Given the pervasiveness of religion and spirituality throughout people's lives and cultures, social workers need to understand religion and spirituality to develop a holistic view of the person in environment and to support the professional mission of promoting satisfaction of basic needs, well-being, and justice for all individuals and communities around the world.”
(http://www.cswe.org/CentersInitiatives/CurriculumResources/50777.aspx)

WELCOME TO THIS CLASS
It is exciting to have you be a part of this mini course on Spiritual Assessment and Intervention in Social Work Practice. May this class take us forward in developing the knowledge, skills and competencies to demonstrate our readiness and responsiveness to meet the spiritual needs of our clients. I look forward to what we will experience and learn together as we engage our mind, body and spirit in this meaningful topic!

1. Course Statement

This course provides a framework of knowledge, values, skills and experiences to promote culturally competent, ethical, spiritually-sensitive Social Work practice which
takes into account diverse expressions of spirituality. In adopting a holistic perspective to guide practice, spirituality will be viewed as a vital and essential dimension of the bio-psycho-social assessment and treatment planning process.

a. Course description
This course will explore the rationale and need to integrate assessment and interventions related to spirituality in social work in a manner that supports cultural humility, social justice and competent practice. It will examine spirituality as rooted in the history of Social Work practice as well as exploring how to best define, integrate, and use spiritual assessment and interventions in addressing presenting client issues. The relationship between spirituality and considerations related to gender, ethnicity, culture, race, sexual orientation, ability, social economic status and age, as well as spirituality across the life span will be explored.

b. Course content
Spiritual assessment and intervention related to specialized areas such as trauma, addiction/recovery and mental health will be addressed including research on the links between religious/spiritual beliefs and practices and physical, mental and behavioral health. Specific methods and interventions will be highlighted and applied to practice. Relevant readings, discussion, case presentations, and experiential exercises will be used to deepen one’s competence and comfort level in integrating spirituality into practice. Students will be asked to explore their own spirituality as it relates to professional identity and Social Work practice effectiveness. Ultimately, we seek to develop effective assessment and intervention skills by which spiritual strengths and resources can be tapped to better assist clients.

This course is not designed to be a review of specific religious belief systems. For those desiring more information about specific religions, the following link may be helpful to you as well as additional resources provided in course handouts.
http://pluralism.org/religions/

This class affirms that spirituality and faith traditions are experienced in very diverse ways. Thus, honoring differences and practicing sensitivity to different expressions and experiences of spirituality and religious practice form the bedrock of our learning in service to our clients and our goal of effectively addressing their spiritual and religious concerns.

c. Course objectives and competencies
Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:
1. Recognize the inclusion of the spiritual dimension of the biopsychosocial spiritual perspective as essential in holistically understanding individuals in the assessment and treatment planning and intervention process. EPAS 2, 4
2. Demonstrate awareness of spirituality in the content of person-in-environment and culture and its impact on client coping with suffering, loss, injustice and attempts to heal, endure and reach one's goals. EPAS 2, 3, 4
3. Acknowledge and respect a variety of expressions of spirituality with and without relationship to religion. EPAS 2, 4
4. Identify and critically reflect on diverse spiritual/religious perspectives and their implications for Social Work practice EPAS 2, 3, 4, 6
5. Formulate qualities of a spiritually sensitive helping relationship and be able to identify a framework of spiritually in Social Work practice that is inclusive and respectful of diversity. EPAS 2, 4, 6
6. Develop beginning skills necessary to assess the roles of spirituality and of religious practices in the lives of social work clients and to evaluate the potential place of spirituality in the helping process. EPAS 2, 4, 6, 7
7. Identify and utilize different assessment models and tools for assessing clients' spirituality. EPAS 2, 4, 6, 7
8. Identify various spiritually sensitive interventions and apply them to social work practice. EPAS 2, 4, 6, 8
9. Articulate both the supportive and the oppressive role spiritual/religious perspectives have played concerning issues of human diversity and marginalizing and exclusion based on gender, race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, health and mental health and social class. EPAS 2, 4, 6
10. Examine and reflect on one's own spirituality and the impact on the development of professional identity and one's Social Work practice. EPAS 2, 3, 4, 6, 9
11. Identify social work literature related to the application of spiritual practices in relationship to physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being. EPAS 4

d. Course design
This course uses a relationship-based engaged approach to learning in which we learn from and with each other. A variety of collaborative learning methods will be used to promote skill development including interactive lectures with active student participation, readings, in-class application exercises, role plays, practice clinical scenarios, videos and written assignments. Understanding core class concepts and the ability to apply these concepts will be emphasized.

e. Curricular themes
Multiculturalism and diversity will be addressed throughout this course and will be highlighted in the content of commonalities and differences in spiritual and religious
traditions, beliefs, expression., and the role of protective factors and social support in health status and disease outcomes.  

