

# SPIR/THEO 635: Conversion and Transformation

Gordon T. Smith

May 29 – June 2; 8:30 – 11:30 am

1 or 2 graduate credit hours; or 1 audit hour

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine the theology of religious experience, with particular examination of the nature and character of Christian conversion and spiritual change. The course enables students to think critically and theologically about religious experience in general, but the focus of the course will be the nature and character of conversion. The lectures and readings will demonstrate that a comprehensive experience of conversion is essential for spiritual transformation and a vital piety. Attention will also be given to the theological rationale for programs that foster conversion and spiritual formation. And, as a primary focus, the course will enable students to see how understanding their own conversion fosters self-knowledge and personal transformation. The course will be based primarily on lectures but will also include guided group discussions.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

**Upon the successful completion of this course, students should have a clearer understanding of:**

1. Come to a comprehensive understanding of the biblical theology of conversion and religious experience within the tradition of the Christian faith;
2. Interpret their own experience of conversion theologically, as well as the experience of others;
3. Develop a theologically consistent and practical program that would foster conversion and spiritual formation in the context of congregational life.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### I. Biblical, Historical and Theoretical Foundations

- A. Thinking about Conversion: The Problem of Language
- B. The Biblical Witness to the Conversion Experience
- C. Historical Perspectives: Chapters in the History of an Idea
- D. The Contours of a Christian Conversion

**Interlude: conversion narratives – a sampler.**

### II. The Nature of a Christian Conversion

- A. To be a Saint: Conversion and Transformation (To be in Christ)
- B. Conversion, Catechesis and Christian Initiation.
- C. Conversion and the Spiritual Life of Children/Adolescents
- D. The Church and Conversion; Community and Religious Transformation

## REQUIRED TEXTS

### Required Reading

Smith, Gordon T. *Beginning Well: Christian Conversion and Authentic Transformation*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2001.

Krieder, Alan. *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*. Wipf & Stock, 1999.

Looking for textbooks? Please [contact](#) the Regent Bookstore, or check out their [direct-fulfillment website, Aerio](#).

Note: Aerio prices are in USD.

Please Note: This Course Information Sheet is meant to assist in selecting courses. The official syllabus should be consulted for more detailed information. A full syllabus with drop deadlines, policies, and course assignment details is available on Moodle for registered students: [moodle.regent-college.edu/login](http://moodle.regent-college.edu/login)

