

SEMESTER AT SEA COURSE SYLLABUS  
University of Virginia, Academic Sponsor

**Voyage: Spring 2016**

**Discipline: English Literature**

**ENGN 4559-101: World Prayer**

**Division: Upper**

**Faculty Name: Elizabeth Fowler**

**Credit Hours: 3; Contact Hours: 38**

**Pre-requisites:** Curiosity and respect for practices and beliefs that are quite different than yours will be essential. Experience writing English prose with confidence, an ability to engage with poetry, and an interest in a scholarly approach to devotional writings are not required, but will be very helpful.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

“The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage . . .

The milky way, the bird of Paradise

Church-bells beyond the stars heard, the soul’s blood,

The land of spices, something understood.”

-- George Herbert’s definition of prayer

Around the globe, billions of prayers rise up everyday from the world’s peoples; they are “in every language spoken,” as Paul Simon sings about prayer in hard times. Prayers make up a large part of the literary heritage of the world; they are poems that are used -- both everyday and at times of great grief or joy -- in the most intimate lives of real people. Because they come from deep within each culture, they are a direct route to its heart. And the most astonishing built places in every city are found when you ask, as we will, what pilgrimage shrines, altars, candles, temples, beads, mosques, incense, offerings, cathedrals, and synagogues house and shape the act of prayer? Unlike money or sex, prayers are something many people are very willing to talk about; this class opens conversations everywhere it goes.

We will learn a little about many religions and contemplative methods, read lots of prayers both secular and religious (in English translation), and go out to speak with people on and off the ship about their prayer practices, collecting and writing about prayer in the cultures we visit with an eye to beauty, to variety, to the sacred, to ritual, and to the conditions and habits of performance. Bring a pocket journal for your prayer collecting, a camera, and a flash drive for sharing your work with me.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students will come away from this course with a set of tools for literary analysis that will help them think (both analytically and contemplatively), as well as help them rock future English courses. We’ll explore how to read and to talk about poetry, as prayers are good examples of the

kind of intense language we call poetry. We'll study literature-in-action -- texts that really matter to people -- as we study the uses of prayer in the religions and contemplative practices of the peoples we visit and the people we are. There will be some introduction, too, to the major world religions, especially to their "material culture" -- the furniture, clothing, ritual objects, props, and architecture that support devotional life. It's my hope that the course will enrich our intellectual and spiritual lives, no matter what religion or skepticism we might practice individually. Perhaps most productively, the course will be an opportunity to develop a way of talking, both inside and outside the classroom, to others about their spiritual lives and contemplative practices.

Note: the professor is agnostic and will not be trying to convert anyone to any faith, but will encourage an exploration of contemplative prayer from a friendly, literary, and anthropological point of view.

The reading assignments, though sometimes brief (prayers tend to be short), will often be very dense: I ask you to read them repeatedly, learning them and seeking out their structures, and in fact to come near to memorizing those your work begins to focus on (you'll learn two prayers by heart to recite to the class).

## **REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

### **REQUIRED**

AUTHOR: Ted Brownstein  
TITLE: The Interfaith Prayer Book  
PUBLISHER: Lake Worth Interfaith Network  
ISBN #: • ISBN-10: 0983260974  
• ISBN-13: 978-0983260974  
DATE/EDITION: new expanded edition: 2014  
Cost: \$9.95

### **REQUIRED**

George Appleton, ed.  
The Oxford Book of Prayer  
Oxford U Press  
ISBN-13: 978-0199561230 ISBN-10: 0199561230  
2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2009  
\$16.51, but used is fine

### **REQUIRED**

AUTHOR: John Bowker  
TITLE: World Religions: The Great Faiths Explored and Explained  
PUBLISHER: DK Adult  
ISBN #: -10: 0756617723  
DATE/EDITION: 2006  
COST: list \$18.95

**RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED**

AUTHOR: Lawrence Lovasik  
TITLE: Pocket Book of Catholic Prayer  
PUBLISHER: Catholic Book Publishing Co  
ISBN #: 13: 9780899420325  
DATE/EDITION: 1997  
COST: \$4.75

**RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED**

AUTHOR: Thich Nhat Hanh  
TITLE: Chanting from the Heart  
PUBLISHER: Parallax  
ISBN #: 10: 9781888375633  
DATE/EDITION: 2006, rev. ed.  
COST: list \$22.95, Amazon \$15.61

**RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED**

AUTHOR: Muhammed Ali  
TITLE: The Muslim Prayer Book  
PUBLISHER: Ahamadiyya Anjumun Ishaat Islam  
ISBN #: 9780913321133  
DATE/EDITION: 5th (or any cheap one)  
COST: \$ 6.95

**RECOMMENDED BUT NOT REQUIRED**

AUTHOR: Mahatma Gandhi  
TITLE: Book of Prayers  
PUBLISHER: Berkeley Hills Books  
ISBN #: 10: 1893163024  
DATE/EDITION: 1999  
COST: \$13; varies; used is fine -- may not be in print, but copies abound

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS: FIELD AND SHIP**

***THE FIELD LOG (20% of your grade)***

Bring a bound notebook (at least 5" X 8"), a pencil, and a camera with you around the ship and especially in every port to draft a description of each site of prayer you visit, and sketch and/or (where respectful -- ask permission) take as many photographs as will allow you to document the built environment of the site and be sure to collect at least one prayer there. Carry this raw-materials notebook everywhere to record the prayers you collect by interviewing people in port and on the ship, information about how each prayer is actually used and where, and your graphic & brief prose analysis of each as an artifact. You don't have to pair up every prayer you collect with built space, but see whether you can. In the front of the notebook, keep a list of the

questions that you'll ask yourself as you think about the relation between prayers, practices, and the built environment, a list that will help you gather the important details as you take notes in the field. You can develop and keep improving your list of questions out of our discussions and readings.

Turn the Field Log in from time to time for quick checks from the professor. By the study day on February 15<sup>th</sup>, your Field Log should have at least fifteen entries (some brief, some substantial) on prayers and their environments gleaned from your conversations both on the ship and in port. Try to double that by the end of the voyage.

### ***THE PRAYER COLLECTION (20%)***

Once you're back to your computer, pillage the raw material of your Field Log to compose a polished version of a formal entry in your Prayer Collection on a sacred space and prayer in combination. You can include images in a separate file or integrate them. At least one entry in the Prayer Collection should be made for each port (these may range from a page to a few pages). The entries should investigate how the architecture, furniture, setting, environment, light, temperature, sound, social segregation, visual program, smell, and other aspects of the built environment help to shape and support the practice of prayer.

You will also compose ONE prayer yourself for a (real) occasion in your life and include it in the collection together with a discussion of an appropriate setting (make sure to mark this prayer as original).

When reading your Prayer Collection, I will be looking for variety and range in the collection, sophistication in your analytical method, literary and aesthetic insight, and anthropological attention to habit, performance, and social meaning. The collection will be submitted from time to time for quick checks from the professor.

### ***THE FIELD LAB (20%)***

Our visit together to many sacred spaces in Ho Chi Minh City will be an intensive day of analyzing material culture, collecting prayers, writing about their interaction, and participating in collective discussion. A section of special entries in the Field Log that integrate prayer texts and sacred spaces will result and may produce great material for your final essay (next).

### ***THE ESSAY (20%)***

Choose the most promising entry from your Prayer Collection and write a 1500 word essay developing its insights. This will be an opportunity to develop your best work. Include original textual and art analysis and draw upon the main topics, readings, and methods of the course.

***CLASS PARTICIPATION (20%)*** will be evaluated according to how your contributions to discussion and presentations (see below) show understanding of and response to the reading for each day, mastery of the course materials, development of our analysis, and a vision &

recognition of collective goals and achievements.

As part of your participation, you'll choose TWO prayers from your collection to learn BY HEART and recite to the prof or the class, one prayer before Saigon and one after. (Aim for something about 14 lines long; it can be excerpted from a longer prayer.)

If you must miss a class, please contact the instructor as soon as possible in order to figure out how to make up missed work.

