Spiritual Issues in Multicultural Counseling
MHS 6061 Section #6262  Spring Semester 2014
   Tuesdays, Periods 6-8 (12:50 – 3:50 PM)
   Norman Hall Room 278

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Office Hours:  By appointment, or before/after class
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Course description
Mental health professionals need to understand diverse religious and spiritual worldviews and how spiritual issues are expressed and addressed in multicultural counseling. Spirituality may be broadly defined as including a variety of expressions, such as search for meaning, dealing with Ultimate concerns, relationship with transcendent power, balance, wholeness, and breath or chi energy. Examples of course topics include: understanding spiritual worldviews and developmental models; healthy and unhealthy expressions of spirituality, assessing spiritual issues in counseling, such as meaning making or coping with suffering. Various spiritual interventions and ethical concerns will be discussed in the context of recently developed spiritual counseling competencies. Students in this course will be asked to engage in experiential learning (e.g., activities that nurture them spiritually), observe a culturally different religious or spiritual practice, read and write from didactic materials, journal for personal awareness, and participate in classroom discussion.

Course Objectives

1) To facilitate student awareness of personal values and meaning attributed to spiritual, religious, and transpersonal experiences, in order to articulate a personal worldview that encompasses spiritual dimensions.
2) To understand culturally diverse expressions of spirituality, religion, and the transpersonal, and how they relate to mental health and wellness both positively and negatively.
3) To conceptualize how spiritual issues are presented in multicultural counseling and psychotherapy and to develop appropriate interventions.
4) To understand and articulate ethical considerations and appropriate boundary setting in dealing with spiritual issues in counseling.
Course requirements

Required reading:


Course Format

The format of this course will be largely discussion-based, and it is essential that all students participate in classroom discussions. The course will also include lecture presentations, and experiential learning activities (e.g., learning various types of meditation, counseling role plays).

Course Assignments

**Journal/Media Reports**

Due January 14 (Two items at 5 points @ = 10 points)

Find one refereed professional journal article on topics related to course and one media article (from popular culture, e.g., Internet, Website, Newspaper, Magazine) to share in class, with brief oral report (hard copies will be collected). This activity is to illustrate the breadth of topics that exist in both professional and popular culture.

**Spiritual/Religious Diversity Component**

Report due February 25 (30 points)

Attend and observe one religious or spiritual event or activity, which is different from your spiritual background or religious heritage. The purpose of this activity is to expose yourself to a belief system and practice different from your own tradition. I suggest that the event or activity be different enough to be interesting and challenging, but not so different that you are overly anxious about
attending. You may team up with other class members. Please be respectful as a “visitor.” Examples include: visiting a worship service at a church, mosque, or synagogue; attending an open “12 Step Program meeting,” attending a spiritually based lecture (e.g., a Buddhist teaching). Reports include the following: Description of activity and rationale for selecting it, what you learned about yourself and your spirituality from engaging in the activity, and implications for you as counselor.

**Spiritual Practice Component**  
**Report due April 22 (30 points)**

Participate in a spiritual nurture and/or developmental type of experience, which consists of on-going weekly meetings (or a one-time daylong or week-end retreat). The purpose of this activity is to deepen your understanding of spirituality as you find meaning for it in your life, and to nurture, sustain, and challenge you throughout this semester. A brief report includes the following: Description of activity and rationale for selecting it, what you learned about yourself and spirituality through practice, implications for you as counselor, and any other creative expressions (e.g., poetry, visual arts). Examples include attending a meditation group, religious study group, dream interpretation group, practicing yoga or tai chi, attending an “Artist Way” group, periodic meetings with a spiritual director, Reiki training, etc.

**Class attendance and participation**  
(2 pts x 15 weeks = 30 points)

“Being present” is a spiritual practice. Attending class contributes to group formation. Group sharing is built on trust, which develops cumulatively over time. The importance of your attendance and participation cannot be over-emphasized and your presence is valued. **Please let instructor know if you will miss class.**

Because discussion topics may be controversial, it is important to follow guidelines that promote multicultural understanding and respect for differences.

**Journal writing**  
(Four entries at 10 points @ = 40 points)

Self-reflection questions are provided in the primary text on the course topics. I encourage you to journal freely throughout the course and record your responses to the many activities and readings. The purpose of this activity is to develop personal awareness and insight into your reactions, thoughts, feelings which are stirred up during class and related activities, and to communicate on a personal level with course instructor. You will be asked to respond to specific self-reflection questions, which will be assigned on a week by week basis. (Limit 1-2 pages). **Due January 21, February 18, March 25, and April 22.**

**Book reaction paper**  
**Due March 11 (20 points)**

Write a brief reaction paper to the book as assigned. Reaction papers can include any (but are not limited) to the following: What surprised you about the story? What were the important themes? With whom did you identify most closely? How was spirituality expressed? What were some of the cultural dynamics and cultural differences that were central to the story? How was spirituality expressed positively/negatively and from whose perspectives? (Limit 2-3 pages)
Brief research paper, 10 page limit, written paper due April 15 (100 points)

Proposals are due March 11

The purpose of this activity is to develop a research question, which extends beyond the current knowledge base of the course. You may team up with other class members. Please review the literature pertinent to your questions, such as marriage and family literature, health psychology, pastoral counseling, etc.

