Eastern Washington University
School of Social Work and Human Services

Course Syllabus--GRADUATE

SWKG 560-78
Spirituality and Social Work Practice
3 Credits
Winter 2007

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Course Description
This overview of spirituality and social work provides a framework of knowledge, values, and
skills for spiritually sensitive social work practice and prepares students to respond competently
and ethically to diverse spiritual perspectives through a comparative, critically reflective
approach.

Rationale
Spirituality is a fundamental aspect of human functioning which has been long neglected in the
field of social work. To engage the whole client system, social workers must consider the roles
of religion and spirituality in supporting or impeding not only human development but also the
development of a socially just society.

Course Objectives
By the end of the course, the student will be able to:
1. Understand and analyze the historical and ongoing relationship between religion, spirituality,
   and social work, noting cultural influences such as rural-urban differences.
2. Identify and critically reflect on diverse sectarian, nonsectarian/indigenous, and philosophical
   spiritual perspectives and their implications for social work practice.
3. Critically analyze both the supportive and oppressive aspects of religious and spiritual
   perspectives concerning issues of human diversity; such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual
   orientation, age, and disability.
4. Demonstrate increased self-awareness of personal values and bias in relation to social work
   practice with spiritually diverse populations.
5. Understand and critically evaluate guidelines for spiritually sensitive assessment of human
   development, functioning, and well being.
6. Identify and critically evaluate practical and ethical guidelines for utilizing religiously or
   spiritually derived social work practice interventions such as religious or spiritual language,
   symbols, prayer, meditation, and ritual.
7. Identify strategies for developing effective collaborative relationships with religious/spiritual
   leaders and support systems serving populations at risk at the individual, family, and
   community level.
8. Develop a preliminary framework of knowledge, values, and skills for spiritually sensitive
   social work, identifying and utilizing components of a spiritually sensitive helping
   relationship.
Course Content
1. Central values and concepts for spiritually sensitive social work including definitions and concepts, the relationship to ethics, and “compassion” as a unifying concept.
2. Exploration of spiritual diversity and social work practice including human diversity, a variety of religious perspectives, and non-sectarian spiritual perspectives and their comparisons, insights, and implications for social work practice.
3. Spiritually sensitive social work in action—creating a spiritually sensitive context for practice, assessing spiritual development in relationship to therapeutic processes and ethical issues, and developing spiritually sensitive practice skills and techniques.

Methodology
Lecture, discussion, experiential exercises, panels, and guest presentations. Students will have self-evaluative, experiential, and theory based assignments.

Texts

Supplemental Required Readings will be distributed or made available on reserve at the library.

Evaluation
Student evaluation at the end of the quarter will be based upon the following criteria:

1. Preparation, attendance, and participation.
   Preparation (reading assigned materials and gathering required information prior to class), attendance (prompt and continual presence during class hours), and participation (active contribution to class discussions, offering ideas and questions) is expected. If the student knows that they will be absent for a particular session, they should notify the instructor in advance. Multiple absences will result in a reduction of the final grade.

2. Assignment Completion
   All assignments, whether written or otherwise, must be completed in a timely manner. Points will be deducted for late assignments. Written assignments will be evaluated for clarity, comprehensiveness, organization, demonstration of the ability to integrate and apply course content responsiveness to assignment, and correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, and referencing style (if references are utilized). All written papers should be double spaced and typed or word processed using *Times New Roman font with 12 point type and 1” margins* unless otherwise specified. Please include a title page with your name and the title of the assignment in the upper right hand corner.

3. Academic Integrity
   “Plagiarism (from the Latin word for kidnapper) is the presentation of someone else’s ideas or words as your own. You plagiarize deliberately as you copy a sentence from a book or articles or material found on the internet and pass it off as your writing, if you summarize or paraphrase someone else’s ideas
without acknowledging your debt, or if you buy or borrow a term paper to hand in as your own. You plagiarize accidentally if you carelessly forget quotation marks around another writer’s words or mistakenly omit a source citation for another’s idea because you are unaware of the need to acknowledge the idea. Whether deliberate or accidental, plagiarism is a serious and often punishable offense.” (H. Ramsey Fowler, Little, Brown Handbook, 3rd Edition, Boston: Little, 1986, p. 570.)