**RECOMMENDED EXTRAS:** each student might try a yoga or meditation class, on or off the ship, and consider attending the services of as many religious faiths as possible (try to see a Roman Catholic mass, a Shinto shrine ceremony, and so forth) in order to observe and perhaps participate in a variety of contemplative practices. Tell us about it in class!

## TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Depart Ensenada- January 5:

**B1- January 8:** Introduction to the course. What is prayer? Read widely in our collections of prayers and begin to mark your favorites, deciding which ones you'll want to collect and discuss in your Field Log (you can begin this before embarking). We'll also complete a brief, ungraded, exploratory writing assignment on a prayer.

**B2-January 10:** What is prayer? Carol and Philip Zaleski, "The Foundations of Prayer" in *Prayer: A History* (Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 3-32. (In our electronic folder on the intranet, which also holds a number of prayer texts.) George Herbert's "Prayer," intranet, "Love" in Appleton #819 (p. 266). Begin the habit of thinking deeply about and marking up two prayer texts chosen from our collections to bring to each class meeting.

Honolulu: January 12

This is a SAS-trips only stop; if you get a chance, try Saint Augustine-by-the-Sea (Catholic), Saint Andrew's Cathedral (Anglican-Hawaiian), Izumo Taishakyo Mission (Shinto), Mu Ryang Sa Temple (Buddhist), Kuan Yin Temple (Buddhist).

**B3- January 13:** Read Bowker, "What is religion?" pp. 6-9. Bring prayers you've collected to class. Discussion and fashioning of our approaches in collecting prayers and criteria for understanding and recording them. What do we want to know about prayers? Continue to read widely in our volumes of prayer and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

**B4-January 15:** What is a *place* of prayer? What are prayer's material supports? Continue to read widely in our collected volumes of prayer (as every day) and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

**B5-January 18:** Bowker: Buddhism (58-81) and work on Buddhist prayer. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Quiz on Buddhism. Turn in the beginnings of your FIELD LOG for an intermediate grade.

Study Day: January 19

**B6- January 21:** The modes of prayer: contemplative, grateful, ecstatic, angry, devotional, occasional? Chant, emotion, state, mental, singing, walking, automatic (flags, wheels, incense, water) . . . ? Let's make a list. What counts as prayer? Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

**B7-January 23:** Bowker: Japanese religions (11—121) and work on Japanese prayer. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Quiz on Japanese religions.

Yokohama: January 24-25

Recommended visits: Isejima Kotai Shrine, 64 Miyazakicho (Shinto); Soji-ji Temple, Zen Buddhist; Shomyo-ji Temple; Kanteibyō (Kuan Ti Miao) Temple and Ma Zhu Miao (Chinese Taoist temple) a few blocks apart in Chinatown; Anglican-Episcopal Church of Japan 235 Yamatecho – and many of you will go to Kyoto and see the superb ancient temples there.

In-Transit: January 26

Kobe: January 27-28

Recommended visits: Ikuta Shrine, Minatogawa Shrine, Sumadera, Kobe Muslim Mosque

**B8- January 30:** Bowker: Chinese religions (98-109) and work on Taoist prayer. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Quiz on Chinese religions.

Shanghai: January 31-February 1

Recommended visits: Longhua Temple, Jade Buddha Temple, Jing'an Temple, Xujiahui Catholic Church, Songjiang Mosque

In-Transit: February 2-3

Hong Kong: February 4-5

Recommended visits: Big Buddha and Po Lin Monastery on Lantau Island, Chi Lin Nunnery, Ten Thousand Buddhas Monastery, Kowloon Mosque, Wong Tai Sin Temple (Taoist), and hundreds of others

**B9- February 7:** Reflection on East Asian prayer (bring photos if we have a projector). Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

Ho Chi Minh City: February 8-12 (the celebration of Tet, the lunar new year, the most important Vietnamese holiday)

**FRIDAY FEBRUARY 12 (Day 5): FIELD LAB! SAIGON'S SACRED SPACES**

Our field lab will take us to many fascinating sites of prayer: Buddhist, Catholic, Islamic, and more. There are hundreds of shrines and places of prayer in the center alone. See more below.

