

Social Work and Spirituality

Social Work 232

Fall, 2013

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#cs232sy2013.doc

Office Hours: Monday 1:30-2:30; Thursday, 5:00-6:00; Friday 3:00-4:00 or another time that meets our needs. Please do not hesitate to request another meeting time.

You can assume a fast response time if you email me

I. Course Description

Some view the spiritual path as a journey that involves coming to terms with the meaning of life and the universe. Others think of spirituality in terms of their relationship to the divine. This relationship is explored in many ways and involves unseen elements beyond our day-to-day reality such as: transcendent purpose, universal force, God, field of love or creative spirit. For others, wonder is central to their spirituality; First Nation's People speak about "The Great Mystery." Still others emphasize the emptiness of the concepts that are used to describe the transcendent; words and concepts are depicted as fingers pointing to the moon but not the moon itself. We are diverse in our spiritual orientations and some of us have a well-defined story about what spirituality is; some of us do not. Some receive guidance from a particular spiritual perspective and may be pretty clear about the importance of God or Jesus in their lives, and some of us are scared by these very words themselves.

There is a structure to the course that will guide us as we explore and learn together. The first area of emphasis is called: ***Having the Conversation***. Many people we work with find that spirituality is a great source of strength, hope, healing, inner peace and life wisdom. On the macro level, spirituality may be a primary force in the forging of community action or the development of services. As responsible social workers, we need to have the conversation with people about the role that spirituality may or may not be playing in their lives as well as the role that it could possibly play. This conversation is scary for many of us and we have probably received little preparation to engage in this way. Some of us are alienated from our parents' spiritual traditions. This alienation perhaps stems from religious rituals that seemed empty. Some of us are deeply spiritual and religious and we are afraid of imposing our beliefs – so we keep our mouths shut about anything spiritual. Some of us are of a minority religious tradition and feel too ignorant or intimidated to engage with someone who, for example, may be Christian. Some of us may be comfortable and effective with the whole matter and those classmates can lead us.

Because Christianity is clearly the largest influence on spiritual matters in the United States, we need to develop comfort engaging with Christian-identified clients, communities and colleagues. The book about Desmond Tutu's philosophy provides a vehicle to engage in the discourse about Christianity, without

the United States' cultural trappings that make some people feel constricted and uneasy. Other readings will expose us to other cultural perspectives (e.g., Latino, Islam, First Nation's, Jewish).

The second area of emphasis is called: ***Taking my seat***. What is required in order for us to be present when we are with clients and communities. What does connecting heart-to-heart look like? And how much is this important? How do we draw on our own sense of peace and spiritual connection when we are with clients? What is our capacity for self-honesty when we are dispirited, angry, tired or frustrated?

Drawing from Zen, we will discuss eight core practices identified in Bein's book that assist us in taking our seat amidst uncertainty: (1) strong back/soft front, (2) radical acceptance, (3) mindfulness, (4) curiosity, caring, and inspiration, (5) bearing witness and honoring boundaries, (6) the middle way beyond dualities, (7) dealing with failure, (8) the warrior's heart. We approach ***taking my seat*** with the intention to water the seeds of growth that are present in ourselves and in everyone we meet. We take our seat with an open heart despite feeling vulnerable about not fully knowing what we are doing. We take our seat with a sense of our oneness and the simultaneous sense that honoring boundaries is essential.

The third area of emphasis is called: ***What is my calling?*** How did you gravitate to this work and what is it about? What is your deepest purpose and what is the source of that purpose? How much is social work a job and how much does your engagement with others connect you to a higher sense of meaning or spirit or the divine or God? How do you stay conscious of your calling and how does it energize you? How much do you forget the bigger picture? There are no text aids to address this third area of emphasis. You will grapple with these questions in other ways.

