



**COURSE TITLE/SECTION:** SOCW 7397/24002: Spirituality and Aging

**TIME:** Monday 1:30-4:30 p.m.

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

### III. Course Content

SOCW 7397 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 a discussion of assigned readings, preparations of a class meditation and practical exercise, and two papers.

### IV. Textbooks

Barks, C. (trans.)(2004). eSSENTIAL RUMI. San Francisco: Harper.

Poitier, S. (2000). THE MEASURE OF A MAN. San Francisco: Harper

Rohr, R. (2003). EVERYTHING BELONGS. New York: Crossroad

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. The 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 for inviting clients to tap their spiritual dimensions in a social-work setting. Group projects are permissible if 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.
- D. In lieu of a textbook that offers applications of spirituality in working with clients, students will distribute a paper on such a technique (such as life review) to accompany their 20-30 minute class discussion.
- 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 the professional and the personal.

- B. Evaluation:** Class participation (including meditation exercise and practical application), 50%; paper 1 counts 15%; 2d paper, 35%.
- 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%	C+ = 76-78.9
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%

- 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 suspend 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 7 to 11 on Tuesdays mornings. 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 24 Introduction, Explicate syllabus, Define spirituality

January 31 Rohr, ch. 1; Barks, sections 1-2

February 7 Rohr, ch. 2; Barks, sections 3-4

February 14 Rohr, ch. 3; Barks, sections 5-6

February 21 Rohr, ch. 4; Barks, sections 7-8; FIRST PAPER DUE

February 28 Rohr, ch. 5; Barks, sections 9-10

March 7 Rohr, ch. 6; Barks, sections 11-12

March 14 SPRING BREAK

March 21 Poitier, ch. 1-3; Barks, sections 13-14

March 28 Poitier, ch. 4-6; Barks, sections 15-16

April 4 Poitier, ch. 7-8; Barks, sections 17-19

April 11 Poitier, ch. 9-11; Barks, sections 20, 22-23

April 18 Thibault/Morgan, ch. 1-3; Barks, sections 24-25

April 25 Thibault/Morgan, ch. 4-6; Barks, sections 26-27

May 2 Thibault/M, appendices. 2-3; Rohr, Guide, Barks, sec. 28

May 5 Final paper in my office by noon