

EDUC 5553 CI02: Topics in Counselling - Spirituality and Counselling

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Syllabus - webpage

Course Overview

This course will examine the relationship between counselling and spirituality. A framework for the spiritually oriented counsellor will be offered to explore topics such as forgiveness, guilt, evil, suffering, death, various concepts of a higher power, transcendence, and mystical experience. Through lectures, film, dialogue, journaling, and research we will explore meaning and transcendence, the difference between religion and spirituality and the impact an openness to spirituality has on the therapeutic alliance.

Erich Fromm wrote that it is not true we have to give up the concern for the soul if we do not accept the tenets of religion. The Greek term ψυχή (psyche) means spirit, soul, mind, self. The alienation that has existed between the mental health professions and religion for most of the 20th century is ending. It is now common for people to present themselves to therapists with concerns that they themselves have categorized as specifically spiritual in nature. Counsellors-in-training are looking for ways to explore and integrate spiritual values in counselling by examining questions around meaning, purpose, connectedness, mystery, divinity, and life-direction.

Students will be provided with an opportunity to reflect on their counselling skills and how to help clients feel at home when examining issues of belief and unbelief, as well as the effects such issues have on their lives. Students are invited to be open to beliefs and belief systems other than their own as we reflect on the culture and content of both western and eastern religions. Students will be invited to bring resources from their own traditions and experience to their coursework as well.

Overall Course Objectives:

Students will

1. Practice an ongoing process of learning heightened awareness.
2. Analyze the stages of faith development to be able to assess clients' present level of development.
3. Articulate present working definitions of spirituality and the differences and similarities between spirituality and religion.
4. Examine the nature of the relationship between spirituality and psychology and the components of a healthy therapeutic alliance.
Connect spirituality with counselling through a growing understanding of how many counselling issues are seeded in early experiences of religion and spirituality.
5. Adapt present counselling skills and try on new counselling skills for working with clients who want a spiritually oriented view point by using various case studies and therapists' advice.
6. Examine numerous spiritually oriented assessment tools and be ready to choose which will more likely benefit clients who are depressed versus those who need to make a significant choice in life.
7. Engage in an examination of their current understanding of myth and broaden that understanding in relation to counselling.
8. Analyze similarities and differences between depression and the dark night of the soul.
9. Explore the nature of struggle and suffering. Develop a broadened perspective on how others face into and try to understand evil and suffering and why they put God on trial or do not believe in a personal God.
10. Examine the nature of forgiveness and the injustice gap, the fact of unforgiveness and why some cannot forgive.
11. Examine his/her experience of death and the experience of denial of death. Analyze the view of death in our culture and how it affects our ability to live.
12. Reflect on the experience of enlightenment.

Goals of the course:

- To explore spirituality as part of human development
- To understand the relationship and divergence between spirituality and religion
- To understand how to approach spirituality when relevant to clients

- Processes and skills which assist the spiritual dimensions of counselling
- To increase understanding of the diversity of spiritual paths
- To be able to articulate an understanding of one's own spiritual journey
- To understand spiritual wellness and related instruments
- To have a framework to discern the "health" of a spiritual path

CACEP Core Competencies Covered and Assessed in this Course

The Council for the Accreditation of Counsellor Education Programs (CACEP) accredits the Counselling Program at Acadia University. All courses offered in the Program meet core competency requirements of CACEP. For a complete description of CACEP program standards and competencies go <https://www.ccpa-accp.ca/accreditation/>.

Competency	Type	Activity/Assignment
the role and identity of professional counsellors and their relationships with other related professionals	CORE CACEP 1.b.	Readings, Assignments 1, 2, 5.
opportunity to apply ethical decision - making processes to case material	CORE CACEP 2.d.	Module activities, Assignments 1,3, 5.
counselling theories that provide the student with a consistent framework to conceptualize client issues and identify and select appropriate counselling strategies and interventions	CORE CACEP 3.a.	Module activities, Assignments 1,2, 5.
understand and apply effective counselling approaches and techniques to facilitate client exploration of issues, examination of alternate perspectives, and development of appropriate actions with respect to the issues presented	CORE CACEP 3.b.	Module activities, Assignments 1,3,4, 5.
a systems perspective that recognizes that all clients are part of larger societal, colleague, friendship and family systems. Curricular experiences are provided regarding systems theories (including family theories) and related approaches and strategies	CORE CACEP 3.c.	Module activities, Assignments 1, 5.
understanding and respecting human diversity within the Canadian multi - cultural society	CORE CACEP 6.a, b, c, d.	Readings, Module activities, Assignments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Instructor