II. Course Objectives

1. We will develop enhanced competence and comfort while engaging with clients and communities concerning spiritual matters.
2. We will develop ways to work in a non-judgmental manner with people from a variety of spiritual and so-called non-spiritual traditions and styles.
3. We will discover the role of spirituality in client healing across cultures. We will develop an understanding of the spiritual nature of ***mental health recovery***.
4. We will develop precise skills in addressing spiritual matters for a variety of clients who are facing a variety of situations.
5. We will develop appreciation for the spirituality embedded in 12-step programs.
6. We will become aware of our hearts as the medium between the "bigger picture" and our clients. We will examine how awareness of our body enhances our ability to be present for clients.
7. We will practice and become increasingly proficient in being radically accepting of ourselves, our world, and, in particular, our clients. We will understand the connection between radical acceptance and DBT.
8. We will experiment with practitioner mindfulness and develop an understanding of its application for ourselves and our clients.

9. Curiosity, caring, and inspiration will be integrated as spiritual principles for social workers.
10. We will develop a deeper appreciation of the dynamics of bearing witness.
11. We will understand how possibilities emerge when we move beyond dualistic thinking (e.g., medical model v. strengths or social constructionism).
12. We will contemplate our calling, how to maintain an open heart and how to stay energized and loving.

III. Course Expectations

This course requires your active participation. In order to enhance feelings of safety and to create a positive learning environment, the following are important:

- You are prompt.
- You have read the assigned material and come to class prepared.
- You get your needs met by interacting with classmates and by raising your concerns and criticisms with the instructor.
- You do not ridicule or belittle others.
- You recognize your own biases and prejudices and respect others with whom you disagree
- You are committed to personal/professional growth and self-exploration.
- You resolve issues that you may have with other group members. If you are not sure how to accomplish this task, we can discuss possible strategies. **It is not acceptable to miss class in order to avoid the group.**

*I expect you to not like some things said here.
Honor that truth and watch it
See your truth and how it emerges from your own point of view
And know that is all I have as well.*

*Watch your preferences.
Watch your resistance
Watch your desire.*

*Open to it all / Don't judge
And when judging, don't judge the judgments.*

IV. Course Format and Philosophy

Many times we approach learning experiences with expectations about what we will *get* from them. The model in the academic setting translates to the professor's *giving* information and papers/tests and the student's *getting* knowledge and grades. I hope that in this class the linear giving and getting gives way to a fluid process of giving to each

other. I believe that in order for this process to occur, we will have to: (1) frame our work together as giving to, receiving from, and growing with each other as well as with our *communities and clients*; (2) open our hearts and be vulnerable and real; (3) explore parts of ourselves that are often hidden and make us feel uncomfortable; (4) move toward full acceptance of ourselves and the people whom we serve; (5) maintain our commitment to be aware of our intentions, to be aware of our thoughts and feelings, and to cultivate a positive, effective presence.

Let's identify guidelines that will help us achieve #1-5 as a class:

- | | |
|----|----|
| 1. | 5. |
| 2. | 6. |
| 3. | 7. |
| 4. | 8. |

Additionally, I want you to know that I am aware of people's energy level. We meet Friday afternoon after a long week. I do not want our fatigue however to become the mantra of the class. Do what you can to come into the class as awake and present as possible. Get as much rest as you can and limit your alcohol and drug intake this semester.

Come to class with the intention that you are going to connect with the experience instead of the expectation that you will "mail it in." If you are in the "mailing it in" mode at this point of your life, I would like for you to commit to another approach or to choose another class.

Special Conditions:

- **Attendance is essential. More than two absences or the equivalent (arriving late/leaving early) will adversely impact your grade; Missing three or more classes (or the equivalent - coming late/leaving early) jeopardizes your chances of passing the course.**
- **There are many students with one form of disability or another. Please let me know as soon as possible of particular needs that you may have. You are entitled to special accommodations and services if you have been officially identified as needing this assistance. If you have not done so already, please contact the Office of Services to Students with Disabilities @ 916-278-6955 for further information.**

V. Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the use of distinctive ideas or works belonging to another person without providing adequate acknowledgement of that person's contribution. Regardless of the means of appropriation, incorporating another's work into one's own requires adequate identification and acknowledgement. Plagiarism is doubly unethical because it deprives the author of rightful credit and gives credit to someone who has not earned it.

If it is determined that a student has plagiarized the work of another, it can result in the student being suspended or expelled from the University, depending on the circumstances. (<http://www.csus.edu/admbus/umanual/UMP14150.htm>) (Anderson, 2006).

VI. Course Texts

Battle, M. (2009). *Ubuntu: I'm in you and you in me*. New York: Seabury Books.