Students are expected to maintain academic integrity. Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offense at EWU. Penalties are contained in the Student Conduct Code and may be applied by a university panel or the course instructor. Penalties include automatic failure of the paper and/or failure of the course. (In some cases, students may even be dismissed from the university.) If plagiarism occurs, this instructor will take action.

Grading will be based on a four-point scale with tenths used at the instructor’s discretion to mark degrees between the points. Number grades will correspond with letter grades following University guidelines. Grades reflect the instructor’s standards as follows:

- 4.0 A Vastly superior work in comparison to average graduate work
- 3.0 B Average expectable graduate work
- 2.0 C Below average expectable graduate work
- 1.0 D Extremely poor work
- 0.0 F Failing

The student appeals process can be utilized if students experience problems arising concerning the class, grades, expectations or learning environment. The student should first discuss the situation with the instructor. If the student is not satisfied with the results of this discussion, the student should appeal to the Graduate Director of the MSW program. If further appeal is desired, the process is spelled out in the graduate catalog.

Blackboard utilization is a requirement in this class. Grades will be kept on Blackboard, so it is mandatory that each student register on Blackboard for this course. Class announcements, changes or additions to assignments, and helpful hints will be posted on Blackboard as well.

Expectations
The topic of this course is inherently controversial. Students are expected to communicate among themselves and the instructor in a manner that encourages open and mutually respectful dialogue, appreciates diversity, and tolerates disagreement. Policies as well as ethical social work guidelines prohibit religious/spiritual proselytizing by the instructor or students. We may well challenge each other to pursue understanding of truth, but we may not coerce or denigrate each other on the basis of our own versions of the truth. In this way we can foster mutual learning. (Canda, 1999, 190-191)
Assignments
Assignments are encompassed in the Course Schedule to follow including reading and written assignments. Instructor may add assignments, including tests, during the course to assist with particular areas of learning.

1. **Call to Service Exercise**  
   **Due: Week 4**  
   15%

   Re-examine your “call to service” (your initial decision to become a social worker). In 3 to 4 pages, address these issues: What, if any, spiritual components were present for you? How many and which of these factors continue to sustain your choice? What, if any, additional or different spiritual factors have emerged in relationship to your “call” or decision over time? How do these factors relate to your own personal spiritual journey? (This should not be a repeat of your personal statement for admission, but a new specifically focused examination of some of the issues raised there.)

   [Goal: Demonstrate self awareness, familiarization with articulating spiritual matters, assessing and analyzing the spiritual component in human behavior]

2. **Spiritual Book Report**  
   **Due: Throughout the quarter**  
   15%

   Each student will chose a spiritually related book to read and will write no more than a single page description to share with the entire class. The report should include 1) a brief description or abstract of the contents/focus of the book, 2) the reader’s personal response/reaction to the book, 3) an indication of the impact on the personal and/or professional self, and 4) a recommendation to others (two thumbs up or two thumbs down, or somewhere in between?).

   **Students should bring copies of their book report for each classmate and for the instructor (to be distributed during class) and be prepared to make a brief presentation and answer oral questions.** (No more than 5 minutes total.)

   This assignment is worth a maximum of 100 points.
   If completed by or before week 6, student will be eligible for all 100 points.
   If completed on week 7, student will be eligible for a maximum of 95 points.
   If completed on week 8, student will be eligible for a maximum of 90 points.
   If completed on week 9, student will be eligible for a maximum of 85 points.
   If completed on last week, student will be eligible for a maximum of 75 points.

   [Goal: Expose students to a variety of spiritually related literature, encourage critical analysis of written material, nurture student’s own spirituality]

3. **Cross-Perspective Experience Summary**  
   **Due: Week 8**  
   35%

   Each student will select a spiritual perspective/tradition other than their own that they would like to learn more about. The student will observe/participate in a spiritual/religious event of that tradition. For example, if Christian, students will observe/participate in a non-Christian service or tradition (e.g., Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, First Nations, Wiccan, etc.). Students must gain permission for
participation from appropriate sources (e.g., spiritual leaders or members of the church, synagogue, temple, group, etc.) and explain that their involvement is linked to a course assignment. Students should also inquire about appropriate attire and permitted level of participation.

