ENGL 470-001 Literature and Major Philosophical Traditions

The Interior Journey: Reading and Writing the Inner Life

Professor Fenton Johnson

Mondays 3:30-6:00pm

This seminar will survey creative nonfiction, memoir, and fiction (with poetry making guest appearances) in the rich mode of interior journey: spiritual, philosophical, metaphorical.

Students will be encouraged to use reading and writing as a means to shaping and deepening their contemplative lives, with attention to craft but with an emphasis on addressing their individual engagement with the great existential questions:

Does life inherently have meaning or must we create it, and if the latter, what are our means to that end?

How does reading and writing figure in your relationship with God / Goddess / the gods and goddesses, concepts and words – with ample time and space given to atheists and agnostics?

Students will be required to meet with the instructor to undertake a practice, or deepen a current practice, outside the class – a method through which they will enrich their interior lives, e.g., brief regular meditation, yoga, centering prayer, journaling.

Students will be asked to write five short (3 page) response papers across the course of the semester, and one cumulative longer (10 pp.) essay comparing / contrasting two of the readings and/or practices we have discussed.

With instructor approval, students may submit a creative effort (e.g., story, long poem or series of poems, memoir) to meet the long-paper requirement.