Bein, A. (2008). *The Zen of helping: Spiritual principles for mindful and open-hearted practice*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.

**Other readings will be made available*

VII. Course Assignments and Grading

1. **Reflection Papers** – Integrates readings (citations required) field and life experiences, classroom activities and personal thoughts and feelings. Stay current on readings and engaged in the class to do well. *10/11 & 11/1*
Two *2-3 page* papers – *10 points each* **20**
2. **Having the Conversation /Taking My Seat Paper** – Processing your conversation with a client regarding spiritual matters. The intention is to facilitate the client's progress through this discussion and to reflect upon your proficiency in "having the conversation." The paper will incorporate elements regarding practitioner strong back / soft front, acceptance, caring, and bearing witness *11/15* *8 pages* **40**
3. **What is My Calling? Paper** – How have you arrived here? What sustains you? How much is social work a job? How much is there a higher purpose in what you do and how will you manifest this purpose? This paper will be written after some personal retreat time (4+ hours)
12/6 *4 pages* **15**

VII. Course Assignments and Grading (cont.)

4. **Journals on Mindfulness** – Exposition of mindfulness’ role in your own self-care and in your capacity to be present and non-judgmental with your clients. *10/18 & 11/22* Two entries – each: *1 page* **5**

Class Participation

Attendance, involvement, engagement with classroom agreements, promptness, in-class demonstration of commitment to learning **20**

Total **100**

IIIX. Course Outline

Important note about readings:

I ask that you approach the readings in a mindful manner. Instead of engaging your *evaluative mind* regarding whether a particular reading was “good” or “not good” or whether you *approve* or *disapprove* of the reading based upon how much you agreed with its contents, I ask you to be aware of your *overall* experience as you read. You may feel inspired, fearful, hurt, angry, loving, judgmental, etc. Please investigate what is happening and then allow yourself to let go of your story lines. Eventually attempt to open to the idea that love and striving for wholeness represent the foundation of each spiritual tradition.

The goal of this course is to examine the world of spirituality so that we may become more competent and helpful for our clients. *This examination inevitably takes us into the realm of religion because religion is the form and container for the expression of so many people’s spirituality.* Some of us “like” spirituality and “don’t like” religion (especially religions that we equate with being oppressive). My aim is not for you to feel comfortable by giving you what you like. Instead, we become more confident, comfortable, and competent by facing what makes us insecure, uncomfortable, and incompetent.

Finally, please note that I am not recruiting you for any particular religious or spiritual tradition, nor do I believe that you should necessarily affiliate with a tradition. I honor your journey. If I have an agenda, it is that you honor the journeys of others and that you begin to deepen your sense of purpose as you engage in the field of social work.

IIX. Course Outline (cont.)

September 6, 2013

Overview of course / Intentions, expectations, and agreements / Introductions

September 13, 2013

The place of spirituality in social work / Spiritually oriented helping activities / Ethics / Assessing spirituality / Spirituality and strengths perspective / Social worker and healer.

Knitter, P. (2010). Social work and religious diversity: Problems and possibilities.

Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work. 29(3): 256-270.

Hodge, D. (2005). Spiritual ecograms: A new assessment instrument for identifying clients' strengths in space and across time. *Families in Society*. 86(2): 287-296.

Canda, E., Nakashima, M., Furman, L. (2004). Ethical considerations about spirituality in social work: Insights from a national qualitative survey. *Families in Society*. 85(1): 27-35.

Bein, A. (2008). Chapter 1.

*Primary texts are in ***bold and italics***

September 20, 2013

Entering the unknown / strong back, soft front / the ground of uncertainty and the search for the Holy Grail: evidence-based practice / Here and Now / Relational view of spirituality & Christianity / Danger of “God on my side” / Closed and open societies / Gay & lesbian issues and religion

Battle (2009). Chapter 1

Bein, A. (2008). Chapter 2

Henrickson, M. (2009). Sexuality, religion, and authority: Toward reframing estrangement. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*. 28(1-2): 48-62.