The written summary should be approximately 5-6 pages in length and include:

A. A description of the experience
B. A discussion of the student’s reactions to the experience including both cognitive and affective responses
C. A discussion of the implications of the experience for the student’s practice with clients from this spiritual perspective/tradition.

[Goal: Expose students to a tradition outside their past experiences and comfort level, demonstrate self awareness, develop analytical skills in different settings.]

4. **Spiritual Emergence Story**  
   **Due: Week 10**  
   25%

   Construct a 5-7 page spiritual narrative for yourself or for a fellow student in this course. This spiritual self-assessment should focus on and take into account both developmental history, and a current status report. Illustrate your narrative with the following tools which will be discussed and practiced in class: 1) a spiritual genogram, to show the roots of spiritual development, 2) a spiritual time line, to show how the individual has developed from their roots to where they are today, and 3) a spiritual ecomap to show the individual’s current spiritual influences and relationships. (Illustrations are not considered as part of the page count.) This spiritual assessment should include not only the past and present, but also future potential and aspirations. Be creative—use pictures, illustrations, symbols, colors, or other graphic means of helping explain who this person is and what their spiritual journey has meant to them. Conclude by explaining how you might use some of these tools and methods in working with clients now or later.

   In summary, papers should contain:
   - Narrative explanation of spiritual past
   - Narrative explanation of spiritual development/journey
   - Narrative explanation of current spiritual status—see text & handouts
   - Narrative explanation of future potential or aspirations
   - Narrative summary of using spiritual assessment tools in your practice
   - Illustrations (required, graded, but not included in 5-7 page total)
     - Spiritual genogram (Can include others than blood relatives)
     - Spiritual timeline
     - Spiritual ecomap
   
   Creativity in expression and illustrations is strongly encouraged!

[Goal: Practice and demonstrate ability to do strengths-based spiritual assessments, develop familiarity with a variety of spiritual assessment tools.]

5. **Preparation, Attendance, and Participation**  
   10%

   See earlier discussion on page 2, “Evaluation”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Read for class</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Basics—Introductions; class format; course goals, processes and structure; respect and inclusion; dialogue.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Introducing our spiritual selves—Who are we? Definitions and models of spirituality and religion, reflection and journaling, critical thinking. McGuire handout distributed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>History and Ethics—Role of religion and spirituality and religion historically, the current debate, contemporary practice. Call to service, compassion, and ethical principles.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Religious/Spiritual Diversity—Overview, major religions of the world. Panel presentation of some middle-eastern religions. <strong>Call to Service Exercise paper due</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Religion/Spirituality and Human Diversity—Panel presentation of far eastern religions. Discussion of gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and religious/spiritual approaches.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Nonsectarian, Indigenous and Philosophical Perspectives—Panel presentation of various spiritual traditions. “Cults,” ethics, healing, holiness, and wholeness, as well as “cure.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Spiritually Sensitive Contexts of Practice—A holistic approach. Creativity, spiritual ecomaps and genograms. Linking theory to practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Assessing Spiritual Development—Models of spiritual development, assessment tools, mysticism, spiritual crises, crisis of faith, mental health symptoms and spirituality, referral and collaboration. <strong>Cross-Perspective Experience Summary paper due</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Assessing Therapeutic Process and Its Spiritual Components—Metaphors, ethical guidelines for using (or not using) spiritually based activities, i.e., boundaries. Guest Speaker?</td>
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Week 10  
Mar. 15  
Spiritually Sensitive Practice—Applying skills and techniques to individuals, agencies and communities. Social justice and the politics of spiritually sensitive practice including documentation issues, advocacy, etc. Rituals and symbols. Course evaluation. 
Spiritual Emergence Story paper due, last chance to distribute book reports.
Bibliography