**B10- February 14:** Reflections on Vietnamese prayer. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Turn in PRAYER COLLECTION for an intermediate grade. Recite a prayer you're working on by heart.

Study Day: February 15

**B11-February 17:** How will we enrich and correct our collection practices? Intentions for Myanmar and beyond. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

Yangon (Rangoon): February 18-22

Recommended visits: Shwedagon Paya (Buddhist pagoda); Dargah of Bahadur Shah Zafar (mosque with burial site of last Mughal emperor); Chaukhtatgyi Paya and Ngahtatgi Paya (very near each other); Sule Paya; Meilamu Paya; Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue (Jewish); Sri Varatha Raja Perumal (Hindu temple for Vishnu); St Mary's Cathedral (Catholic); Kheng Hock Keong (Chinese Buddhist and Taoist: dedicated to the sea goddess Mazu)

**B12- February 24:** Bowker, Hinduism (18-43) and work on Hindu prayer. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Quiz on Hinduism.

**B13- February 26:** Bowker, Jainism (44-57) and Sikhism (82-95) and work on prayer. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Quiz.

Cochin: February 27-March 3

Recommended visits: Paradesi Synagogue, Jewtown (oldest synagogue in India); Chottanikkara Bhagavathy Temple; Salem Marthoma Church, Convent Rd, Ernakulam; Jain Temple, Gujarati Rd; St Francis Church, Church Rd; St. George Jacobite Syrian Church, Karingachira

Study Day: March 12

**B14-March 5:** Student presentations of prayers and sites: bring a text for us all to work on. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

Study Day: March 6

**B15-March 8:** Student presentations of prayers and sites: bring a text for us all to work on. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

Port Louis: March 9

Recommended visits: Mauritius is a SAS trip only destination, but you might choose a trip that takes you to a prayer site. Jumma Mosque and St. Louis Cathedral are important in Port Louis.

**B16- March 11:** Bowker: Judaism (122-147) and work on Jewish prayer. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Quiz on Judaism.

Study Day: March 12

**B17-March 14:** Bowker, Islam (174-195) and work on Muslim prayer. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Quiz on Islam.

Cape Town: March 15-20

Recommended visits: St. George's Cathedral (Anglican – don't miss the Memory and Witness Centre in the crypt or walking the Siyahamba Labyrinth prayer path in the courtyard garden), Gardens Schul (synagogue), Auwal Mosque, Groote Kerk (Dutch Reformed)

**B18- March 22:** Bowker, Christianity (148-173) and work on Christian prayer. Sign up for presentations/workshops over the coming schedule. Lead and/or breakup into groups, depending on our numbers. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Quiz on Christianity.

**B19-March 24:** Student presentations of prayers and sites: bring a text for us all to work on. Reflections on South Africa. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

**B20-March 25:** Student presentations of prayers and sites: bring a text for us all to work on. Continue to read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

Takoradi: March 27-28

Tema: March 29-31

Recommendations in Accra: Cathedral Church of the Most Holy Trinity (Anglican), Accra Ghana Temple (LDS), Accra Central Mosque

**B21- April 2:** Reflections on Ghana. Student presentations of prayers and sites: bring a text for us all to work on. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

**B22-April 4:** Student presentations of prayers and sites: bring a text for us all to work on. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections.

**B23: April 6:** Paper exchange workshops. Read widely and mark up two prayer texts chosen from our collections. Recite your second prayer by heart: it should be one (or part of one) that you're working on intensely, preferably the focus of your essay.

Casablanca: April 7-11

Recommendations: Hassan II Mosque, Synagogue Beth-El

Study Day: April 12

**B24: April 14:** Celebration of what we've learned: reciting our favorite prayers

**April 16: Disembarkation Day**

## **FIELD WORK IN GENERAL**

Your own field visits in every port to shrines, temples, mosques, churches, cemeteries, and other institutional places designed for prayer will be an important part of the course. Please remember



that packing appropriate clothing will allow you to make these visits, because many places of prayer require us to cover our heads, legs, shoulders, and so forth. Each student should visit and describe in a field log entry at least one site of contemplative practice in every port.

