



**PT/CH/TH 645 EXPLORING THE 'DREAM EXPERIENCE'  
IN CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY (3)**

**Fall 2006**

**Instructor:** Charles Nienkirchen, Ph.D.                      **Office Phone:** (403) 571-2550 Ext 5905  
**Email:** [cnienkirchen@auc-nuc.ca](mailto:cnienkirchen@auc-nuc.ca)                      **Office:** 5<sup>th</sup> floor / Room 537  
**Office Hours:** W/ 9:00a.m.-12 noon                      **Room:** TBA  
or by appointment

**Class Times:** Thurs Sept 28 6:30-10:00 p.m.  
Fri Sept 29 6:30-10:00 p.m.  
Sat Sept 30 9:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.  
Thurs Oct 12 6:30-10:00 p.m.  
Fri Oct 13 6:30-10:00 p.m.  
Sat Oct 14 9:00 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

**I Course Description**

The course will survey the significance and understanding of the dream experience in both eastern and western Christian traditions. Special attention will be given to the role of the dream in the spiritual journeys of prominent Christians, the dream and the death experience, as well as to developing a Christian approach to dream interpretation. Students will gain from the course an historical / theological appreciation for the value of the dream within a Christian worldview as well as a sense of how to integrate dream interpretation with an understanding of one's own spiritual journey.

(Class limit - 20 persons)

**II Course Objectives**

- To help the student appreciate the nature / significance of the dream experience in biblical literature;
- To expose the student to various historical perspectives on the dream experience within eastern and western Christian traditions;
- To investigate the role and significance of the dream experience in the lives of individuals from diverse Christian traditions and time periods;
- To help the student determine the relevance of and guidelines for integrating the dream experience with his/her own spiritual journey.

**III Textbooks**

Robert L. Van de Castle, Our Dreaming Mind (1994)  
Russ Parker, Healing Dreams (1993)  
Patricia Garfield, The Universal Dream Key (2001)  
Course Handouts

#### **IV Course Schedule**

**Session 1** Thursday, September 28 / 6:30-10:00 p.m.

A Personal Odyssey in Dreaming / Dreaming and the Scriptures  
Video - Jacob's Dream  
The 'Sin' of Dream Interpretation

**Session 2** Friday, September 29 / 6:30-10:00 p.m.

Dreams and the Scriptures (OT)  
Dreams and the Scriptures (NT)

**Session 3** Saturday, September 30 / 9:00 a.m.- 12 noon

Dreams in the Eastern Christian Tradition

**Session 4** Saturday, September 30 / 1:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Dreams and the Western Christian Tradition  
Video - The Power of Dreams: The Creative Spark

**Session 5** Thursday, October 12 / 6:30-10:00 p.m.

Dream Vignettes of Prominent Christians  
Video - Sigmund Freud: The Interpretation of Dreams

**Session 6** Friday, October 13 / 6:30 - 10:00 p.m.

Dreams / Visions and the Death Experience  
Video - Tom Harpur: Dreams of the Dying

**Session 7** Saturday, October 14 / 9:00 a.m. - 12 noon

Dreams and the Spiritual Journey  
Explanation of Assignments

**Session 8** Saturday, October 14 / 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Dreams and Spiritual Direction  
The Journey of Journeys

#### **V Course Requirements**

**A.** A **dreamography** (10 pages), the structure/content of which will be discussed in class  
OR

A **research paper** (10 pages) on some dimension of 'Christian dreaming' (subject to be chosen in consultation with the professor with respect for the student's disciplinary interests). The paper should follow an acceptable scholarly format.

- B.** A **review/response paper** (6-8 pages) on Parker, Healing Dreams which includes the following:
1. A summary of the thesis of the book and its relationship to the title/subtitle (5 marks);
  2. An identification of the critical issues raised by the book with respect to a 'Christian' view of dreaming. Think 'within' and 'beyond' the book (10 marks);
  3. A discussion of the strengths / weaknesses of the book (8 marks);
  4. A reflection on the theological / experimental value of the book (4 marks);
  5. A mention of those specific aspects of the dreaming experience prompted by the book which require further study / consideration on your part (3 marks).
- C.** A **review/response paper** (6-8 pages) on Garfield, The Universal Dream Key which includes the following:
1. A summary of the thesis of the book and its relationship to the title/subtitle (5 marks);
  2. An in-depth discussion of the development of the thesis (10 marks);
  3. An identification of the strengths / weaknesses of the book (8 marks);
  4. A reflection on the significance of the book for a 'Christian worldview' (4 marks);
  5. A mention of those specific aspects of the dream experience prompted by the book which require further study / consideration on your part (3 marks).

