

Course Overview

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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 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 they will help clients feel at home examining issues of belief and unbelief, as well as the effects such issues have on their lives. Students are expected to be open to other belief systems than their own as we reflect on the culture and techniques of both western and eastern religions.

Overall Course Objectives:

The student 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

Instructor

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Michael Belgrave

Since I graduated from Acadia's counselling program in 2007, I have worked as a counselling therapist at Breakthrough, a co-operative private practice in Halifax made up of counsellors, clinical social workers and psychologists.

During undergraduate studies, I majored in Religious Studies and I received a Master of Divinity Degree from Atlantic School of Theology in addition to the Master of Education in Counselling that I received from Acadia. I am an Adjunct Professor in the Counselling program and I have taught the Pre-Practicum and Seminar & Practicum courses as well as the Professional Issues course.

I have worked in parochial and clinical pastoral settings as well as in corporate staff development and human resources prior to moving into clinical practice.

Because of my educational background and my work experiences, I often find myself working with

individuals, couples and families who want to explore meaning and values and transcendence and the dimension of spirituality in their lives and relationships.

Contact Information:

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Course Materials

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Educ 5553 Coursepack from Acadia bookstore.

See the [student handbook](#) for ordering information.

Web-references included in course modules.

Evaluation

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Evaluation will be based on the following Assignments

3 Journals (required but not marked)	
Narrative of Spiritual History	30%
Reflective Paper	40%
Integrative Narrative (conversation)	30%

No tests or written exams.

The assignments are delivered to the instructor via assignment drop-boxes. 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: files are requested to be in MS Word (2007) or .pdf format.

1. Journal Reflections (not marked, but will be included in final paper): Due after you

complete Modules 2, 4 & 9, based on reading material, DVD, and youtube videos.

2. A Narrative of your Spiritual History (30%)

"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.

It is my hope that this assignment will be a conscious endeavour that fosters awareness, hope and a sense of awe about the beauty, the tragedy and comedy of your story. Please feel free to share or withhold what you feel safe in doing so. It 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 tells me (and reminds you) how you got to where you are today.

"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. Papers should follow APA style.

A few guidelines (suggestions only) 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.

3. Reflective Paper (40%)

Four Parts:

You will post the first three parts of this assignment, which will be acknowledged but not graded. These will be included in this final assignment along with part 4 and should be presented as ONE final paper. Follow APA style. Grades will be lower if there is no title page, including your name, the title of the course, date, and my name.

1. 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. (title page, plus two pages, double spaced, 12 font)
2. Journal what you learned from the excerpt on choice from Scott Peck's life. How has it sensitized you for present or future clients? (title page, plus two pages, double spaced, 12 font)
3. 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). (Title page, plus three pages, double spaced, 12 font)
4. 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. (Title page, plus two pages, double spaced, 12 font)

4. Integrative Narrative (30%)

At the end of Module 10, we will have a conversation in which we will ask:

1. What you have learned?
2. What effect(s) has this learning had on you as a counsellor?
3. How will this experience influence your work with your clients and who and how you are as a counsellor?

Student Handbook

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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](#), contact:

Open Acadia (formerly Distance Education)
38 Crowell Drive (Willett House)
Wolfville, NS B4P 2R6
Phone: 902-585-1434 or 1-800-565-6568
Fax: 902-585-1068
Email: openacadia@acadiau.ca

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.

You have 6 months to complete this course. You may set your own schedule, but if you intend to complete the course in less than 3 months, you should let me know so that we can arrange a schedule.

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

Recommended Schedule

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Weeks 1-2	Module 1 - Awareness and Spiritual Development in Counselling
Week 3	Module 2 -Similarities and Differences between Spirituality and Religion
Week 4	Module 3 - Spirituality and the Therapeutic Alliance
Weeks 5	Module 4 - Assessment
Week 6-7	Module 5 - Your Mythic Journey
Week 8	Module 6 - Depression & Dark Night
Weeks 9	Module 7 - Evil & Suffering
Week 10	Module 8 - Forgiveness
Week 11	Module 9 - Death
Week 12	Module 10 - EnLIGHTenment