



COURSE TITLE/SECTION: SOCW 7336/17948 Spirituality and Aging

TIME: Monday 9:00am-12:00pm

FACULTY: W. Andrew Achenbaum

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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 completion of 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/affectional preference.
6. Describe ways to introduce spirituality into social work practice.

III. Course Content

SOCW 7354 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 two papers.

IV. Textbooks

- Barks, C. (trans.)(2004). ESSENTIAL RUMI. San Francisco: Harper.
- Mitchell, S. (1987). THE BOOK OF JOB. San Francisco: North Point
- Poitier, S. (2000). THE MEASURE OF A MAN. San Francisco: Harper
- 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 (3-5 pages) will explicate the students' understanding of links among aging, spirituality, and a particular faith tradition (or lack thereof). The second (5-10 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. This requirement will not be graded for content but it will 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 traditions and beliefs. Questioning ideas is fine; derogating people is not. Our primary task will be 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%.

The following standard grading scale has been adopted for all courses taught in the college.

A =	96-100% of the points	C+ =	76-79.9%
A- =	92-95.9%	C =	72-75.9%
B+ =	88-91.9%	C- =	68-71.9%
B =	84-87.9%	D =	64-67.9%
B- =	80-83.9%	F =	Below 64%

Writing well is essential to communicating ideas. Be logical and felicitous. Proofread.

C. Office Hours: I will be in room 333 from 7 to 11 on Tuesdays mornings. For an appointment at another time, call me at 3-8070 or email me at Achenbaum@uh.edu.

VII. Policy on grades of I (Incomplete):

The grade of "I" (Incomplete) is a conditional and temporary grade given when students are either **(a)** passing a course or **(b)** still have a reasonable chance of passing in the judgment of the instructor but, for non-academic reasons beyond their control have not completed a relatively small part of all requirements. Students are responsible for informing the instructor immediately of the reasons for not submitting an assignment on time or not taking an examination. Students must contact the instructor of the course in which they receive an "I" grade to make arrangements to complete the course requirements. Students should be instructed not to re-register for the same course in a following semester in order to complete the incomplete requirements.

The grade of "I" must be changed by fulfillment of course requirements within one year of the date awarded or it will be changed automatically to an "F" (or to a "U" [Unsatisfactory] in S/U graded courses). The instructor may require a time period of less than one year to fulfill course requirements, and the grade may be changed by the instructor at any time to reflect work completed in the course. The grade of "I" may not be changed to a grade of **W**.

Please refer to the UH Graduate and Professional Studies bulleting for the university policy regarding a grade of Incomplete (I). Incompletes will be given only in accordance with this policy.

VIII. Policy on academic dishonesty and plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate and maintain a professional standard of writing in all courses, do one's own work, give credit for the ideas of others, and provide proper citation of source materials. Any student who plagiarizes any part of a paper or assignment or engages in any form of academic dishonesty will

receive an "I" for the class with a recommendation that a grade of F be assigned, subsequent to a College hearing, in accordance with the University policy on academic dishonesty. Other actions may also be recommended and/or taken by the College to suspend or expel a student who engages in academic dishonesty.

All papers and written assignments must be fully and properly referenced using APA style format (or as approved by the instructor), with credit given to the authors whose ideas you have used. If you are using direct quotes from a specific author (or authors), you must set the quote in quotation marks or use an indented quotation form. For all direct quotes, you must include the page number(s) in your text or references. Any time that you use more than four or five consecutive words taken from another author, you must clearly indicate that this is a direct quotation. Please consult the current APA manual for further information.

Academic dishonesty includes using any other person's work and representing it as your own. This includes (but is not limited to) using graded papers from students who have previously taken this course as the basis for your work. It also includes, but is not limited to submitting the same paper to more than one class. If you have any specific questions about plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please raise these questions in class or make an appointment to see instructor. This statement is consistent with the University Policy on Academic Dishonesty that can be found in your UH Student Handbook.

IX. Americans with Disabilities Statement

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. Please call 713-743-5400 for more assistance. Instructors may not provide accommodations without supporting documentation from the UH Center for Students with Disabilities.

READING ASSIGNMENTS FOR CLASS MEETINGS

- January 23: Introduction, Explicate syllabus, Define spirituality
- January 30: Mitchell, p. vii-p. 9; Rohr, Introduction
- February 6: Mitchell, complete *Job*; Holly Oxlander: Tolles, *The Power of Now*
- February 13: Rohr, ch. 1-6
- February 20: Rohr, ch. 7-12
- February 27: Paper # 1 due in class—be prepared to discuss it; Barks, pp. xv-16
- March 5: Poitier, ch. 1-3; Barks, sections 3-4
- March 12: SPRING BREAK
- March 19: Poitier, ch. 4-6; Barks, sections 5-6
- March 26: Poitier, ch. 7-8; Barks, sections 7-8
- April 2: Poitier, ch. 9-11; Barks, sections 9-10
- April 9: Thibault/Morgan, ch. 1-3; Barks, sections 11-12
- April 16: Thibault/Morgan, ch. 4-6; Barks, sections 13, 15, 18
- April 23: Thibault/Morgan, appendices; Rohr, postscript; Barks, sections 23, 23, 26
- April 30: Present 2d papers; written version due May 2 by noon in my office