

SPIR 70043/80043: Howard Thurman: Spirituality and the Quest for Justice
(3 Semester Hours)

Instructor: Timothy Robinson

Prerequisites: none

Description of Content: Howard Washington Thurman has been called a mystic, a prophet, philosopher, theologian, educator, pastor, and mentor to leaders of the civil rights movement. One of the most significant African American intellectuals and religious figures in the United States in the 20th century, Thurman left a legacy of writings, speeches, and sermons that articulate a spirituality that integrates a sophisticated analysis of the inner life, mystical experience, a rich aesthetic of nature, and pointed social criticism on racism, nonviolence, human suffering, and resistance to oppression. In this course we will encounter Thurman's work directly through some of his major writings and speeches. Through a sustained engagement with Thurman's spiritual and social writings, we will consider how he speaks to our own "inward journeys" and how spirituality and the quest for justice are integrated in our lives.

Course Procedures: seminar discussion, some lecture, audio and video presentations, contemplative exercises

Objectives:

Students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the biographical details and the significance of the life Howard Thurman
2. Demonstrate familiarity with the content and major themes of the works of Thurman
3. Articulate the enduring influence of Thurman within Christian spirituality
4. Articulate the relationship between contemplation and action / mysticism and social ethics in the life and work of Thurman
5. Articulate their own understanding of contemplation and action: that is, of the relationship between contemplative spirituality and prophetic public witness

Requirements:

1. Attendance and participation
2. Weekly reading response papers (2-3 pages each)
3. Creative project
4. Film review: *Backs Against the Wall: The Howard Thurman Story*
5. Advanced programs students: research paper (20-25 pages)

Texts:

1. Howard Thurman, *With Head and Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1979) ISBN: 015697648X \$17.95 (used copies begin at \$13.61)
2. Howard Thurman, *The Luminous Darkness* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1965) ISBN: 0944350070, \$13.00

3. Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) ISBN: 9780807010297 \$16.00 (used copies begin at \$6)
4. Howard Thurman, *Deep River and The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1975), ISBN: 0913408204, \$14.00
5. Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1971), ISBN: 0913408948, \$13.00 (used copies begin at \$6.54)
6. Howard Thurman, *The Creative Encounter: An Interpretation of Religion and Social Witness* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1972), ISBN: 0913408077 \$14.00 (used copies begin at \$5.95)
7. Howard Thurman, *Disciplines of the Spirit* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1963) ISBN: 0913408352, \$13.00 (used copies begin at \$4.22)
8. Howard Thurman, *Sermons on the Parables*, edited by David Gowler and Kipton Jensen, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2018) ISBN: 978-1626982833, \$25.00 (used copies begin at \$17.30, Kindle at \$9.99)

Grading procedures:

1. Attendance and participation: 20%
2. Reading response papers: 30%
3. Creative project: 25%
4. Film review: 25%
5. Advanced programs paper: 30% (other percentages adjusted accordingly)