*Social justice and social change* will be addressed by examining the potential impact of spirituality/religious beliefs and practices on social justice both in the United States and globally. Key spiritual diversity dimensions will be examined as both a source of support as well as promotion of marginalization, exclusion and oppression for disenfranchised populations. This course emphasizes the identification of theories, practice and/or policies that promote social justice, illuminate injustices and are consistent with scientific and professional knowledge.  

*Promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation* will be addressed through review of the literature regarding connections between health (physical, mental, behavioral) and spiritual beliefs, behaviors and affiliations and the implications for practice, policy and research.  

*Behavioral and social science research* will be presented throughout the course and will include findings from sociology, psychology, medical anthropology, social work, public health, medicine, nursing, and health services research related to spirituality and health.

**f. Relationship to social work ethics and values**

The social work program is one of professional preparation. In addition to acquiring theoretical knowledge, students are expected to acquire professional values, to integrate knowledge from a range of sources, to develop professional skills and be socialized into the profession.

Social work ethics and values will be addressed in the context of the NASW Code of Ethics and the NASW Cultural Competency guidelines. This course will increase awareness of intersectionality of one’s own personal spiritual and/or religious beliefs and the beliefs of clients as well as the impact of values and reactions to diverse beliefs and experiences.

The NASW Code of Ethics outlines a set of core values that form the basis of the Social Work profession’s purpose and perspective. The Code encourages behaviors which promote professionalism and respect not only for clients, but for colleagues and employers as well.

“Social workers should treat colleagues with respect….” “Social workers should avoid unwarranted negative criticism of colleagues in verbal, written and electronic communications with clients or with other professionals.” Unwarranted negative criticism may include demeaning comments that refer to colleagues’ level of competence or to individuals’ attributes such as race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief,
religion, immigration status, and mental or physical disability.” (NASW Code of Ethics, 2.01a and b)

It is expected that all students conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the Code of Ethics and demonstrate professional use-of-self behaviors in class including respect, courtesy and ACTIVE listening with fellow students and the instructor. See Use-of-Self documents on Canvas.

As professionals, you are expected to maintain confidentiality and respect differences. You are expected to take personal responsibility and be committed to your own learning experience by being an active and responsible and response-able member of each class.

For further elaboration of the values and ethical standards inherent in social work, students are encouraged to access the Code of Ethics in the UM SSW Student Guide or at: https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English

g. Intensive focus on PODS
This course integrates PODS content and skills with a continued emphasis on the identification of theories, practice and/or policies related to spiritual and/or religious beliefs and practices that have promoted or impeded well-being and social justice.

Students are invited and expected to actively contribute from their experiences, field placement practice and knowledge of readings, etc. to help support and develop a vision of social justice, learn to recognize and reduce mechanisms that support oppression and injustice, work toward social justice processes, apply intersectionality and intercultural frameworks and strengthen critical consciousness, self- knowledge and self-awareness to facilitate PODS learning.

2. My teaching philosophy

Learning is in service to clients.
Relationship focused partnership: mutual learning commitment
My commitment is to provide organized, meaningful course material and opportunities for learning in a respectful, safe and encouraging learning environment. Many times we approach learning experiences with expectations of what we will get from them. This model focuses on the professor’s giving information and the student’s getting information. Relationship-based learning means to me that we will be “giving, getting and growing” together as we learn from and with each other. Students are invited and expected to be active and engaged partners in the learning process by coming to every
class fully prepared, ready, willing and able to contribute to meaningful discussion and learning. Please feel free to contact and meet with me throughout the course as needed with questions, concerns and suggestions. I look forward to what we will experience and learn together.

**HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH EACH OTHER**

It can often be easier to talk about people than talking with them. Talking with people often requires taking the risk to be honest, courageous and humble. Providing feedback is a core competency all social workers need and we will use this class to further develop this skill.

**We take responsibility to talk WITH each other, rather than ABOUT each other.**

Please provide feedback on your learning needs, how the class is going for you and suggestions for improvement throughout the class. We will do a mid-term and final evaluation, however the opportunity to respond to feedback is much more beneficial for both professors and class members if it is ongoing and not just provided at the end of the term. You are encouraged to proactively address any concerns or needs with your class colleagues and myself as they arise.

3. **Expectations of students**

Your learning is not just about academic learning but also involves learning and improving life skills and professional use-of-self. Students are expected to take personal responsibility and be committed to their own learning experience by being active and response-able members of each class session. An optimal individual learning experience is one that is active, self-directed and requires engagement. **Accountability shifts the focus from being not solely about what one is taught, to self-determination about what one consciously chooses to learn.** I invite you to come to this class with the intention that you are going to engage and connect with the experience.

a. **Attendance**

A significant part of learning in this course is interactive and experiential with discussion, in-class activities which cannot be fully replicated or replaced by make-up work. Therefore, both your learning and the learning of your colleagues are benefitted by your attendance. The School of Social Work Class Attendance Policy states: “It is expected that students attend classes and instructors are encouraged to monitor attendance.” Attendance, participation and engagement are expectations and requirements (See Student Guide). Class grades include evaluation of attendance, participation and engagement. This class focuses on learning and demonstrating competencies in service to our clients.
Absences are not judged as “excused” or “unexcused.” Life happens and each individual student may have absences from personal choices made regarding prioritization of competing demands as well as uncontrollable events. Missing more than a total of 4 hours of this mini course for any reason equates to missing a significant percentage of the course (>25%) and may result in non-credit, non-passing grade for the course due to the significance portion of the course missed and in-class competencies not demonstrated.

**Partial Absences**
Promptness in attendance is also valued as it conveys professionalism, respect and courtesy and creates a safe environment for sharing among one another. We will begin and resume class promptly after designated break(s).

Partial absences also negatively impact learning and demonstration of competencies. A partial absence include any of the following: Lack of engaged presence due to use of electronic devices for non-class related activities during class, late arrival after class start time, late return from break after class has resumed and/or early departure before class ends.

b. **Class participation**
As a graduate student, class attendance, completion of assigned readings for each class, participation and engagement are highly valued as these behaviors contribute to the quality of learning for the individual and the class as a whole and contribute to our ultimate goal of service to our clients. Predictability, reliability and consistency (“being there”) are core to any strong relationship as well as being incredibly important to our clients and our employers. Thus, “being here” engaged presence is an important competency for this class.

Class participation is vital to the learning experience of this course and focuses on being emotionally and intellectually present and engaged in class each week. Active engagement and sharing of your diverse ideas, perspectives and experiences are highly valued and expected. In service to our clients, we must learn to use our voices on their behalf and our learning is a part of using our voices for our clients. Thus, participating in class will be an opportunity to practice and develop this skill even when it is sometimes challenging and/or uncomfortable.

Students should be prepared each week to both be called on and to initiate knowledgeable sharing of their understanding, ideas, reactions and applications from
readings in weekly class discussions and integration across progressive weeks. The quality and preparedness of responses illustrating completion of the readings will be used as a part of the assignment of grading for class participation and will differentiate grades of exceptional mastery (A) from grades of mastery (B).

c. Grading

Academic standards matter to our clients and the responsibility with which we are entrusted in our work with and on behalf of them.

Grades are the outcome of student efforts and demonstration of competency. They are “earned” not “given.” While this course has been designed to provide information and learning experiences, what you ultimately gain will largely depend on your use-of-self, your engagement in the class and your commitment to take responsibility for your individual learning.

Grades are based on points earned through demonstration of competency and class participation and completion of in-class learning activities and written assignments.

