

**Valdosta State University, Division of Social Work**  
**SOWK 7890 Fall 2013 (3 Credit Hours)**  
**Human Behavior in the Social Environment**

Instructor: Dr. Michael Sanger  
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Credit hours: 3  
Location: EC2001I

Class Meeting times:

Class Dates:

August 17 <sup>th</sup>	1:30—5:30
Sept. 7 <sup>th</sup>	1:30—5:30
Sept. 28 <sup>th</sup>	1:30—5:30
Oct 19 <sup>th</sup>	1:30—5:30
Nov. 16 <sup>th</sup>	1:30—5:30

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

Canda, E. R. & Furman, L. D. (2010). Spiritual diversity in social work practice: The heart of helping. NY: Oxford University Press.

Additional readings will be provided

### **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY**

BlazeView will be used as a tool for course enhancement. Your documents will reside in the BlazeView course site, where you will find all handouts, and links to Internet sites. I want to encourage you to access the online course materials in Blazeview as soon as possible. Begin with the Home Page and the top left link entitled "Getting Started," and then explore the rest of the course.

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND RATIONALE**

Social work seeks to assist people to achieve their full potential within their environmental contexts. In order to do so it adopts an holistic person-in-environment perspective to guide practice. Since the historical foundation of the profession, many social workers have recognized that a holistic perspective requires taking into account the biological, psychological, sociological, and spiritual aspects of human needs, strengths, and experience. However, the spiritual aspects of social work practice have been commonly marginalized or ignored in social work education until recently. Minority spiritual perspectives have been especially neglected given the Eurocentric assumptions common in social work. However, current trends in social work education and practice, as well as the NASW Code of Ethics, support the inclusion of content on religious and spiritual diversity.

Accordingly this course is a diversity practice selective that provides a comprehensive introduction to spiritual aspects of culturally competent and spiritually sensitive social work practice. It builds on the

generalist approach, giving a more specialized understanding of spiritual diversity in social work practice and its relevance to policy, research, and theory.

In this course, the term "spirituality" designates the human striving for a sense of meaning and fulfillment through morally satisfying relationships between individuals, communities, the surrounding universe, and the ontological ground of our existence (whether conceived in theistic, animistic, nontheistic, atheistic or other terms). As such, spirituality is expressed through diverse forms in our clients' lives. Often, spirituality is expressed in religious forms (i.e. through institutionalized patterns of belief and behavior oriented toward spiritual concerns). However, spirituality may also be expressed without adherence to a religion. Clients' spiritual perspectives are related inextricably with their understandings of suffering and injustice and their attempts to accomplish personal and collective goals. Therefore, social work practitioners need to be prepared to respond to the spiritual aspects of client needs, strengths and experiences.

This course provides a framework of knowledge, values, skills and experiences for culturally competent, ethical, and spiritually-sensitive social work practice. A comparative, critically reflective approach to content is employed. The roles of religion and spirituality in supporting or impeding individual strengths and social justice are considered.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES.**

By the conclusion of this course students will demonstrate an ability to:

1. Identify and critically reflect on diverse religious and nonreligious spiritual perspectives and their implications for social work practice.
2. Understand and analyze the history of the relationship between religion and social work as well as the current state-of-the-art for culturally competent, ethical and spiritually-sensitive social work practice.
3. Understand and formulate qualities of a spiritually-sensitive helping relationship and evaluate their own practice and its outcomes accordingly.
4. Understand and critically evaluate guidelines for spiritually-sensitive bio-psycho-social assessment of human development and well-being, including use of standard diagnostic systems such as DSM as well as strengths based assessment tools.
5. Identify strategies for effective cooperation with religious and nonreligious spiritual support systems of clients regarding both direct and indirect practice.
6. Identify and critically evaluate practical, theoretical, ethical and research-based guidelines for utilizing religiously derived social work practice activities, such as religious symbolism, prayer, meditation, ritual, and referral to and collaboration with religiously affiliated social service agencies and community organizations.
7. Understand the supportive and oppressive aspects of religious and spiritual perspectives concerning issues of human diversity, such as gender, ethnicity and culture, age, sexual orientation, ability, and social class.
8. Apply to practice a framework of knowledge, theory, values, and skills for spiritually-sensitive social work.

## **Selected topics**

Various models of empowerment and liberation for understanding and working with spiritually diverse clients as an example of diverse clients populations.

A foundation of theoretical perspectives for spiritually sensitive and culturally competent practice such as transpersonal theories and spiritual development models.

Guidelines for ethical decision-making with regard to addressing spirituality in practice consistent with social work professional values and the NASW Code of Ethics.

Guidelines for assessment of strengths and challenges of client systems related to spirituality, including appropriate use of DSM regarding distinguishing between psychopathology and spiritual crises.

Guidelines for application of spiritually-oriented skills and techniques, including use of religiously derived helping activities and support systems and nonreligious interventions such as stress-reduction meditation.

Guidelines for establishment of a spiritually-sensitive helping relationship, including interpersonal communication skills, organizational policies and procedures, and community collaboration.

Current debates and issues pertaining to recent federal policy initiatives on" faith-based social services in relation to social work.

Use of holistic approaches to practice that go beyond verbal interaction, such as creative arts, therapeutic dreamwork, meditation, and ritual.

Understanding of local community religious traditions and support systems which are commonly used by diverse local client populations.

