

READING & WRITING GUIDELINES

Please read all books as indicated (some are required; some may be recommended reading)

BOOK REFLECTION PAPERS

1 page each

Due one week prior to the course: a one-page reflection paper per required book.

We believe that reading the books prior to the course begins to acquaint you with the material in a foundational way. God also uses these reading times to shape and encourage your spiritual life.

How should I read?

Much of the reading we do is for acquiring *information*. We read the newspaper to learn about current events, stock prices, or sports' scores. Often, we read books this way, too...even the Bible. We read to know who did what, when, and why. While reading for *information* is important, we ask you to read for *formation*.

Formative spiritual reading is an essential discipline in the Christian life. Try following these steps:

1. Set aside a portion of uninterrupted time.
2. Find a private and comfortable space.
3. Begin by praying a prayer that asks God to make this time and space sacred.
4. Linger for a few minutes in quietness.
5. Pray to God asking that the Holy Spirit would guide your reading.
6. Begin reading and pay special attention, not only to the details or thematic content, but to "holy intuitive nudges."
7. When something inside "clicks" or causes you to have an "ah-ha" moment, stop reading...at least for now.
8. In a notebook or journal briefly write down what thoughts or feelings arise. Wonder how God might be using these words or this book to shape or form your life.
9. Return to your reading, continuing the same prayerful process.
10. End your reading with prayer.

This discipline of spiritual reading is not only *formative* but is also *transformational* in your life and spiritual journey.

How should I share?

After you complete each book, look back over your notations and prayerful insights. Gather these insights into a ONE-PAGE REFLECTION PAPER (**12-point font, double spaced**). The paper should contain three paragraphs. In the first paragraph give a brief overview of the book and its themes. The second and third paragraphs should contain a summary of one or two of the formative or transformational insights from your reading. You are also encouraged to write two or three questions you have about something you read. Depending on the course, your questions may or may not be addressed during plenary or small group discussions. You will submit your papers online via Moodle one week before the course. Papers will be read and returned to you within two weeks following the course.

Conclusion

Formative reading may be a new discipline for you. Be gentle with yourself as you learn a new way to listen for God. May God meet you in your seeking.