All assignments will be graded with these criteria:
• Address specific assignment criteria defined in instructions and rubric
• Professional and academically sound writing skills (clarity of thought, organization and flow, APA referencing as appropriate)
• Ability to think critically and integrate concepts/content across the term
• Demonstration of clinical competency, ability to engage and be insightful
• Demonstrate professional use-of-self and social work values and ethics (PODS, strengths-based perspective)
• Integration and demonstration of completion and understanding assigned readings and additional literature when appropriate
• On time completion of assignments by assigned due date

Time constraints are validated as a normal and ongoing part of life. Each individual student will experience time challenges related to both personal choices made regarding prioritization of competing demands as well as uncontrollable events. We acknowledge and accept that not every assignment may be completed at the mastery level depending on one’s individual situation, goals and/or choices. Earning “A” grades is not always possible AND meaningful learning can still occur. Graduate school standards anticipate that students will spend time outside of the class room to complete readings and assignments at a level of mastery.
Final Grades will be based on individual personal performance and demonstration of course competencies and expectations including the quality of the work, demonstration of reading and ability to apply concepts, professional use-of-self and class participation as defined in course documents using a 100 point system. The total accumulation of points earned reflect competencies demonstrated. Final letter grades are defined by the School of Social Work as follows:

**A grades**
Earned for *exceptional* individual performance and *superior* mastery of the material. The use of A+ (100), A (95-99), and A-(90-94) should distinguish the degree of superiority.

**B grades**
Earned for students who demonstrate mastery of the material. B+ (87-89) indicates performance just above the mastery level but not in an exceptional manner. B (84-86) indicates mastery and B- (80-83) indicate just below the mastery level.

**C grades**
Mastery of the material is limited.
C- is the lowest grade which carries credit. C+ (77-79), C (74-76) and C- (70-73).

**D grades**
Indicate deficiency and carry no credit. (Below 70)

**E grades**
Indicate failure and carry no credit.

**I grades**
Incomplete grades can be given in rare situations in which significant unforeseen, extraordinary and compelling reasons prevent completion of work AND there is a definite plan and date for completion pre-approved by the instructor.

If more than one-third of the required course assignment points are incomplete by the last day of class and/or more than 4 hours absence from class have occurred, an incomplete grade may not be given & credit for the course is NOT possible.

In fairness to all students, incomplete grades will not be given based on requests for time extensions to complete assignments without a compelling reason and sufficient justification provided beyond common life experiences of having limited time or multiple class deadlines.

Students are responsible for initiating advanced contact with the instructor to request an incomplete grade and to establish a specific plan for completion. If no contact has been initiated by the student with the instructor regarding incomplete work and/or no specific plan has been established to complete work by the last day of class, a grade will be given based on the completed work submitted thus far. This may potentially result in a grade which carries no credit. Review and include a reference link to the MSW Student
Guide policies on Grades in Academic Courses and in Field Instruction as well as Student Grievance procedures and the policy for grading in special circumstances. Here are some resources around testing and grading from CRLT.

Additional School and University policies, information and resources are available here: https://ssw.umich.edu/standard-policies-information-resources. They include:

- Safety and emergency preparedness
- Mental health and well-being
- Teaching evaluations
- Proper use of names and pronouns
- Accommodations for students with disabilities
- Religious/spiritual observances
- Military deployment
- Writing skills and expectations

2. Class Requirements
a. Text and class materials

It is expected that assigned readings posted for each week will be completed prior to each class to enhance discussion and interaction. Grades of A will require completion of assigned readings.

Course Readings
There is no required textbook for this course. Readings will be from a wide range of articles posted in Canvas and from your self-select diverse peer-reviewed articles in your areas of interest and incorporate evidence-based research and practice into class discussion and assignments.

The amount of required reading has been designed to provide you with a basic foundation while giving you freedom to individualize supplemental readings. It is designed to be in line with graduate level workload expectations. You are expected and encouraged to do literature searches and additional reading to meet some assignments and to pursue areas of interest.

Additional relevant handouts will also be distributed via Canvas for reading. Additional reference materials specific to class topics will be discussed throughout the term.
Additional literature searches and readings may be needed to complete some assignments.

