

# The Essential Writings of Howard Thurman *(WS-627)*

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This course is a study of the major writings of Howard Thurman. Howard Thurman, the mystic, prophet, poet, philosopher and theologian, who promotes the idea that out of religious faith emerges social responsibility. Thurman's understanding of the role of meditation and the contemplative life informed his every action. As a man of quiet spirit he found the unity in all living things, which created for him a harmony with nature, self, people and, more importantly, with God. Through his writings we will explore that harmony and center ourselves for a deeper spiritual journey.

**Mondays from 4:00 p.m. to 6:45 p.m., beginning January 27, 2020**

## **Course Objectives:**

1. Participants will cultivate an awareness of the theology of Howard Thurman and the spiritual disciplines that inform his mysticism.
2. Participants will understand the connection between Thurman's theological praxis and his belief in the interconnectedness of all living things.
3. Participants will examine issues of race, ethnicity, social boundaries and their impact on faithful engagement in the world.
4. Participants will engage in a broad based self-examination of faith in the public square and how an authentic (self-identified) spirituality informs vital action.

## **Note:**

While Thurman's theology is bottomed in a Christian perspective, his dialogical engagement with other faith traditions makes the study of his spirituality of particular interest to those desiring to break barriers in the search for common ground.

## **Course Requirements:**

- Class attendance is a must. Excused absence will be granted, but more than two absences will result in a 10% lowering of the grade.
- Participation in class requires assigned readings and preparation to lead group discussion with a 15 minute overview of assigned topic.
- Preparation and delivery of classroom exercise in spirituality. Please see full outline for details.

All written assignments must conform to Hartford Seminary writing guidelines. (Please check: [www.hartsem.edu/student/forms/researchpaperguide.pdf](http://www.hartsem.edu/student/forms/researchpaperguide.pdf).) The instructor will use the official Hartsem student email addresses for all communications. Please check your Hartsem email account regularly.

**REQUIRED READING:**

Thurman, Howard; The Centering Moment. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. Deep is the Hunger: Meditations for Apostles of Sensitiveness. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1990.

\_\_\_\_\_. Deep River and the Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1975.

\_\_\_\_\_. Disciplines of the Spirit. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1987.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Growing Edge. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1974.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Inward Journey. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. Jesus & the Disinherited. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1981

\_\_\_\_\_. The Luminous Darkness: A Personal Interpretation of the Anatomy of Segregation and the Ground Hope. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. Meditations of the Heart. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Search for Common Ground: An Inquiry into the Basis of Man's Experience of Community. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1986.

\_\_\_\_\_. With Head & Heart: The Autobiography of Howard Thurman. San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1979.

Edited by Fluker, Walter Earl and Tumber, Catherine; A Strange Freedom: The Best of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998. (Selected pages)

**Course Outline: The Essential Writings of Howard Thurman (WS-627)  
Spring, 2020**

**January 27:** Introduction to Howard Thurman the philosophy and influences that bottomed his understanding of the interconnectedness of all living things.

**February 3:** The man and the myth, Howard Thurman in his own words: we examine the influences that helped to mold his thought and action.  
*Required reading:* With Head and Heart: the Autobiography of Howard Thurman.

**February 10:** Thurman's understanding of the requirement to love as the basis of all relationships. *Required reading:* Jesus and the Disinherited

**February 17:** The unity of all living things.  
*Required reading:* The Search for Common Ground.

**February 24:** Discovering the light in darkness.  
*Required reading:* Luminous Darkness.

**March 2:** Finding wholeness in the present an examination of the religious insights of the Negro Spirituals.  
*Required reading:* Thurman's Deep River and the Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death

**March 9:** Meditations of an Apostle of Sensitivity.  
*Required reading:* Deep is the Hunger: Meditations for Apostles of Sensitivity.

**March 16: Assignment Due:**

March 16, 2020. Each participant must write a commentary on one of the meditations from Thurman. Participants should think critically as they attempt to move outside their traditional boxes. As you immersed yourself in the meditation, what were your reflections, reactions and what resonated with your spirit? What, if anything, made you uncomfortable from your encounter with the thoughts embedded in the meditation? This personal reflection should be no more than 10 pages.

