



# Spirituality in Counseling

3 Credit Hours

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**Course Description.** This is a specialized course for graduate counseling majors that provides a knowledge base of the process of integrating spirituality in the counseling process. The course involves specific guidelines and suggestions for this integration as well as addressing issues that arise in this process. The course is an in-depth study of spirituality and its incorporation into counseling, especially examining the need for counseling to address spiritual issues and the commitment of the mental health professions to examine this area.

We will discuss and review the history between spirituality and mental health, including a discussion of the barriers and bridges between them. In our study of incorporation of spirituality into counseling, we will focus on the major Western or Monotheistic religions, to include Judaism, Christianity, Islam, as well as Native American religions and others, and the major Eastern religions, to include Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. One of our goals is to develop an awareness of the concepts and diversity of religious beliefs and an understanding how these concepts may influence a client's worldview. These considerations will focus on cultural implications with the discussion including the theoretical integration of the counselor and its impact on counseling. How the counselor can help the client develop a spiritual identity is a consistent theme throughout the course.

The course examines the ethics of integrating counseling and spirituality, to include ethical issues and concerns such as informed consent, spiritual identity development, dual relationships, collaboration with religious leaders, respect of clients' religious or spiritual values, boundaries of the counselor's work setting, and the counselor's area of competence. The course explores specific techniques counselors can use for incorporating spirituality in counseling clients, including religious practices such as prayer, sacred writings, and religious community, and practices that overlap both religiously oriented counseling and general counseling practice. Underlying this course is the belief that integrating the spiritual dimension in one's counseling practice can be very important and, when utilized, needs to be done in a manner that is respectful to both the counselor and the client.

The course is complimented by several reading selections of enduring intellectual value--current articles, book excerpts, and research studies. Participants in the course will be involved in scholarly dialogue and class discussions; will make oral presentations on selected topics to the class; and will journal on readings and class discussions. The journals should be a collection of reflection papers about course topics and the learning experience. Grading will encompass class attendance; class discussion and the degree of preparedness for each class session; the quality of oral presentation(s) in terms of content and preparedness; and the quality of the written work in terms of content, concept or theory development, and writing skills.

**Evaluation of Learning Objectives.** Course participants will be evaluated to determine whether or not the learning objectives are achieved. Evaluations include the class discussion focusing on learning objectives, oral presentation involving these objectives, and the application of theory and concepts (learning objectives) in the journal and reflection paper. In total, these means of evaluations address all stated course learning objectives. Preparation for each class session is essential if these objectives are to be met. In this regard, staying current in the assigned readings is very important.



**Course Learning Objectives.** Through intellectual dialogue and critical evaluation of course materials and other sources of information, at the course conclusion, each participant should:

1. have developed an understanding and definition of the concept spirituality, and understand spirituality in the context of counseling;
2. understand historical development in terms of barriers and bridges between spirituality/religion and therapy;
3. be familiar with Western or Monotheistic Religions;
4. be familiar with Eastern Religions;
5. understand theoretical integration with cultural implications;
6. understand counseling focus integration;
7. understand ethical issues regarding the integration of spirituality in counseling;
8. understand specific treatment techniques;
9. have developed a sense of awareness to issues of spirituality and clients' needs;
10. have developed an ability to critically evaluate issues and topics addressed in this course;
11. be able to process course materials and articulate them in a coherent written or oral form;
12. be respectful of others in the course ; and
13. be able to apply theoretical perspectives and concepts addressed in the course to everyday, real life situations and to one's counseling practice.