Cross-cultural and international comparison of religious traditions and their impact on the understanding and provision of human service.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

Note: The main purpose of assignments and course policies is to encourage learning and professional standards of conduct. I invite you to meet with me individually by appointment if you would like to discuss your particular learning interests, goals, and needs. Students may request to design an alternative to the standard graded assignments at least 3 weeks prior to due date. Requests must be based on legitimate academic rationale and meet the learning objectives of the standard assignment.

The general topic of this course is inherently controversial. Students are expected to communicate between themselves and the instructor in a manner that encourages open dialogue, appreciates diversity, and tolerates disagreement. In a public educational institution, religious proselytization by the instructor or students is prohibited. We may well challenge each other to

pursue understanding of truth, but we may not coerce or denigrate each other on the basis of our own versions of the truth. (PCP)

### **On-line and in-class discussions (10% of total grade)**

This course relies heavily on students' participation and mutual support. Weekly discussions in either in on-line or face to face format will be used to explore the centering being addressed each week.

### **Weekly check-ins (1% of total grade)**

At the end of each week you will submit a discussion posting that includes a brief comment or question (one or two sentences) on issues for further discussion. These can be issues that are not clear to you or that you would like to explore further. The purpose of this is to give the instructor feedback on items to cover in more depth and/or clarify.

### **Weekly Self-Reflection Exercises and Journal Entries (70% of total grade)**

This assignment is based on the exercises listed at the end of each chapter in Canda & Furman's textbook. It allows for flexibility and variety of learning styles. The exercises stimulate self-reflection and provide guidance for application of text material to social work practice and personal growth. You will need to choose and complete an exercise for each chapter and write about each one. The length of each reflection essay (per chapter) should be about 3-5 pages, typed and double spaced. This assignment is adapted from guidelines for journaling at the end of chapter one (Exercise 1.3) in the Canda & Furman book. Be sure to follow those guidelines.

### **Take Home Exam or Exploration Paper (19 % of total grade)**

There will be an exam that tests students' knowledge of course content, or a paper of your choosing

**Extra Credit Option: Creative Project (5 points maximum possible added to final grade. For example, if the final grade is 85%, this grade can be raised up to 90%)**

## **GRADING SCALE**

Your final grade will be based on the points you earn divided by the approximately the highest point total of anybody in the class. Thus if somebody was perfect (and I guarantee you that nobody is perfect) they would have 675 points. And if you got a total of 600 points you'd have a **88%**. Which is a B.

- A** 90-100%
- B** 80-89%
- C** 70-79% (a "C" involves one deficiency point—See Student Handbook, p. 21)
- D** 60-69% (a "D" involves two deficiency points—See Student Handbook, p. 21)
- F** Less than 60%

I will need to inform your Advisor if your final **grade falls below a "B."**

**Please Note:** Students should be aware of various issues that may adversely affect their grades and even their participation in the program. These regulations arise from legal codes, The Georgia Board of

Regents, Valdosta State University, or the Valdosta State University Division of Social Work. All of them are listed in the Student Handbook at <http://www.valdosta.edu/sowk/documents/StudentHandbook07-08.pdf> IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO READ AND UNDERSTAND ALL OF THE STUDENT HANDBOOK. Remember the "STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING" signed by all students (see pages 20-24).

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASS TOPICS AND DUE DATES FOR ASSIGNMENTS**

<b>Class Session and Date</b>	<b>Provisional Topics and Reading Assignments</b>
First F2F meeting	<u>Introduction to Course and Key Issues for Cultural Competence</u>
Week One.	<u>Values and Ethics for Spiritually Sensitive and Culturally Competent Social Work</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 1
Week Two	<u>Compassion, Justice, and the Call to Service</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 2.
Week Three	<u>The Meaning of Spirituality for Practice and Research</u> Canda & Furman, ch. 3.
Week Four*	<u>Spirituality and Resilient Response to Chronic Illness: Spirituality in Life Context</u> Readings will be provided
Week Five	<u>Spiritual Diversity Issues Relating to Oppression, Empowerment, and Social Policy</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 4.
Week Six	<u>Diverse Religious Perspectives on Social Work</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 5, pp. 143-162.
Week Seven	<u>Diverse Religious Perspectives on Social Work</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 5, pp. 162-184.
Week Eight	<u>Diverse Nonsectarian Spiritual Perspectives on Social Work</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 6. Readings from Ken Wilber will be provided
Week Nine	<u>Evaluating the Practice Context for Spiritual Sensitivity and Cultural Appropriateness</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 7.
Week Ten	<u>Assessing Spiritual Development and Issues in Using DSM-IV-TR</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 8. Additional readings will be provided

Week Eleven	<u>Strengths Oriented Assessment and Ethical Decision Making in Spiritually Sensitive Practice</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 9.
Week Twelve	<u>Spiritually Sensitive Practice Skills and Techniques</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 10, pp. 314-335.
Week Thirteen	<u>Spiritually Sensitive Practice Skills and Techniques Continued</u> Read Canda & Furman, ch. 10, pp. 335-358.
Week Fourteen	<u>A Worldwide View and Concluding Celebration</u> (Co-designed by students and instructor.) Read Canda & Furman, ch. 11.

Since the course is a seminar it will be guided in part by the interests of the students taking part. Thus the readings, assignments, and topics covered may be adjusted over time.