### **OUR CLASS FIELD LAB IN VIET NAM**

(A Crucial Note: you absolutely must attend the entire FIELD LAB in Ho Chi Minh City if you're enrolled in the course. Please be careful not to book individual travel plans or a Semester at Sea sponsored trip on the day of our field lab, Friday February 12th! You cannot pass the course without the Lab.)

We'll explore Ho Chi Minh City together on our last day in Viet Nam, looking for the sacred places that are magnets for prayer. The city is saturated with them, and people often patronize several of different religious flavors. Saigon is one of the most tolerant and warm cultures I've ever visited – we can expect to be welcomed into many of these sacred places to see prayer in action. Tolerant and open, but still: please plan to wear conservative, respectful clothing –make sure your shoulders, waist, and legs are fairly completely covered: no shorts, tee shirts, etc. for men or women.

Our exploration of sacred sites in Ho Chi Minh City will include a mosque, a cathedral, a memorial shrine, Buddhist and Taoist pagodas, a Hindu temple, and a shrine to Ho Chi Minh. Upon completion of the field lab, write an entry in your field log (3-6 pages) comparing three of the sacred sites, including a discussion of the material supports to prayer (architecture, color, ornament, furniture, jewelry, paintings, birds, turtles, incense, money, flags, food, and so forth) and the human activities that make up prayer at the site. Any prayers you collect there will be excellent additions – and it's fine to share texts with one another. Your analysis should be based on careful observation, on discussion, and on academic research completed while back onboard the ship. Work with the images you collect with your camera, too.

Field Lab Objectives:

1. To investigate how the design of sacred architecture is used to heighten, shape, and interpret spiritual experiences and support prayer practices.
2. To develop your skill in collecting observations, images, and texts, your facility in interacting with other scholars and with practitioners of devotion, and your ability to see and articulate the interactions between prayer and the built environment.
3. To enrich your analysis with direct experience and group discussion.

See the "Assignments" section of the syllabus for the academic product of the field lab, worth 20% of your grade.

### **RESERVES IN THE SHIP'S LIBRARY**

AUTHOR: Lawrence Lovasik  
TITLE: Pocket Book of Catholic Prayer  
PUBLISHER: Catholic Book Publishing Co  
ISBN #: 13: 9780899420325  
DATE/EDITION: 1997  
COST: \$4.75

AUTHOR: Thich Nhat Hanh  
TITLE: Chanting from the Heart  
PUBLISHER: Parallax  
ISBN #: 10: 9781888375633  
DATE/EDITION: 2006, rev. ed.  
COST: list \$22.95, Amazon \$15.61

AUTHOR: Muhammed Ali  
TITLE: The Muslim Prayer Book  
PUBLISHER: Ahamadiyya Anjumun Ishaat Islam  
ISBN #: 9780913321133  
DATE/EDITION: 5th (or any cheap one)  
COST: \$ 6.95

AUTHOR: Mahatma Gandhi  
TITLE: Book of Prayers  
PUBLISHER: Berkeley Hills Books  
ISBN #: 10: 1893163024  
DATE/EDITION: 1999  
COST: \$13; varies; used is fine -- may not be in print, but copies abound

I will add some of my own books to the library reserve stacks, both resources on world religions and further collections of prayers.

### **METHODS OF EVALUATION / GRADING RUBRICS**

Assessment will be distributed this way: the field log (25%), the prayer collection (25%), the essay (25%), presentations, general quality of class participation including quizzes, and quantity of attendance (25%).

### **ELECTRONIC COURSE MATERIALS**

AUTHOR: Philip Zaleski and Carol Zaleski  
ARTICLE/CHAPTER TITLE: The Foundations of Prayer (chapter 1)  
JOURNAL/BOOK TITLE: Prayer: A History  
DATE: 2005  
PAGES: 3-32 plus notes on pp. 369-370.

### **HONOR CODE**

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense. You may be expelled permanently from the voyage if judged in violation of the code: plagiarism and other sorts of cheating on your assignments all constitute

violations.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: “On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment.” The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed “[signed].” The pledge does not prohibit the collaborations that Prof. Fowler has encouraged or required.