Michael Belgrave is a counselling therapist & counsellor-supervisor in private practice, as well as an adjunct professor in the MEd (Counselling) Program at Acadia University.

Contact Information: Michael Belgrave, PhD, RCT, CCC-S
Office: currently virtual
Office Tel/Txt: (902) 456-0168 | Personal Tel/Txt: (902) 499-1608
E-mail: belgravect@eastlink.ca

Please note that text msg often tends to work best to make initial contact and we can then arrange to speak together. You may also contact my admin/scheduling support associate via the office number (902-456-0168).

Course Materials

EDUC 5553 material is now included as .pdf documents in the individual modules.

Web-references included in course modules. Because many of the resources are web-based, you may occasionally find broken links. I encourage you to bring these to our attention, and also to be welcome to find and use alternate resources that may be relevant and that may speak to your experience and interest as well.

Evaluation

Evaluation will be collaborative (part of our final discussion) and based on the following Assignments.

1. Discussion Forum Contributions (minimum 2 Posts and 2 Comments)	20%
2. Reflective Paper (4 Journals combined)	20%
3. Narrative of Spiritual History	20%
4. Annotated Bibliography	20%
5. Final Summative Discussion	20%

The assignments are delivered to the instructor via assignment drop-boxes in Acorn (Moodle). Please remember to put your name, student number, course number, and assignment number on the assignment and keep a copy in the event the original is lost.

Note: file submissions are to be in MS Word (.doc or .docx) or .pdf format. **Suggestions for length of assignment submissions are guidelines to help you plan your work. I am more interested in the content/quality of what you submit than how many words or pages in your written work.**

Assessment of Assignments Submitted:

As Graduate Students in a Master's program, I am looking for graduate level work. If I feel that your work does not meet at least the minimal acceptable level and needs to improve, I will give you feedback and let you revise and re-submit it. As a guideline for what I am asking, please see the following rubric. We will discuss your submissions and determine their associated grade when we speak together.

Advanced	Equivalent to A+ Level Work	Students working at an advanced level are dynamic and productive writers and researchers. They demonstrate advanced capacities for thinking critically and creatively and possess a broad, deep and highly integrated knowledge base. They develop powerful, cogent and convincing arguments that are richly positioned in theory. They offer conceptualizations that advance scholarly discourse in significant ways.
Proficient	Equivalent to A Level Work	Students working at a proficient level are excellent writers and researchers. They demonstrate capacities for critical thinking and possess a broad, deep, and integrated knowledge base. They can produce clear, systematic, well-argued written and oral presentations that are well connected to current theoretical thinking and relevant literature. Students should aspire to this level of scholarship by the end of their degree program.
Competent	Equivalent to B+ to A- Level Work	Students at this level are competent writers and researchers. They demonstrate capacities for systematic thinking and possess an increasingly integrated knowledge base. They can produce well-argued written and oral presentations that are situated in current theoretical thinking and scholarly literature. Students should be at or working toward this level of scholarship during the course of their graduate level degree program.
Novice	Equivalent to B- to B Level Work	Students at this level are developing their competency as writers and researchers. They demonstrate capacities for substantial thinking and a growing knowledge base. They can produce papers that are well-organized and that demonstrate capacities for argumentation. They have some awareness of the value of theorizing and may be familiar with important theoretical trends and notions. Most students beginning graduate level studies can be expected to be at or near this level of scholarship.

1. Contributions to Discussion Forum (20%)

The purpose of this assignment is to facilitate a continuing dialog among participants in the course. You are invited to comment on at least two things that you read or watched in the course material, or something that arose for or occurred to you, or something that you have found for your Annotated Bibliography that you'd like to share with others. You could share something that *resonated*, or something that you found yourself *resisting*, or something that you are continuing to *wonder* about. As well, you are invited to respond to, or comment on, two postings by your colleagues. You can use the discussion forum on our Acorn site for these reflections/questions and responses.