SOME RELEVANT SPIRITUALITY FOCUSED JOURNALS

International Journal for the Psychology of Religion
International Social Work
Jewish Social Work Forum
Journal for Buddhism and Psychology
Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work
Journal of Family Psychotherapy
Journal of Jewish Communal Service
Journal of Marital and Family Therapy
Journal of Muslim Mental Health
The Journal of Pastoral Care
Journal of Psychology and Christianity
Journal of Psychology and Judaism
Journal of Psychology and Theology
Journal of Psychotherapy Integration
Journal of Religion and Spirituality
Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought
Journal of Religious Gerontology
Journal of Transpersonal Psychology
Marriage and Family: A Christian Journal
Muslim World Affairs
Social Work and Christianity
Spirituality and Health
Transcultural Psychiatry
Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion
Journal for the Study of Spirituality
Journal of Psychology and Theology
Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work
Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health
Mental Health, Religion and Culture
Review of Religious Research

I have provided you with additional resources posted on Canvas which may be useful for assignment completion and further exploration of areas of interest including:

- Recommended spirituality focused texts and readings on world religions
- Relevant Website Resources
b. Assignments
Your learning in this course will stem from several modalities: Course readings and lectures; class and small group exercises which draw from field-based experiences, case examples, self-reflection, and interactions with classmates; and assignments which seek to focus you on select themes concerning the role of spirituality in direct social work practice with client systems. All assignments must be submitted by the designated due date unless an explicit prior agreement is arranged with the instructor. Assignments submitted late without prior arrangements earn deduction of 10% of their total point value per day late.

Assignments will focus on developing spiritual competence defined as an active, ongoing process characterized by three interrelated dimensions (Hodge, 2006).
• Developing awareness of your own value-informed, spiritual worldview and its associated assumptions, limitations, and biases.
• Developing empathic understanding of clients’ spiritual worldview that is devoid of negative judgment.
• Increasing ability to design and implement intervention strategies that are appropriate, relevant, and sensitive to the client’s spiritual worldview.

| The course assignments and your course grades upon which they will be based include: |
| 1) In-Class Participation/Use of Self | Ongoing | 20 points |
| 2) Spiritual Self-Assessment | In class | 25 points |
| 3) In-Class Application Activities | Ongoing | 20 points |
| 4) Spirituality Diversity Article of Choice | Due June 4 | 20 points |
| 5) Post-Class Final Integration Reflection | Due June 11 | 15 points |

Further assignment descriptions and grading rubrics are articulated in Canvas course documents.
Course Schedule, Learning Opportunities

May 28

**PRE-WORK REQUIRED PRIOR TO FIRST CLASS**

1. Review the syllabus prior to the first day of class

2. **Required Reading:** Read article prior to first class and be prepared to discuss. Article is available in Canvas.
   

**Morning Topics**

What is Spirituality?

Why Should Social Workers Care About Spirituality?

Historical Background, Rationale and Relevance to Social Work

Ethical Principles for Social Work Practice

Our Fears and Concerns

View of Clients

Differentiating Spirituality from Religion

Spirituality and Health

**Optional Selected Articles**


United Nations Universal Human Rights
http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/UniversalHumanRightsInstruments.aspx


**Afternoon Topics: Spiritual Assessments**

Spirituality Self-Assessment
Assessment Approaches, Tools, Techniques
Common Client Spiritual Issues
Life Cycle and Diversity Issues

Additional **optional** selected reading resources for your further exploration as desired:


**June 4**

**PRE-WORK required prior to second class**

Spirituality Diversity Article of Choice Integration Paper Due

**Morning Topics**

What are Spiritual Sensitive Interventions?
Spiritual Narratives

Various Interventions and Techniques
Diversity Considerations and Various Client Population Application
Negative expression of spirituality
Forgiveness

Spiritual Life Maps
Seeing and Addressing Spirituality in Our Clients
Intervention Application

**Afternoon Topics**

What about Our Spirits?
Strategies for Nurturing Our Spirit
Gratitude, Compassion, Loving Kindness Meditation

Companioning Our Clients
Alan Wolfelt Tenets

**Take-Aways and Wrap Up**

**June 11**

**Post-Class Final Reflection Assignment**

See separate Canvas handout for specific instructions.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRESENCE IN THIS CLASS.**

**Additional selected reading resources for your further exploration and assignment ideas.**


http://sw.oxfordjournals.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/content/58/4/321.full


doi:10.4081/hpr.2013.1448


**Additional optional** selected readings on wide variety of diverse topics.


Gray, B. (2014). The use of rituals, primarily related to grief, in a hospital setting: How are they helpful and how can they be most effective? *Critical Horizons, 2*(2), 165-177.


http://sw.oxfordjournals.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/content/58/4/321.full


