

**COURSE SYLLABUS--COUN 691—Fall 2010**  
**RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL ISSUES IN COUNSELING**  
**Tuesdays, 6:30 to 9:15 pm**

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**Office:** Dickmeyer 209 **Office Hours:** TBA and by appointment

**Required Text (other readings TBA)**

Nelson, J. (2009). *Psychology, religion and spirituality*. New York: Springer.

**University Mission**

Valparaiso University "values respect for learning and truth, for human dignity, for freedom from ignorance and prejudice, and for a critically inquiring spirit." It "aims to develop in its members these values, together with a sense of vocation and social responsibility," and "holds that these values receive their deepest meaning and strength within the context of the Christian faith." Full statements of the University mission are given in the General and Graduate catalogs.

**Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of psychology professional programs at Valparaiso University is to produce competent, reflective practitioners with a sense of moral and ethical responsibility to their clients and the larger community. In general, this goal is met by:

- Increasing student **knowledge** and **sensitivity** through study of issues, theories and research findings, as well as experiential exercises. This provides a base for reflective thinking.
- Increasing **competence** through study/practice of assessment and intervention techniques
- Increasing **leadership** potential by increasing knowledge of professional and community issues, especially social and professional delivery structures that impact the effective provision of services.

Essential to this task is the building of a theoretical framework that will enable counselors to understand their clients and develop interventions for them. At Valparaiso University, development of a biopsychosocial framework is encouraged by considering developmental, biological, sociocultural, systemic and learned bases of behavior. Understanding of assessment, counseling and case management techniques flow from these theoretical perspectives.

## **How the Course Relates to the Conceptual Framework Course Objectives**

Since the early days of American psychology, religion and spirituality have been identified as powerful forces in human development. However, little training is typically offered about how these issues appear in counseling sessions, or how counselors might best address spiritual and religious issues in their work. This course is designed to (1) introduce the student to the background **knowledge** and practices helpful in understanding the developmental, spiritual/religious and counseling issues that form a background to counseling, and (2) allow the student to explore specific models and techniques by which these issues may be *implicitly* or *explicitly* worked on in counseling. The knowledge and skill practice is designed to increase our **sensitivity** to religious or spiritual issues, as well as **competence** and ability to provide **leadership** for service delivery in this area.

A key belief underlying this course is that the religious beliefs, values and practices of the counselor affect the counseling session, particularly when spiritual and religious issues are a focus of the work. Thus, the development of competence must involve a personal exploration of these issues and how they are likely to affect our practice. Some course content and exercises are devoted to this issue.

### **Class Format and Methods of Instruction**

The scope and nature of the topic is best handled by approaching our topic in two ways:

1. Lecture introductions to the subissues covered in the course
2. Readings that cover basic material relevant to the subissues covered in the course
3. Discussion and exercises to help students integrate the material and consider how to apply it in the practical counseling setting.

## Brief Course Schedule

### Part I--Fundamentals

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u>  | <u>Text Reading</u> |
|-------------|---|---------------------|
| Aug 24      | Introduction  | Chapter 1           |
| 31          | Religious traditions and experience                                   | Chapters 3-4        |
| Sep 07      | Religious & spiritual issues in development                           | Chapters 5, 7-9     |
| 14          | Religion, health & mental health: Gen issues                          | Chapters 10-11      |
| 21          | Religion, health & mental health: Specifics<br>Depression, addictions |                     |
| 28          | Project 1 due   |                     |

### Part II--Bases of Helping

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u>   | <u>Text Reading</u> |
|-------------|--|---------------------|
| Sep 28      | Traditional religious approaches<br>Spiritual direction, pastoral counseling | Chapter 14 (part)   |
| Oct 05      | Assessment and personal issues   | Chapter 6 (part)    |
| 12          | Models of counseling and religious issues                                    | Chapter 14 (part)   |
| 19          | New religious-based approaches   | Chapter 14 (part)   |
| 26          | Religious issues and counseling theories                                     |                     |
| Nov 02      | Consultation   | Chapter 10 (part)   |
| 09          | Project 2 due  |                     |

### Part III--Applications

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Topic</u>          | <u>Text Reading</u> |
|-------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Nov 09      | Case studies          |                     |
| 16          | Case studies          |                     |
| 30          | Case studies          |                     |
| Dec 07      | Case studies          |                     |
|             | Review for final exam |                     |
| 14          | FINAL EXAM            |                     |

## **Assignments and Grading**

Each student is expected to (1) do assigned readings, attend class sessions, participate in discussions, and complete required study questions; (2) do two projects exploring in depth the issues raised in Parts I and II of the course; (3) produce an oral presentation analyzing spiritual and religious issues with regard to a specific case; and (4) participate in a group oral final exam. At least one of the projects should be a powerpoint presentation on an advanced topic related to the course, the other may be a second presentation, a personal project, or some type of literature review. Grading for the course will be based upon the following system of weighted grades:

Attendance, participation, study questions: 20%

Project 1: 20%

Project 2: 20%

Oral presentation: 20%

Final exam: 20%

## **Honor code and Ethical standards**

As per university policy, all written work that is submitted should have a written and signed statement of the honor code: *I have neither given nor received, nor tolerated others use of unauthorized aid.* Papers and projects must be your original work and not have been produced for another class unless prior arrangements are made with the instructor. Failure to abide by these expectations will be treated as an honor code violation. Please contact the instructor if you have questions about what constitutes unauthorized aid in a given situation.

In addition, students are expected to abide by the ethical guidelines spelled out in the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice spelled out by the American Counseling Association.