#### **Required Texts:**

Miller, Geri. Incorporating Spirituality in Counseling and Psychotherapy. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003.  
Kushner, Harold. Living a Life That Matters. Knopf Publishing Group, 2002. **(Recommended)**

#### **Course Requirements and Evaluations (Grading):**

1. Attendance and participation in classroom discussions. This includes being prepared to discuss assigned readings, handouts, films and videos, etc. Twenty points toward the final grade will be based on participation and attendance. After reading the syllabus, you can understand that attendance is important to take full advantage of all the learning opportunities of this course. If you know in advance that you must miss a class, speak to me so that I can give you assignments to make-up the absence. One absence can be made-up. Two absences will result in the loss of 10 points, plus will require make-up work. If you anticipate more than two absences, please enroll for the course at a time more convenient to your schedule.
2. Oral Presentations in class on assigned selected articles/readings. A 10-15 minute report on the reading. Summarize and evaluate (critically evaluate) the material, stressing the major points, give your comments on the issues and be prepared to discuss material and answer questions. End your report with your reactions to the material. Each oral presentation is worth 20 points.
3. Journal. Students will develop and maintain a journal for the course. The student will journal on readings and class discussions, especially reflections about these activities and class or course content. The journaling should include reflections and insights about the value of topics and materials covered in the course and how they might be incorporated into one's counseling practice. The journal is worth 60 points.
4. Academic Integrity Policy. The Doane College Academic Integrity Policy will be adhered to in this class. All projects and tests will represent your own work. The use of other's ideas and words shall be properly cited. Please ask if you are unsure as to how or what a proper citation of a source is.



**Grading Scale:**

100-97=A+  
96-94=A  
93-90=A-  
89-87=B+  
86-84=B  
83-80=B-  
79-77=C+  
76-74=C  
73-70=C-  
60-67=D

**Possible Points:**

Journal 60 points  
Attendance/  
Participation 20 points  
Oral Presentation 20 points  
Total Possible Points 100

6. Critical Thinking. Remember, in seeking the elusive truth, we have two basic questions to ask:

*How do you know?...What does it mean?*

I hope that you will enjoy this learning journey.



*I hold the holy pipe and I am moved to silence and tears. I enter the sweat lodge and feel the presence of the Great Spirit - it goes all through me. When the warmth of the sun comes down from the sky and touches my skin, I feel a part of all that is whose life also comes from the sun, all of our Mother: the rock, the sky, the birds, the trees, the water, and my brother, the bear. My brother, the white man, finds his spirit in a building made by man. He has such a hard time bringing that spirit out of the building.*

Guest speakers will join us from time to time, depending on their availability and our progression in class. Some sessions will additionally have video presentations pertinent to the issues at hand. Various articles and books will be available the first two class sessions for student selection. Books that we will utilize in addition to the text include:

James W. Fowler. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development*. HarperCollins, 1995.  
Viktor E. Frankl. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Touchstone Edition, 1984.

And others...

*Peace Be Upon You...*



**Course Outline:**

Reading Assignment: Chapter 1 Introduction  
(Read prior to class)

**Session One.**

- 1. Introduction and explanation of the course and learning expectations.
- 2. Discussion of course requirements and assignments.
- 3. Introduction of course participants.
- 4. LECTURE/DISCUSSION: What are the questions to address before a counselor incorporates the spiritual dimension in counseling?

Topics Include: Definition of Spirituality                      Spirituality in the Context of Counseling  
Creation of a Sacred Place                      Encouragement of Self-Care  
Encouragement of Spiritual Practice

- 5. Case Studies
  - 6. Exercises
  - 7. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 11, and 12.
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Reading Assignment: Chapter 2 Historical Development  
(Read prior to class)

**Session Two.**

- 1. Discuss role theory, reinforcement theory, cognitive theory, and symbolic interaction theory from a critical thinking perspective.
- 2. Discuss term paper requirements. (View example papers)(Handout)
- 3. LECTURE/DISCUSSION: Barriers and bridges between spirituality/religion and therapy.

Topics Include: Separateness and Integration  
Transference      Countertransference  
Secondary Socialization

- 4. Case Studies
- 5. Exercises
- 6. ORAL PRESENTATION:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

- 7. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 11, and 12.



