

Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life

The structure of the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life program facilitates independent adult learning in a distance-education format. Courses earn “Institute Units” toward a post-baccalaureate certificate, which requires the completion of 15 Institute Units (IUs).

Courses are designed to increase Secular Franciscan knowledge and formation in areas of history, spirituality, and the Franciscan way of life. Courses are intended primarily for Secular Franciscans; however, anyone interested in learning more about Catholic Franciscan values and their influence on contemporary society is welcome to enroll.

Mission Statement

Recognizing that Franciscan formation is a life-long process, the Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life offers a program of study which seeks to deepen knowledge of the Franciscan heritage and the Secular Franciscan Order. The focus of the program is independent adult learning and distance education for those interested in the Franciscan life.

The Institute for Contemporary Franciscan Life responds to the formational and post-secondary educational needs of the Secular Franciscan Order and other interested individuals.

The program of study is designed to:

- a. lead to a post-baccalaureate certificate;
- b. provide formational and educational preparation in at least three areas of Franciscanism: Franciscan Spirituality, Gospel Living in the Contemporary World, and Franciscan Family History;
- c. build competence in Franciscanism with emphasis on the application of the teachings of Jesus, in the tradition of Francis and Clare, in today’s world;
- d. lead to a possible role of formation and leadership in the national, regional, or local level of a Secular Franciscan fraternity.

INSTITUTE FOR CONTEMPORARY FRANCISCAN LIFE — COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

201. Franciscan Gospel Living in the Contemporary World (3 IUs)

A study of theology and spirituality as the foundation of the Franciscan Gospel life with an emphasis on the challenge to shape a spiritual, historical, and Franciscan vision in the contemporary world. An exploration of the pastoral and spiritual dimensions of Christian Franciscan tradition in terms of scriptural roots, historical development, and current interpretations, highlighting the relevance of Christian Franciscan values for living in the contemporary world.

202. The Franciscans: A Family History (3 IUs)

A study of the history of the three Franciscan orders (Friars, Poor Clares, Third Order: Secular and Regular) with particular emphasis on their development and growth from the time of Saint Francis and Saint Clare until the present. An explanation of the Franciscan Order in its historical context over the centuries and an examination of those factors, both internal and external, which influenced or led to the numerous divisions and reforms of the three branches.

204. Franciscan Spirituality

(3 IUs)

A study of the conversion and Gospel form of life followed by Francis of Assisi and his early companions in their concrete historical context. An investigation of the religious experience of these men and women, their encounter with and understanding of Jesus Christ, and the expression of their religious values.

This course will use a variety of historical tools to understand how Francis, Clare and their early companions made meaning of thirteenth-century Italian society, and the consequences of their actions in that social context. It will introduce the adult learner to the reading of Franciscan texts and some of the challenges associated with studying the life of Francis of Assisi.

206. Clare of Assisi: Her Life and Writings

(3 IUs)

A study of Clare of Assisi as the co-founder of the Franciscan movement, the “first Franciscan woman” to embrace Gospel life in accord with the example and teaching of Francis of Assisi. This course is a study of the form of life Clare established at San Damiano, her struggles with preserving the privilege of poverty, and her legacy to the Franciscan movement, the Church and the world.

Based on the life and writings of Clare, the primary purpose of the course is to increase an awareness of who Clare was as a woman and leader, as well as her place in the panorama of the Franciscan history, and then challenge us to examine what Clare’s legacy is for us today.

207. Franciscan Prayer

(3 IUs)

This course is an examination of the theology and spirituality of prayer in the Franciscan tradition based on the writings of Francis, Clare, and Bonaventure. Prayer as the foundation of Franciscan spirituality is considered, and the implications of this tradition for the contemporary Christian life are explored.

299. Integrative Project in Contemporary Franciscan Life

(3 IUs)

The Integrative Project is an opportunity for the adult learner to submit a proposal on any Franciscan topic of interest and develop a project based on that. The project is to unite what one has learned from the *ICFL* program of study with one’s educational background; experiences in life, in ministry, and in the community at large. The Integrative Project proposal is submitted after 12 IUs of *ICFL* courses have been completed successfully. The Integrative Project must be concluded with a written report of 10 to 15 typed pages.

310. The History of Healthcare in the Franciscan Tradition

(1 IU)

This course is an investigation into how the Franciscan vision of health and illness can affect contemporary understandings of health care institutions and health care ethics. From the perspectives of major figures in the early Franciscan tradition—Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, Scotus, and others—a theological approach to healthcare issues is complemented with a distinctly Franciscan spiritual and moral dimension. *This course is also offered for credit as RLST 396.*

400. Franciscan Servant Leadership

(1 IU)

The course is designed to acquaint the adult learner with the process of servant leadership through use of the text, *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership*. This is not a theoretical course, but one based on the accumulated wisdom of the many contributors to the Handbook. These authors are members of the Franciscan Family and speak from first-hand experience. The assignments focus attention on models of servant leadership, common questions raised by fraternities, and techniques used in addressing specific fraternity needs.

401. St. Francis of Assisi, An Introduction

(1 IU)

The course is designed to acquaint the adult learner with the life and spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi. Through use of the text *Francis of Assisi: A Life* by Chiara Frugoni, the course examines the historical and spiritual forces which influenced and affected the spiritual development of the Saint. The text is a historical biography which will introduce the learner to the reality of his life and times. Through this study of one of the most significant figures in the history of Christianity, the reality of the life of St. Francis of Assisi can be more fully understood and appreciated.

402. The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation

(1 IU)

A course developed to make accessible the riches of the text “De Illis Qui Faciunt Penitentiam” The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Origins, Development, Interpretation, authored by Fr. Robert M. Stewart. O.F.M. Fr. Bob applied the tools used in modern Biblical scholarship to analyze the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order promulgated on June 24, 1978. Fr. Bob’s study of the text and its sources led him on a seven year journey that took him physically to Rome to study the archives of the Secular Franciscan Order and intellectually back to the Origins of the SFO in the early 13th century, and even earlier to the beginnings of the penitential movement with the Church.