2. Reflection Paper (20%)

In Four Parts:

First 3 Journal Reflections will not be individually reviewed and graded, but you will include them in your final paper: Complete these after you finish Modules 2, 4 & 9, based on reading material, DVD, and YouTube videos.

You should post/submit the first three parts of this assignment (as a way to keep yourself on track), when you complete the respective modules. I won't evaluate the individual module reflections as they will be included in the final assignment along with part 4 and should be presented as ONE final combined paper. In evaluating your final paper, I will be looking for you to make connections to your spiritual history narrative, to the course material that you are using as the basis for your reflections, and to any other relevant or associated material that you have found for your bibliography. I will consider formatting (APA 7th format) in assessing your submission.

- i. Based on the readings and your own experience, reflect on what your understanding is of the similarities and differences between spirituality and religion. Some people equate them. Include in your discussion the opinion of two others with whom you have discussed this issue. (two to three pages)
- ii. Journal what you learned from the excerpt on choice from Scott Peck's life. How has it sensitized you for present or future clients? (two to three pages)
- iii. Journal your experience of watching the DVD, *Griefwalker*. Note the things that evoked inspiration and what provoked or challenged you. Note any wisdom that strikes you as helpful a) to you personally and b) helpful for your clients (current or future). (two to three pages)
- iv. Choose **either** Module 6 Depression and Dark Night **or** Module 10 Enlightenment. Discuss what was most valuable for you as a counsellor and how you will integrate this knowledge/wisdom in your own life and when you guide clients. (two to three pages)

3. A Narrative of your Spiritual History (20%)

"Journeys bring power and love back into you. If you can't go somewhere, move in the passageways of the self." Rumi

"The enlightened person has but one duty - to seek the way to themselves, to reach inner certainty, to grope forward no matter where it leads. This realization may shake us profoundly." Herman Hesse

Henry David Thoreau believed that we must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake. He stated he knew of no more encouraging fact than our unquestionable ability to elevate our lives by a conscious endeavour.

This assignment is intended to be a conscious endeavour that fosters awareness, hope and a sense of awe about the beauty, the tragedy and comedy of your story. Please share or withhold what you feel safe and appropriate. What you do share will be held in a spirit of respect and confidentiality. This paper is your opportunity to reflect (developmentally) on your unique spiritual path in a manner that speaks to how you got to where you are today. It is an opportunity to let your narrative 'voice' tell your story.

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." Albert Schweitzer

I encourage you to write about those people who have been a major influence in your spiritual life. The purpose of this assignment is to help you reach a level of self-awareness that will prepare you to listen more deeply to the spiritual issues of your clients.

This assignment is due at the end of module 5. This reflection is generally three to five pages. Papers are to follow APA 7th style.

A few suggestions (things to consider) to help you with your narrative:

- What are your earliest memories of spirituality and religion in childhood? What (if any) spiritual path, traditions, and practices were you given?
- What images of spirit did you experience as a child?
- What stands out from adolescence regarding your relationship to spirituality?
- What significant people, books or other experiences have influenced your spirituality.
- How would you characterize your spiritual journey currently?
- What is the relationship between your current spiritual journey and the institutions of our culture?
- How do you currently channel your spirituality through a community? If you are not part of some community, reflect on this.

4. Annotated Bibliography (20%)

Try to submit this by the time you are at Module six or seven. **Choose at least five resources to include.** These can be articles, books, and website resources. My intention is for you to have an opportunity to bring forward, or look for, additional material beyond what is

provided in the course and that speaks to your own experience, history, and tradition around issues of spirituality. You can and should use these resources when you are considering your Spiritual Narrative assignment and to help you prepare the final assignment, an Integrative Narrative. Follow APA 7th style. I also ask you to share one or more of these resources, with your reasons for recommending it, on our Discussion Forum for others to access.