Reading Assignment: Chapter 3 Western or Monotheistic Religions  
(Read prior to class)

**Session Three.**

1. LECTURE/DISCUSSION: What are the main Western religions? How similar are their doctrines?

Topics Include: Working Across Differences  
Judaism Christianity Islam  
Zoroastrianism Sikhism  
Native American Religions

2. Case Studies

3. Exercises

4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_  
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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 4, 11, and 12.

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(Read prior to class) Chapter 4. Eastern Religions

**Session Four.**

1. LECTURE/DISCUSSION: What are the main Eastern religions? How similar are their philosophies?

Topics Include: Hinduism Shintoism Jainism  
Buddhism Confucianism Taoism

2. Case Studies

3. Exercises

4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

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(Read prior to class) Chapter 5. Theoretical Integration with Cultural Implications.

**Session Five.**

1. LECTURE/DISCUSSION: How can counselors use their knowledge of their clients' religious or spiritual cultures to ensure the welfare of the client is protected through the assessment, treatment, or referral process of counseling?

Topics Include: Therapy Integration  
Transference Issues      Countertransference Issues  
Types of Integration      Cultural Implications

2. Case Studies

3. Exercises

4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, and 12.  
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Reading Assignment: Chapter 6. Counseling Focus Integration  
(Read prior to class)

**Session Six.**

1. LECTURE/DISCUSSION: Helping clients develop a spiritual identity

Topics Include: Supervision Process Issues  
Assessment Process Issues  
Treatment Process Issues

2. Case Studies

3. Exercises

4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

a. \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

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(Read prior to class) Chapter 7. Ethical Issues

**Session Seven.**

1. LECTURE/DISCUSSION: What are some core ethical issues when incorporating spirituality in counseling?

- Topics Include: Informed Consent      Development of a Spiritual Identity
- Determination of Secular or Religious Counseling
- Avoidance or Minimization of Dual or Multiple Relationships with Clients
- Collaboration with Clients' Religious Leaders
- Respect for Clients' Religious or Spiritual Values
- Boundaries of the Counselor's Work Settings
- Counselor's Area of Competence

2. Case Studies

3. Exercises

4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, and 12.

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(Read prior to class) Chapter 8. Specific Treatment Techniques

**Session Eight.**

1. LECTURE/DISCUSSION: What are some religious or spiritual practices that can be used in counseling clients?

Topics Include: Religious Practices      General Practices  
Religious and General Practices

2. Case Studies

3. Exercises

4. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

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(Read prior to class) Your Choice

**Session Nine.**

1. LECTURE/DISCUSSION:. Bringing it all together

Topics Include: Your Choice Maybe Pizza

2. ORAL PRESENTATIONS:

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

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Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Questions....answers?

4. Course evaluations.

5. LEARNING OBJECTIVES ADDRESSED: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13.

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## Competencies: Spirituality and Counseling

In order to be competent to help clients address the spiritual dimension of their lives, a counselor should be able to:

1. explain the relationship between religion and spirituality, including similarities and differences,
2. describe religious and spiritual beliefs and practices in a cultural context,
3. engage in self-exploration of his/her religious and spiritual beliefs in order to increase sensitivity, understanding and acceptance of his/her belief system,
4. describe one's religious and/or spiritual belief system and explain various models of religious/spiritual development across the lifespan,
5. demonstrate sensitivity to and acceptance of a variety of religious and/or spiritual expressions in the client's communication,
6. identify the limits of one's understanding of a client's spiritual expression, and demonstrate appropriate referral skills and general possible referral sources,
7. assess the relevance of the spiritual domains in the client's therapeutic issues,
8. be sensitive to and respectful of the spiritual themes in the counseling process as befits each client's expressed preference, and
9. use a client's spiritual beliefs in the pursuit of the client's therapeutic goals as befits the client's expressed preference.

from: Miller, Geri "The Development of the Spiritual Focus in Counseling and Counselor Education" *Journal of Counseling and Development* Vol. 77; No. 4. (Fall, 1999) - p. 500.