



**COURSE TITLE/SECTION:** SOCW 7354/31104: Spirituality and Aging **TIME:** M 9-12:00

**FACULTY:** W. Andrew Achenbaum **E-mail:** [achenbaum@uh.edu](mailto:achenbaum@uh.edu) **Phone:** 713-743-8070

## **I. Course**

### **A. Catalog Description**

Cr. 3 (3-0). Prerequisite: 31 hours in social work or consent of instructor. Examines the significance of spirituality over the life course with attention to the theoretical connections among spirituality, religion, and vital aging as well as clinical implications for practice with clients.

### **B. Purpose**

This elective course is designed to familiarize students with western and eastern spiritual exercises, life review, and autobiographies as ways to expose older people to possibilities for inner reflections and social connections that traditional religious institutions do not always afford.

## **II. Course Objectives**

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Distinguish between spirituality and religion within and across cultural boundaries
2. Trace the importance of spirituality over the life span
3. Demonstrate spiritually sensitive approaches in a manner consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics.
4. Use spiritual exercises as a way to integrate personal and professional dimensions of self.
5. Express ways in which spirituality may be influenced by one's gender, class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual/affective preference.
6. Describe ways to introduce spirituality into social work practice.

## **III. Course Content**

SOCW 7354/31104 will focus on several pathways to spiritual development and identify various ways in which social workers might incorporate spirituality into their practice. The course will entail discussing assigned readings, preparing a class meditation, keeping a journal, and writing a short essay and a term paper.

#### IV. Textbooks

Atchley, R. C. (2009) SPIRITUALITY AND AGING. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

Kurtz, E. & K. Ketcham (2002). SPIRITUALITY OF IMPERFECTION. NY: Bantam

Rohr, R. (2011). BREATHING UNDER WATER. Cincinnati: St. Anthony

Thibault, J. M. and R. L. Morgan (2009). NO ACT OF LOVE IS EVER WASTED. Nashville: Upper Room Books.

#### V. Course Requirements

- A. Students will keep up with readings in order to join class discussions.
- B. Written assignments will be negotiated with the instructor. The first paper (1-2 pages) will explicate the students' understanding of links among aging, spirituality, and a particular faith tradition (or lack thereof). The second (8-10 pages) will describe a technique (1) for inviting clients to tap their spiritual dimensions in a social-work setting OR (2) taking care of yourself in your social-work practice as a clinician and empathetic person. Group projects are permissible as long as they serve everyone's professional development.
- C. Students will work together in creating a 20-30 minute meditation for the beginning of a class meeting to be determined. They should give the class some take-away materials that to help them use the technique discussed.
- D. Each student will keep a journal, logging their spiritual journey during the term. In addition, beginning the week of January 28, I ask students to reflect on the Ten Commandments, which you may reframe as you deem appropriate, as part of the journal entry. The journal will not be graded for content, but the document must be turned in.
- E. There will be no mid-term or final examination.

#### VI. Evaluation and Grading

- A. General:** In accordance with GCSW policies, two absences (granted before class) are permitted. Excessive absences, excused or not, will adversely affect grades. Given the nature of the course material, all of us should exercise care to respect individual diversity of faith-based traditions and beliefs. Special care should be exercised in distinguishing religion from spirituality. Questioning ideas is fine; derogating people is not. We want to establish a level of trust so that we all feel comfortable bridging professional and personal spheres.
- B. Evaluation:** Class participation (including meditation exercise and practical application), 50%; paper 1 counts 10%; 2d paper, 30%; journal, 10%.
- C. Grades:** Incompletes, in accordance with UH policy, will be given only in

instances that, for reasons beyond a student's control, a temporary and conditional grade is warranted. Students are responsible for informing me immediately the reasons for being unable to complete an assignment. Unfinished assignments must be completed early within the next term. Students should be instructed not to re-register for the same course in a following semester in order to complete unfinished assignments. A grade of "I" cannot be changed to a grade of "W," but within a year of its granting will automatically revert to an "F" or "U."

The following grading scale has been adopted in GCSW:

A = 96-100% A-=90-94 B+=87-89 B =84-86 B-=80-83 C+=77-79 C=74-76 C-=70-72

Writing well is essential to communicating ideas here and in your career. Be logical and felicitous. Proofread. Avail yourself of UH's Writing Center if necessary.

**D. Plagiarism:** To avoid any confusion concerning plagiarism, please consult and use the APA style manual as well as the University Policy on Student Dishonesty in the UH Student Handbook. The contents of ALL papers must adhere to APA format with due credit given to any authors whose ideas (on line or in print) you incorporate in your work. Direct quotations—using at least four words from specific author(s)--must be set in quotation marks or set aside as an indented quotation. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense: Anyone incorporating another person's ideas or words without appropriate citation will receive an F in this course. Other actions may be taken by the College to suspect or expel a student who is found to be dishonest.

**E. Accommodations:** Whenever possible, and in accordance with 504/ADA guidelines, the University of Houston will attempt to provide reasonable academic accommodations to students who request and require them. Students must contact the UH Center for DisABILITIES. For information call 713/743/5400 or to on line, <http://www.uh.edu/csd/>

**F. Office Hours:** I will be in room 333 from 1 until 4 on Tuesday afternoons. For an appointment at another time, call me at 3-8070 or email me at [Achenbaum@uh.edu](mailto:Achenbaum@uh.edu).

## READING ASSIGNMENTS FOR CLASS MEETINGS

January 13: Intro to class & syllabus. Instructor's working definition of spirituality

January 21: Dr. King holiday. Start work on next week's assignment

January 28: Rohr, Introduction; Kurtz & Ketcham, Introduction

1<sup>st</sup> Commandment in Journal

Atchley, Preface, Intro, Chapter 1; Appendices A & B

February 3: Book of Job, ch. 1-5, 38-42  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch. 1-2  
Mary Oliver, "The Summer Day"  
2<sup>d</sup> Commandment in Journal

February 10: Atchley, ch. 2-3  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch. 3-4  
Achenbaum, "Cultural Gerontology"  
3<sup>d</sup> Commandment in Journal

February 17: Atchley, ch. 4-5  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch. 5-6  
4<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Journal  
"Siddhartha"

February 24: Atchley, ch. 6  
Rohr, ch. 1-3  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch. 7-8  
Excerpt from Poitier, MEASURE OF A MAN  
5<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Journal

March 3: Paper # 1 due in class—be prepared to discuss it;  
Atchley, ch. 7  
Rohr, ch. 4-6  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch. 9-10  
Rumi, "Only Breath"  
6<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Journal

- March 10: Spring Break
- March 17: Rohr, ch. 7-9  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch. 11-12  
7<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Journal  
Rumi, "Gamble everything for love"
- March 24: Rohr, ch. 10-12  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch, 13-14  
8<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Journal  
Anne Lamott, "Becoming the person you were meant to be"
- March 31: Atchley, ch. 8  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch. 15  
Thibault/Morgan, Introduction and ch. 1-2  
McFadden & Lunsman, "Arts involvement and spirituality...."  
9<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Journal
- April 7: Thibault/Morgan, ch. 3-5  
Kurtz & Ketcham, ch. 16  
10<sup>th</sup> Commandment in Journal  
Rumi, "A children's game"
- April 15: JOURNALS DUE IN CLASS  
Thibault/Morgan, ch. 6-7, Appendix 2  
Atchley, Conclusion  
Rohr, Postscript  
Psalms 23, 42-43, 91
- April 21: Paper presentations
- April 28: Paper presentations
- May 2: Hard copy of your paper due by noon in my office