5. Summative Discussion: An Integrative Narrative (20%)

When you complete the course, you and I will have a conversation to bring things together and to conclude and evaluate your work. If we can, we will meet in person, if we cannot meet in person, we will converse by telephone or Skype/FaceTime. **I will look for you to make arrangements for us to meet when you have completed the material and are ready to finish the course.** You can call my office (902-456-0168) or text/email to make arrangements.

Our conversation will focus on what you have done throughout the course: what you have learned, how it fits into your work now and in the future, and what you are going to pursue further, related to the integration of spirituality into the work that you do, and to spirituality's connection to the counselling relationship. Be prepared to discuss how you would rate the quality of your submitted work and use the following questions as a starting point for our discussion:

1. Be prepared to talk about what you have learned: What resonated, what did you find yourself resisting, and what are you continuing to wonder about?
2. What effect(s) has this learning had on you as a counsellor?
3. How has your own background, experience, and supplemental readings (from your annotated bibliography) informed your course work, and how will you bring what you have learned into your current and/or future therapeutic practice?
4. Having completed this work, what do you think will stay with you? Why do you think what will stay with you was so affecting?
5. Based on the assessment criteria I noted, how would you rate (grade) your work in the course? Why? And what is *your* evaluation of the course?

Student Handbook

You are responsible for becoming familiar with the contents of the Student Handbook. It contains important information about scheduling examinations (if applicable), applying for extensions, withdrawing from your course, ordering books, and computer and library services available to you. If you have questions about the policies outlined in the handbook (<https://courseware.acadiau.ca/openacadia/studenthandbook.html>), contact:

Open Acadia

- 21 University Avenue (Rhodes Hall)
- Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6
- Phone: 1-800-565-6568
- Fax: 1-902-585-1068
- Email: openacadia@acadiau.ca

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity demands responsible use of the work of other scholars. It is compromised by academic dishonesty such as cheating and plagiarism. A student who is uncertain whether or not a course of action might constitute cheating or plagiarism should seek in advance the advice of the instructor involved.

- Cheating is copying or the use of unauthorized aids or the intentional falsification or invention of information in any academic exercise
- Plagiarism is the act of presenting the ideas or words of another as one's own. Students are required to acknowledge and document the sources of ideas that they use in their written work.
- Self plagiarism is also a form of plagiarism. It is the presentation of the same work in more than one course without the permission of the instructors involved.
- A student who knowingly helps another to commit an act of academic dishonesty is equally guilty.

- Penalties are levied in relation to the degree of the relevant infraction. They range from requiring the student to re-do the piece of work, through failure on that piece of work, to failure in the course, and to dismissal from the university.

Course Schedule

Normally, 5000-level courses are scheduled for Fall or Winter semesters, or during approximately three-week Spring or Summer Intersessions. You have 6 months to complete this open-entry course. Consequently, extensions, requested due to extenuating circumstances, tend to be relatively rare, and are subject to the usual policies of Open Acadia and the School of Education. The recommended schedule below is based on completion of the course in a three-month period.

Please do not leave all of your course work until a few weeks before your completion date. Although I will endeavour to accommodate your schedule within reason, I need time to review assignments.

Recommended Schedule

Weeks 1-2	Module 1 - Awareness & Spiritual Development in Counselling
Week 3	Module 2 - Similarities & Differences between Spirituality & Religion Submit: Journal Part i.
Week 4	Module 3 - Spirituality & the Therapeutic Alliance
Week 5	Module 4 - Assessment Submit: Journal Part ii.
Weeks 6-7	Module 5 - Your Mythic Journey Submit: Assignment #3 (Narrative of Personal Spiritual History)
Week 8	Module 6 - Depression & Dark Night
Week 9	Module 7 - Evil & Suffering Submit: Assignment #4 (Annotated Bibliography)
Week 10	Module 8 - Forgiveness
Week 11	Module 9 - Death Submit: Journal Part iii.
Week 12	Module 10 - EnLIGHTenment Submit: Assignment #2 Reflection Paper (Combined Journal Entries i-iv) Schedule: Assignment #5 Integrative Discussion

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Last modified: Tuesday, 12 July 2022, 9:21 AM

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