September 27, 2013

Unbuntu: own humanness depends on recognizing it in other / children of divine love and looking with eyes of love / Radical acceptance and judgments / radical acceptance of self and other / Radical acceptance and change / Group application / Application to oppressed clients / Dialectical behavior therapy

Battle (2009). Chapter 2

Bein, A. (2008). Chapter 3

October 4, 2013

Mindfulness for practitioner self-care & clients / Presence, breath & mindfulness / Letting go / Hmong healing / Shamans / **Marsha Linehan Video**

Bein, A. (2008). Chapter 4.

Ying, Y. (2008). What predicts mental health in religious and nonreligious social work students? *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work.* 27(3), 235-257.

Her, C & Culhane-Pera, K. (2004). Culturally responsive care for Hmong patients. *Post-graduate Medicine.* 116 (6): 39-46. Available at:
www.web.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.csus.edu.

Heisel, D., Mochel, M., Bauer, R. (2004). Shamans in a Hmong American Community. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine.* 10 (6): 933-938.

October 11, 2013

Having the conversation / Curiosity as spiritual practice / Caring and compassion / Being inspired by clients / Inspiration and the “bigger picture” / “Go wash your bowl” / Healing relationships / ‘Adoration of Jesus and God is the adoration of the oneness of all beings’

Bein, A. (2008). Chapters 8 & 5

Battle (2009). Chapter 3

Reflection Paper I Due

October 18, 2013

Beyond race to compassionate, universal concern / Beyond the duality of liberation spirituality and universal liberation / Latino healing

Battle (2009). Chapter 5, (pp. 138-153); Chapter 4 *optional*

Chevez, L. (2005). Latin American healers and healing: Healing as a redefinition process. In R. Moodley & D. West (Eds.). *Integrating traditional healing practices into counseling and psychotherapy*, (pp. 85-99). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Mindfulness Journal I Due

October 25, 2013

Bearing witness and trauma / 12-step spirituality and bearing witness / Boundaries and boundlessness / Agency culture / Beginner’s mind / Social justice and bearing witness / Themes of healing for those traumatized

Bein, A. (2008). Chapter 6.

Redman, D. (2008). Stressful life experiences and the roles of spirituality among people with a history of substance abuse and incarceration. . *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work.* 27(1-2), 47-67.

November 1, 2013

Bearing witness and trauma continued / Recovery in mental health and spirituality / Older adults and depression: CBT and spirituality

Hodge, D. & Bonifas, R. (2010). Using spiritually modified cognitive behavioral therapy to help clients wrestling with depressions: A promising intervention for some older adults. *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*, 29(3), 185-206.

Reflection Paper II Due

November 8, 2013

The middle way beyond dualities / Disease model v. strength duality / Spiritual approach for effectiveness in the agency world / Islam spirituality / The role of prayer

Bein, A. (2008). Chapter 7

Bushfield, S. & Fitzpatrick, T. (2010). Therapeutic interventions with immigrant Muslim families in the United States. *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*, 29(3), 165-179.

November 15, 2013

Dealing with failure / Forgiveness and failure / DVD on individual and global forgiveness – *Power of Forgiveness*

Bein, A. (2008). Chapter 9

Having the Conversation /Taking My Seat Paper Due

November 22, 2013

What is my path? / The warrior's journey as metaphor for "beyond working a human services job" / LGBT community and spirituality

Graham, J. (2008). Who am I? An essay on inclusion and spiritual growth through community and mutual appreciation. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*. 27(1-2), 5-24.

Bein, A. (2008). Chapter 10 (pp.175-183).

Henrickson, M. (2007). Lavender faith: Religion, spirituality and identity in lesbian, gay, and bisexual New Zealanders. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*. 26(3), 63-80.

Mindfulness Journal II Due

November 29, 2013

Thanksgiving Holiday / Enjoy Your Time!!

December 6, 2013

Catholic social thought / *Reading and additional topics* at instructor & class discretion /

Constable, R. (2007). Catholic social thought and the caring professions: Social work. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work*. 26(3), 81-100.

What is My Calling? Paper Due

December 13, 2013

Class will conclude by “the Way of Council” – a First Nation’s People inspired group structure

Citation not in reader:

Zimmerman, J. (1996). *The way of council*. Ojai, CA: Bramble Books. (pp. 27-50).

Please have a wonderful break!!