- March 16:** Meditations of an Apostle of Sensitivity.  
*Required reading:* Centering Moment
- March 23:** Meditations of an Apostle of Sensitivity.  
*Required reading:* The Inward Journey.
- March 30:** Meditations of an Apostle of Sensitivity.  
*Required reading:* Meditations of the Heart.
- April 6:** Reading Week (No Class)
- April 13:** Sermons of the Apostle.  
*Required reading:* Thurman's The Growing Edge.
- April 20:** Understanding Thurman's Mysticism.  
*Required reading:* Mysticism and the Experience of Love; Mysticism.
- April 27:** Understanding Thurman's Mysticism.  
*Required reading:* Social Change (Pages 108-123 Strange Freedom).
- May 4:** Synergy and the role of spiritual awareness.  
*Required reading:* Disciplines of the Spirit. Final presentations and course wrap-up.

**Assignments Due:**

- Each participant will be required to present in class a reflection and/or insight on the readings for that session and be prepared to facilitate discussion of the books in review. Please have a copy of your presentation available for each participant in the class. Please limit your insights to 15 minutes.
- Each participant is required to keep a journal during this course and make entries as they discover the “aha moments” and clues into their own spiritual pilgrimage. Journals will be checked periodically throughout the course.
- Each participant is required to write a weekly prayer/meditation to be shared with fellow participants.
- Each participant must present a final term paper (due May 4th) on one or more aspects of Howard Thurman. How does Thurman's understanding of the

interconnectedness of life inform your ministerial context and/or how does it affect you personally? From this launching pad, examine the ways, if any, Thurman can be an asset in your future ministerial endeavors. Your topic must be reviewed with the instructor prior to beginning the term paper.

### **ASSESSMENT**

- 10% Attendance
- 20% Mid-semester reflection paper
- 30% Class participation and engagement
- 40% Final integrated paper/project. Details to be distributed in class.

### **RECOMMENDED READING:**

Makechnie George K.; Howard Thurman: His Enduring Dream. Boston: the Howard Thurman Center, 1988.

Smith, Luther E.; The Mystic As Prophet. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1991.

Thurman, Howard (Author), Fluker, Walter Earl (Senior Editor)  
The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman: Volume I: My People Need Me, June 1918–March 1936. University of South Carolina Press, 2009.

Thurman, Howard (Author), Fluker, Walter Earl (Senior Editor)  
The Papers of Howard Washington Thurman: Volume II: Christian, Who Calls Me Christian? April 1936 - August 1943. University of South Carolina Press, 2012.

Thurman, Howard, The Creative Encounter: An Interpretation of Religion and Social Witness. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1972.

\_\_\_\_\_. Footprints of a Dream: The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples. New York: Harper & Row, 1959.

\_\_\_\_\_. For the Inward Journey: The Writings of Howard Thurman. Selections by Ann Spencer Thurman. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1984.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Mood of Christmas. New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

\_\_\_\_\_. Mysticism and the Experience of Love. Wallingford, PA.: Pendle Hill Pamphlet 115, 1961.

\_\_\_\_\_. Temptations of Jesus. Richmond, Indiana: Friends United Press, 1978.

Yates, Elizabeth, Howard Thurman: Portrait of a Practical Dreamer. New York: John Day, 1964.

### **Seminary Classroom Policies**

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:** Academic honesty and integrity are expected of all students.

Plagiarism exists when: a) the work submitted was done, in whole or in part, by anyone other than the one submitting the work, b) parts of the work, whether direct quotations, ideas, or data, are taken from another source without acknowledgement, c) the whole work is copied from another source [especially a web based source], or d) significant portions of one's own previous work used in another course. See "Plagiarism" at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.

**Appropriate Classroom etiquette and use of technology:** In order to respect the community within the classroom: 1) Mute all cell phones during class; 2) Utilize laptops for the sole purpose of taking class notes. Please do not surf the web, email, or other programs during class time. Such use of the computer during class is disrespectful of the class and professor, and may result in lowering your participation grade.

### **Inclusive Language:**

Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another's images of God.

**Extensions:** Extensions for papers will be given for illnesses or family emergencies only in consultation with the instructor.

**Official Handbooks:** For all other questions you might have regarding policies or procedures, please check the student handbook <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/> and seminary policies at Academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>