

Integrating Spirituality into Counseling

Syllabus Fall, 2010

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Contact Information

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Office Hours: 2:00 to 4:00 Wednesday and Thursdays or by appointment.

Course Description

Spirituality, religion, and a search for meaning are central to the lives and of many clients and many counselors. The importance of preparing counselors to include these elements of personal experience in their work with clients is increasingly clear. This class will focus on understanding the ways spirituality and religion inform and influence the lives of clients and of counselors, and how spiritual and religious experience can enrich the purposes, efforts and effectiveness of both in the work of counseling.

Through reading, reflective journaling, presentations, respectful dialogue, and exploration of diverse spiritual orientations, traditions and practices, this class aims to:

- Develop beginning knowledge and appreciation of the richness, diversity, and potential power of religious and spiritual resources in the lives of counselors and clients;
- Increase the capacity of all participants to inquire into the frames of meaning that shape their own understandings and to expand our capacity to understand the similarities, differences, and rich diversity of the experiences and views of others.
- Examine effects of these frameworks of meaning on quality of life, life strategies, and approaches to coping with life's challenges;
- Examine counselor strategies for assessment and intervention that seek understanding of, and draw on client's spiritual and religious resources.

The activities of this class will emphasize dialogue, reflection, exploration and experiential learning.

Goals and Objectives

Upon completion of the course, students will:

- Be familiar with ethical guidelines applying to issues of spirituality and religion.
- Have an increased understanding of the diversity of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices in American society and in the world.
- Be able to describe, explain, and apply conceptual frameworks for understanding spirituality and religion, core beliefs in major religions, and for differing orientations to differences, otherness, and diversity of these.
- Demonstrate an increased understanding of their own (as a future counselor) religious and spiritual experience, beliefs, and practices and the ability to articulate these.

- Demonstrate understanding and skill in engaging in a receptive, accepting, and exploratory dialogue with persons whose experiences, beliefs, and practices are different from their own.
- Develop understanding and acceptance of a variety of religious/spiritual expressions in client communication.
- Demonstrate knowledge of and ability to apply relevant models of religious and spiritual development over the lifespan as a way to increase understanding of individual's experience and meaning.
- Describe and understand how spiritual and religious experience are interwoven with relationships, families, faith communities in all traditions, communities and societies.
- Demonstrate understanding of how religious/spiritual experience can be interwoven with mental health issues, challenges, and disorders.
- Demonstrate knowledge of a variety of spiritual practices relevant to their own and client well-being.
- Practice and demonstrate knowledge of a range of spiritual /religious assessment tools and interventions.
- Demonstrate the ability to develop treatment goals that reflect and respect a client's beliefs, values and practices.
- Recognize the influence of religiously based beliefs and practices in social and political movements.

Primary Source Texts

Plante, Thomas G. (2009). Spiritual Practices in Psychotherapy: Thirteen Tools for Enhancing Psychological Health. Washington, DC. American Psychological Association.

Smith, Huston. (1995). The World's Religions. San Francisco, CA., HarperCollins.

Recommended supplementary reading.

Tippett, Krista. (2007). Speaking of Faith: Why Religion Matters--and How to Talk About It.

Reserve readings will be available online at the Moodle site for this course.

Other Course Materials will be made available on the Moodle site.

Technology Notes:

If you have any limitation on your ability to access the online materials for this course, please inform me as soon as possible what those limitations are. We will make arrangements to insure that you have other ways to secure the materials and readings.

Most of the source files for this course will be in MS Word, Office 2007, *.docx format. If you are using other software and have difficulty downloading and opening files in this format, please notify me. If you are using an MS Word program that uses the '97

– 2003, *.doc. format, you can download a small translator software program from the Lewis and Clark Information Technologies website that will convert all files created in Office 2007 (docx) format to your software format.

Regarding Respectful Dialogue

The experiences and views of each member of the class regarding spiritual and religious matters are uniquely their own and reflect many important life experiences. These views and experiences are normally central to each person's sense of meaning, personal values, and personal identity. In order to create a class environment that fosters learning and growth, it is critically necessary that each person feel confident that her or his views and experience will be respected. This means specifically that when a class member speaks or writes about her/his experiences and beliefs that other members of the class respond with their best efforts to listen carefully and appreciatively, to inquire thoughtfully, and to seek first to understand and accept the experiences of their classmate.

While this does not mean that any of us can fully understand each other's experiences or views, and does not require that we agree with another person's views, it does mean that we offer intentional, affirming interest and an invitation to further exploration of that person's orientation and experiences. When we give and receive this level of acceptance and affirmation, we are enabled to reflect, question, challenge, and enrich our frames of understanding. Deliberately practicing these approaches promotes choice, change, and growth. Learning how to engage in this kind of dialogue and exploration is central to the purposes of this class.

Statements and declarations of absolute, dogmatic truth are contrary to these essential conditions for learning. While it is entirely appropriate for members of the class to state that they feel strongly about a particular point of view or issue and explain their bases for their approach, it is critically necessary that in doing so we acknowledge that other members of the class may have different views that are equally important to them. Strongly stated declarations and opinions that imply a threat, or a stance of superiority or condemnation, or that suppress questioning and uncertainty, are inimical to a vital and nurturing learning environment.

We will practice accepting and invitational listening, and thoughtful, respectful expression of our own experiences and views. We are committed to this as ethical practice with our clients. Extending the same efforts to each other will strengthen our capacity for acceptance, perceptive understanding, and compassionate work with our clients.

Requirements for credit:

Note: Due dates and more specific guidance regarding the content and emphasis of each written assignment will be provided in the class sessions and the schedule.

1. Attendance and active participation in the dialogues and practices of the class.
2. Interaction, oral and written, demonstrating understanding and engagement with the information and ideas from readings and presentations.
3. Documented practice of a spiritual practice during the weeks of the class.

4. Brief reaction and reflection notes, as requested in class sessions.
5. Reflective and integrative essays.
 - a. My Spiritual Autobiography
 - b. Exploring Spiritual and Religious Experiences Different From Mine:
 - c. My Approaches to Client Spiritual Issues
 - d. What I Have Learned from Spiritual Practices and How I Envision My Future Learning and Growth.

Attendance and Absences

Active participation in discussions and dialogue in small groups and the entire class are central to the purposes and the processes for learning regarding spirituality and religion. Absences from class are acceptable only for extenuating reasons such as illness, unavoidable emergencies, or matters of family or medical necessity. If you anticipate any such occurrences discuss them in advance with me so that arrangements can be made to maintain your active engagement with the learning activities of the class. If you find it necessary to be absent for unpredicted and unavoidable reasons, please notify your discussion partners and the course instructor as soon as possible. Arrangements to replace the missing participation with your discussion partners and with the activities of class may involve supplementary work, usually in the form of written dialogue or other responsive communication and interaction.