grade must be submitted to the Registrar's Office in writing and providing the basis for appeal within 30 days of receiving notification of the final grade, providing the basis for appeal. A review fee of \$50.00 must accompany the appeal. If the appeal is sustained, the fee will be refunded.

Academic Integrity

We are committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. Academic dishonesty is taken seriously at Ambrose University as it undermines our academic standards and affects the integrity of each member of our learning community. Any attempt to obtain credit for academic work through fraudulent, deceptive, or dishonest means is academic dishonesty. Plagiarism involves presenting someone else's ideas, words, or work as one's own. Plagiarism is fraud and theft, but plagiarism can also occur by accident when a student fails or forgets to acknowledge to another person's ideas or words. Plagiarism and cheating can result in a failing grade for an assignment, for the course, or immediate dismissal from the university college. Students are expected to be familiar with the policies in the current Academic Calendar that deal with plagiarism, cheating, and the penalties and procedures for dealing with these matters. All cases of academic dishonesty are reported to the Academic Dean and become part of the student's permanent record.

Note: Students are strongly advised to retain this syllabus for their records.