Before proceeding, please present the research topic to get feedback and suggestions from instructor. Papers typically include the following: Introduction, statement of the problem and research question, review of literature, discussion, conclusion & implications for counselors, and references (APA Style). Examples of research topics: meditation and pain management, spirituality and sexuality, spiritual concerns of abuse survivors, separation of church and state in K-12, spirituality in couples counseling.

Research projects will be presented to class as oral reports. In-class oral reports are scheduled for April 8 or April 15. Hard copies of a one-page summary and references are required at time of presentation for all class members, and the final paper will be turned in electronically to the instructor on April 15.

Extra Credit

Reports due by April 22 (10 points)

One brief report on extra credit activities will be accepted. Examples of activities include: relevant lectures, films, books, or attending additional religious/spiritual events.

Creativity

Matthew Fox criticized traditional education, and I paraphrase him here: “We patronize art...art should be at the center of education... we (educators) shouldn’t be putting something into a box, we should be lighting a fire.” I encourage you to tap into your creative imaginations to inform how you pursue knowledge and how you present what you are learning. For example, your journal assignments may include creative expressions, such as a poem, sketch, collage, or song. Most assignments will be turned in electronically via my email at fukuyama@ufl.edu.

Grading

Grading is ultimately a subjective experience. Generally I grade on the following criteria: student follows “guidelines” for assignment, shows original thought and integration of ideas, and expresses ideas clearly.

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**Classroom etiquette**  Please, no cell phones, texting, or beepers in class. If you are on emergency call, let the instructor know. Please reserve snacking for break periods. Please respect confidentiality of clients who use the CERC Center. Please notify instructor in advance if you will miss class.

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) STATEMENT**

The University of Florida provides high-quality services to students with disabilities, and we encourage you to take advantage of them. Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations should

1) Register with and provide documentation to Disability Resources (352-392-8565), and
2) Bring a letter to the instructor from Disability Resources indicating that you need academic accommodations. Please do this as soon as possible, preferably within the first week of class.

**ACADEMIC HONOR CODE AND ACADEMIC HONESTY**

**Preamble:**

In adopting this Honor Code, the students of the University of Florida recognize that academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students who enroll at the University commit to holding themselves and their peers to the high standard of honor required by the Honor Code.

Any individual who becomes aware of a violation of the Honor Code is bound by honor to take corrective action. A student-run Honor Court and faculty support are crucial to the success of the Honor Code. The quality of a University of Florida education is dependent upon community acceptance and enforcement of the Honor Code.

**The Honor Code:**

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

**Pledge:**

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied:

"On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. As a University of Florida student, one is expected to neither commit nor assist another in committing an academic honesty violation. Additionally, it is the student's duty to report observed academic honesty violations. Violations of the Honor Code and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Specifically, instructors will rigorously pursue incidents of plagiarism of any type or incidents of referring to any unauthorized material for any class requirement. Before submitting any work for this class, please read the policies about academic honesty at [www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr), and ask the instructors to clarify any expectations you do not understand.
Appendix A  
ASERVIC Competencies for addressing Spiritual and Religious Issues in Counseling  
(Revised and Approved, 5/5/2009)  
http://www.aservic.org/resources/spiritual-competencies/

Culture and Worldview

1. The professional counselor can describe the similarities and differences between spirituality and religion, including the basic beliefs of various spiritual systems, major world religions, agnosticism, and atheism.

2. The professional counselor recognizes that the client’s beliefs (or absence of beliefs) about spirituality and/or religion are central to his or her worldview and can influence psychosocial functioning.

Counselor Self-Awareness

3. The professional counselor actively explores his or her own attitudes, beliefs, and values about spirituality and/or religion.

4. The professional counselor continuously evaluates the influence of his or her own spiritual and/or religious beliefs and values on the client and the counseling process.

5. The professional counselor can identify the limits of his or her understanding of the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspective and is acquainted with religious and spiritual resources, including leaders, who can be avenues for consultation and to whom the counselor can refer.

Human and Spiritual Development

6. The professional counselor can describe and apply various models of spiritual and/or religious development and their relationship to human development.

Communication

7. The professional counselor responds to client communications about spirituality and/or religion with acceptance and sensitivity.

8. The professional counselor uses spiritual and/or religious concepts that are consistent with the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives and that are acceptable to the client.

9. The professional counselor can recognize spiritual and/or religious themes in client communication and is able to address these with the client when they are therapeutically relevant.
**Assessment**

10. During the intake and assessment processes, the professional counselor strives to understand a client’s spiritual and/or religious perspective by gathering information from the client and/or other sources.

**Diagnosis and Treatment**

11. When making a diagnosis, the professional counselor recognizes that the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives can a) enhance well-being; b) contribute to client problems; and/or c) exacerbate symptoms.

12. The professional counselor sets goals with the client that are consistent with the client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives.

13. The professional counselor is able to a) modify therapeutic techniques to include a client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives, and b) utilize spiritual and/or religious practices as techniques when appropriate and acceptable to a client’s viewpoint.

14. The professional counselor can therapeutically apply theory and current research supporting the inclusion of a client’s spiritual and/or religious perspectives and practices.