

Arizona State University
School of Social Work
Spring 2010

Lead Instructor: Dr. David R. Hodge

I. Course Title: SWG: 598/SWU 494—Spirituality and the Helping Professions

II. Course Level: Undergraduate & Graduate

III. Course Requirements:

Credit: 3 semester hours
Elective

IV. Course Description:

This social justice informed course provides a framework for spiritually/culturally competent practice with diverse populations.

V. Rationale for the Course:

The helping professions have a strong commitment to providing human services that support human diversity and alleviate social injustice. Building upon a generalist foundation, this course provides more specialized understanding of these commitments in the area of spirituality and religion. Ethical standards commonly enjoin helping professionals to obtain the necessary training to work with diverse spiritual groups in a non-discriminatory, culturally competent manner. In addition, helping professionals are typically encouraged to understand oppression with respect to religion and to strive to eliminate discrimination based upon religious beliefs, both nationally and internationally. Accordingly, this course lays a foundation for spiritual competent practice with diverse groups, with special consideration of those who are marginalized by the dominant culture.

VI. Course Objectives:

The objectives of the course fall into the following three areas:

A. **Knowledge**

1. Understanding the connections and distinctions between spirituality and religion.

2. Understanding common rationales for belief in the Transcendent.

3. Understanding common ethical principles that directly bear upon practice with people of faith.
4. Familiarity with various ethical options for addressing potential value conflicts in an ethical and professional manner.
5. Familiarity with the Joint Commission's standards regarding spiritual assessments and various spiritual assessment approaches.
6. Understanding the intersection between media and people of faith.
7. Familiarity with the standards that address religion and social justice in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
8. Understanding of how spirituality can vary across the lifespan.

B. Instrumentation

1. Interpersonal skills to move toward overcoming personal and cultural boundaries.
2. Beginning ability to conduct spiritual assessments in a spiritually competent manner.
3. Initial capability to handle ethical dilemmas appropriately (e.g., knowing when to refer a client).
4. Critical analytical skills to identify societal conditions that impact oppressed spiritual groups in forums such as the media.
5. Analytical skills for assessing the charitable choice provisions and various theoretical models that address spirituality and religion.
6. Developing skills to build professional credibility across faith groups.

C. Experiential

1. Awareness of the culturally competent helping professional as someone who must cross cultural borders when working with spiritual groups that differ from one's own.
2. Awareness of the issues commonly faced by diverse faith groups in the dominant culture.

3. Development of spiritual vocabularies that facilitate dialogue across various spiritually-based cultures
4. Cognitive readiness to act as an agent of social change on behalf of clients and client groups encountering religious discrimination
5. Awareness of one's personal sphere of competency and issues that may necessitate referral.
6. Initiation of personal spiritual self-assessment and lifelong learning in social work practice with diverse spiritual groups.

These objectives will be evaluated through the assignments delineated at the end of the syllabus.

VII. Key Course Concepts:

Ethics and values

Ethical principles related to spirituality and religion; Universality of value systems; Value neutral vs. value-informed perspectives; Self-awareness regarding one's own value system; client autonomy; Western value systems vs. Islamic value systems.

The connections and distinctions between spirituality & religion

Connections and distinctions between spirituality and religion; Interrelationship between spirituality and religion; Irrationality of faith; Rationales offered to support belief in God or the Transcendent.

Common norms for addressing potential value conflicts in an ethical manner

Informed consent; Consultation and referral; Boundary issues/dual relationships; Areas of competence; Displacing the role of spiritual authorities; Importance of avoiding the imposition of the practitioner's own values in practice settings.

Spiritual assessment and interventions

The Joint Commission's spiritual assessment requirements; Brief and comprehensive spiritual assessment approaches; Verbal spiritual histories; Spiritual lifemaps; Spiritual ecomaps; Spiritual genograms; Spiritual ecograms; Strengths and limitations of various comprehensive spiritual assessment tools; Spiritually modified cognitive/behavioral therapy; Assessment and aging.

Social justice and people of faith in the United States

Separation of church and state; Constitutional rights of people of faith in the United States; Orthodox and progressive worldviews; Media and self-perceptions; Common stereotypes of Muslims in the United States.

International advocacy for people of faith

Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Importance of religious freedom as a building block for other rights; Scope of religious persecution in the world; United States' Commission on International Religious Freedom.

Spirituality and religion: Empirical associations

Empirical relationships between spirituality/religion and various mental health outcomes; Spirituality and religion as empirical strengths; Spirituality and religion as a resource for empowerment, particularly for minority populations; the relationship between spirituality and aging.

Theoretical models of spirituality and religion

Theoretical frameworks to explain spirituality's effects; Attachment theory and spiritual experience; Models for understanding spirituality and religion's influence on health/mental health; Models for conceptualizing spiritual development across the lifespan.

Spirituality and the elderly

Spirituality and the elderly; Spiritual development and aging; Spiritual conflicts between older parents and adult children; Spiritual needs of older adults; Spirituality and death anxiety in late adulthood; Spirituality and palliative care in old age.

Faith-based providers and charitable choice

Welfare reform; Charitable choice; Faith-based providers; Characteristics of faith-based drug and alcohol treatment providers; The debate about government funding of faith-based social services.

Demographic overview of spiritual and religious diversity in North America

Major spiritual traditions in North America; Roman Catholicism; Mainline Protestants; Evangelical Christians; Pentecostalism; Latter Day Saints; Eastern Orthodoxy; New Age or Syncretistic Spirituality; Judaism; Islam; Hinduism; Sikhism; Buddhism; Native American religions.

VIII. *The required readings for this course will typically be posted on blackboard.*