OR

A **reading report** (6-8 pages) based on Our Dreaming Mind which answers the following questions:

Chapter 2 / "Dreams That Have Changed the World"

1. Identify those areas of human activity (with examples) which have been influenced profoundly by the dream experience (4 marks);
2. How would you evaluate the formative dream experiences of non-Christian religious traditions? (4 marks)
3. What is your personal response to the content of this chapter? (2 marks)

Chapter 10 / 'Contemporary Dream Research'

1. Summarize the various dimensions of the dream experience which have occupied the attention of contemporary dream scientists (4 marks);
2. What implications would the findings of dream scientists have for a 'Christian' view / evaluation of the dream experience? (4 marks)
3. What is your personal response to the content of this chapter? (2 marks)

### Chapter 12 / 'Dreams Throughout the Life Span'

1. Explain how various dimensions of the 'human journey' affect the dream experience. Refer also to Chapters 13 & 14 for pertinent material (4 marks)
2. Identify the distinguishing characteristics of a 'night terror' or 'nightmare'. In your opinion (give reasons), is the differentiation of 'night terrors / nightmares' from other forms of the dream experience supportable? (4 marks)
3. What is your personal response to the content of this chapter. (2 marks)

## VI Grading

Dreamography or research paper	-	40%
(Research paper will be evaluated on the basis of the clear definition and development of subject, quality of research, and the ability to draw conclusions regarding a Christian view of dreaming / structure and content of dreamography to be discussed in class)		
Book Review / Response Paper #1	-	30%
Book Review / Response Paper #2		
OR	-	30%
Reading Report on <u>Our Dreaming Mind</u>		

**DUE DATE (for all assignments): TBA**

**NOTE: No student who is absent for more than one session of the course is eligible to receive a passing grade for the course.**

### Grading Schedule

<u>Letter Grade</u>	<u>Description</u>
A+	
A	Excellent
A-	
B+	
B	Good
B-	
C+	
C	Satisfactory
C-	
D+	
D	Minimal Pass
F	Failure

### Important Notes:

- A. All late assignments which have not received an officially approved extension by December 20/2006 will be granted the highest possible failing grade. Extensions will be considered only in cases such as a death in the family, the hospitalization of yourself or a member of

**your immediate family, or a prolonged illness for which you required treatment by a physician. All requests for extensions must be received in writing at least seven days prior to the due date. Factors such as assignments for other courses, computer software difficulties, or computer printer malfunctions are not sufficient grounds for requesting an extension. If an extension has been granted it is your responsibility when submitting the paper to attach a note indicating the date to which the extension was granted and the date on which the paper is actually submitted. Retain for yourself a copy (software or hard copy) of each paper.**

- B. The title page of **ALL** assignments should include the course name and number, the professor's name, the student's name, student ID number and mailbox number. This is imperative!
- C. **No assignments will be received by electronic transmission.**
- D. Minimum standards of writing will be observed in all type-written essay assignments.

### **Additional Information**

It is the responsibility of all students to become familiar with and adhere to academic policies as are stated in the Student Handbook and Academic Calendar.

Personal information, that is information about an individual that may be used to identify that individual, may be collected as a requirement 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@auc-nuc.ca](mailto:privacy@auc-nuc.ca).

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". Alternative times for final examinations cannot be scheduled without prior approval. Requests for course extensions or alternative examination times must be submitted to the Registrar's Office by the appropriate deadline. Course extensions are only granted for serious issues that arise "due to circumstances beyond the student's control".

We are committed to fostering personal integrity and will not overlook breaches of integrity such as plagiarism and cheating. 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 and the Student Handbook 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.

Students are advised to retain this syllabus for their records.