



# **School of Mercy and Justice**

## **Student Syllabus (2021-2022)**

# Requirements: Vision

## Overview

- Attendance (5 modules)
  - **Readings (7 books)**
  - Activities (4)
  - Receiving Spiritual Direction (6 sessions)
  - Practicing Spiritual Disciplines (8)
  - Written Reflections (4)
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## Readings

- Every reading list says something about whose voices and perspectives are worth listening to. Our list is always a work in progress, though there is a concerted attempt to learn voices that have typically been ignored or marginalized.
- This year, of the six required books, four are by women and one is by an African-American author.
- Aside from the six books outlined below, you will read an additional book of your choice (approved by your teacher) by a BIPOC (black, Indigenous, and people colour) author on race, racial oppression, white supremacy, etc. It is helpful to have this book read in preparation for module three.
  - This requirement encourages you to:
    - Become more aware of how racism affects black and indigenous people, and people of colour;
    - Acknowledge you own experience relative to black and indigenous people, and people of colour, and gain awareness of how you have been shaped by systemic racism;
    - Work to dismantle your own racist attitudes and practices;
    - Engage in the work of transforming relationships, values, systems, structures, and policies which perpetuate racism;
- For a selection of possible books:  
<http://www.philippelazaro.com/new-blog/antiracismflowcharts>

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## Activities

- We are not solely or even primarily thinking beings.
- Much of what actually forms us is based on what we do with our bodies - the repetitive, physical “liturgies” that shape our desires and perspectives of life.
- As such, the school includes four required activities in the hope that as you do and participate in them, they will be formative in deep and meaningful ways.
- All the activities invite you to participate in some kind of action or practice and notice what you experience in your thoughts, feelings, and body as you engage the activity.

## Receiving Spiritual Direction

- You agree to receive direction for the duration of the training.
- Allowing a compassionate and spiritually discerning person to companion you as you reflect on your life encourages you to rest from doing and be reflective; to notice, savour, and respond to the presence, communication, and activity of God.
- This is especially important in mercy and justice work, where needs and issues always seem urgent, ubiquitous, and inexhaustible.
- If you need help finding a director, your teacher can assist you.

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## Practicing Spiritual Disciplines

- Coinciding with selected chapters from *Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton, you will engage in two spiritual disciplines between modules.
- Each of the disciplines are well-worn contemplative Christian practices that have stood the test of time; people from spiritual novices to masters have found them helpful in deepening awareness of God's presence, communication, and activity.
- The goal is not only exposure to and personal familiarity with the practices for the sake of fulfilling school requirements, but to habituate you in spiritual disciplines that will sustain you as you pursue a life of mercy and justice for the long haul.

## Written Reflections

- In tandem with respective modules, written reflections encourage you to take time to process and document what you have been learning and experiencing.
- The reflections also give your teacher a chance to engage with you one on one - to "hear" you in more personal ways and to respond via comments.
- At least a week prior to each module (beginning with module two), you will upload your written reflections to Box. The reflections include at least a paragraph each on:
  - The current circumstances of your life and spiritual journey.
  - Your experience of readings, activities, receiving spiritual direction, and practicing spiritual disciplines.
  - Any question(s) you would like to discuss in the upcoming module.

## Overview

- Module books, spiritual disciplines, and activities
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### Module One: The Story of Our Life

- *Pilgrimage of a Soul: Contemplative Spirituality for the Active Life* (Phileena Heuertz)
- *Sacred Rhythms: Introduction and Chapter 1* (Ruth Haley Barton)

### Module Two: Compassion and Grief

- *Dark Clouds, Deep Mercy: Discovering the Grace of Lament* (Mark Vroegop)
- *Sacred Rhythms: Chapter 2 and 3* (Ruth Haley Barton)
- **Spiritual Disciplines:** Solitude and Lectio Divina
- **Activity:** See someone in need and respond to the need regardless.

### Module Three: Humility and Power

- *Radical Spirit: 12 Ways to Live a Free and Authentic Life* (Joan Chittister)
- *Sacred Rhythms: Chapter 4 and 5* (Ruth Haley Barton)
- **Spiritual Disciplines:** Centering Prayer and Honouring the Body
- **Activity:** Show up in any space where you are the minority, or engage in panhandling.

### Module Four: Mercy and Justice

- *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (Bryan Stevenson)
- *Sacred Rhythms: Chapter 6 and 7* (Ruth Haley Barton)
- **Spiritual Disciplines:** Examen and Discernment
- **Activity:** Take someone who needs food grocery shopping or out for a meal.

### Module Five: Rhythm and Rule

- *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life* (Tish Harrison Warren)
- *Sacred Rhythms: Chapter 8 and 9* (Ruth Haley Barton)
- **Spiritual Disciplines:** Sabbath and Rule of Life
- **Activity:** Practice a day of solitude (being by yourself) and silence (abstaining from speech or technology).