

Spring 2010 – First Term

The first term of the semester runs for six weeks (through March 23), although the course on 12-step programs will continue through the second term (for a total of 12 weeks). [Click here](#) to sign up for either class by email.

Here are descriptions of the two courses offered:

The 12 Steps for Everyone

Led by Jacqie Wallen and John Morris

“The greatest contribution America has made to the world, a contribution that will be remembered for thousands of years, is the invention of A.A.”

–Kurt Vonnegut, *Mother Night*

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is a spiritually based, peer-support program in which recovering alcoholics achieve and maintain sobriety through “working” the 12 steps of AA. Numerous other 12-step programs have since come into existence, all based on the AA model. They include AlAnon, Narcotics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Debtors Anonymous, Codependents Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, and many others. We believe that everyone can benefit from working the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous whether or not they have a specific addiction problem. We all suffer from the human condition, we all need help letting go of unhealthy attachments, we all have a “higher power,” and we can all benefit from sharing our experience, strength, and hope with one another. In this class, we will work on one step each week, using readings from the “big book” of AA, in-class assignments, and step-focused AA-style meetings.

This is a semester-long class, consisting of two consecutive 6-week terms. Participants are asked to commit for both terms

(12 weeks).

***Silence*, by Shusaku Endo**

Led by Brenda Seat

I cannot think of a more powerful book to read during Lent than *Silence* by Shusaku Endo. Based on real events, the novel is set in sixteenth-century Japan and explores the Japanese feudal government's persecution of Japanese Christians and missionaries who the government felt were promoting ideas that threatened its authority. Eventually, the government felt so threatened by any Western ideas that it closed the doors to the West for 100 years until Commodore Perry arrived with his Black Ships in the 1860s. The book takes this small part of history and explores what happens from the perspective of two Portuguese priests, Sebastion Rodrigues and Francis Garpe, and the Japanese Christians who were a part of their flock. We follow the escalating persecution and the seeming silence of God in the midst of their suffering, and their sense of abandonment by the church, by their country, and by God.

Shusaku Endo, the author, has been compared to Graham Greene in his exploration of matters of faith as it pertains to our everyday lives, and yet because of his unique perspective as a Japanese Christian he allows us to look at our faith more deeply and to become aware of the ways culture and religion are entwined, allowing us to see the true essence of our faith more clearly. This is a very difficult book to read since it deals with failure, defeat, torture and a sense of abandonment, yet it is a powerful and profound book which makes us look deeper into what it means to be Christian. I think you will find that it explores deeply the very essence of Lent.

This is a one-term, six-week course with a possible additional session.