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**CPS 8970: Integrating Contemplative Spirituality into Counseling**  
**Georgia State University**  
**Maymester Summer 2016**

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**Office Hours:** By appointment  
**Graduate Credit:** 3 hours CRN: TBD

**COE Unit Theme:** *“Leadership and Scholarship Focused on Learning and Development”*  
**Departmental Theme:** *“Developing Professional Skills to Maximize Student’s Potential for Learning”*

**Required Text:**

Hook, J. N., Davis, D. E., Owen, J., DeBlaere, C. (2016). *Cultural humility*. American Psychological Association.

Aten, J. D., & Leach, M. M. (2009). *Spirituality and the therapeutic process: A comprehensive resource from intake to termination*. American Psychological Association.

Readings drawn from counseling/psychology literature, religious studies, philosophy, and history.

**Course Objectives:**

- Increase knowledge regarding theories about the role and function of religion/spirituality and the sacred in people’s lives.
- Increase knowledge regarding historical tensions within Christianity regarding eastern spiritualities and consider implications for modern polemical issues within the counseling profession.
- Develop skills for forming, maintaining, and when necessary, repairing a strong alliance with religiously/spiritually different clients or communities (with a focus on contemplative traditions within Christianity and other faiths).
- Develop skills for integrating religion/spirituality into the treatment of clients coping with physical health problems, mental health problems, or disability, including use of contemplative activities that are tailored to the client’s particular faith background.
- Gain a cultural immersion experience designed to provide greater awareness of contemplative spiritual perspectives.
- Promote personal and professional development regarding the ability to approach difficult dialogues about spirituality with humility and respect.

**Course Description and Rationale:**

Eastern spirituality has exerted considerable influence on counseling and psychology. This course is a practical introduction to integrating spirituality in counseling, with a particular focus on assessing and adapting contemplative activities to Christian clients. Moreover, we also consider how to adapt contemplative practices to spiritual, but not religious or non-religious individuals. Our approach is based on a recently proposed model of cultural humility in counseling. The course applies the model to humility regarding spiritual identity. Humility involves having an accurate view of oneself, including limits in one’s awareness, knowledge, and

skills for working with diverse groups. In addition, humility involves the ability to regulate egotism and cultivate an other-oriented stance, especially when relationships are strained by one's identity and loyalty to cultural groups. Humility enhances the ability of a counselor to work with diverse clients, particularly across strong identify differences such as religious/spiritual commitment. Although it may seem ironic to "work on" one's humility, the virtue of humility is an organizing theme of this course.

The course includes didactic, experiential, and dialogue elements. The didactic portion will focus on interdisciplinary (including psychology, history, religious studies) readings and content designed to provide some background and context for the experiential activities. The experiential component will involve several guest speakers who identify as Christian, but prioritize contemplative practice in their spiritual work. To provide a contrast, we will also visit several spiritual communities outside the Christian tradition. This relational experience will deepen students' understanding of the complexity of spiritual narratives, history and commitment, and offer students the opportunity to explore their own spiritual/religious identities in a context that invites empathy for other traditions. The dialogue portion will involve several conversations in preparation, during, and after the experiential component. The intention of these conversations is to try to gain a deeper understanding of the worldview and experience of groups with different religious/spiritual perspectives from one's own. This may involve groups from a different religion or subgroups within one's own religion. We will also focus on implications for one's professional work and have several self-directed assignments designed to help you consolidate personal and professional growth. What follows is an overview of the logic of the course.

After a general orientation, the second class provides a general argument for the importance of effectively working with spirituality in counseling. Religion/spirituality is an important aspect of identity for many clients, but many counselors feel uncomfortable with their ability to effectively explore and incorporate religion/spirituality into their clinical work. The third and fourth classes provide a general overview of the (a) influence of eastern spirituality within psychology and (b) various strains of contemplative practice within the Christian tradition. Classes five through nine describe a model of cultural humility regarding spirituality, apply this model to assessment of spirituality, provide practical training in a variety of contemplative activities that can be used in counseling, and learn to adapt the presentation of these activities to increase acceptability in Christians as well as other clients. Classes ten through twelve involve dialogue with three different spiritual leaders. We provide practical training in how to form collaborative relationships with clergy. Engaging with another culture can be a powerful way to gain perspective regarding the strengths and limits of one's perspective—a "fish out of water" experience. Humility involves the ability and freedom to focus deeply on the other. Thus, it can accelerate counselors' ability to form a therapeutic alliance, and develop a greater sense of empathy for the perspective and experience of religiously different individuals. The final two classes involve presentations of course projects.

### **Key Activities**

- Explore how sacred space provides and reflects meaning and value in adherents' lives.
- Engage in intra- and inter-faith dialog to deepen understanding and respect.
- Explore the contemplative strategies and rituals different Christian faith traditions use to support healing, development and wellness.
- Develop specific applied skills to use contemplative activities within therapy and interventions to increase acceptability of these techniques with Christian clients.
- Visit spiritual communities both within and outside of Christianity that emphasize contemplative practice.

### **Class Requirements/Assignments:**

**1. Expressive writing journals (20 points):** Students will keep a journal throughout the course, and will

complete at least 10 significant entries. In the journal entries, the student will discuss how the readings, discussions, and experiences affect their understanding of the role of religion/spirituality in their life, and in the lives of others, particularly people (and potential clients) from a faith tradition different from their own.

**2. Interview (30 points):** Based on the readings and experience of this course, students will develop a structured interview designed to gain a deeper sense of another person's spiritual identity, with a particular focus on attitudes towards prayer and contemplative practice. Students will then interview someone who belongs to a religious/spiritual community that is very different from their own. After the interview, students will prepare a 10 minute presentation about what they learned.

**3. Book club (30 points):** We have suggested several books, and we will have class discussions regarding these books. Students will choose at least one book from a Christian and one book from a non-Christian perspective. Students will write a book review that provides a brief summary, followed by what they have learned, and how it deepened (or didn't) their ability to engage with spiritual clients in a more humble fashion. We will post these on a course blog and all class members will be expected to read the reviews before each dialogue.

**4. Participation (20 points):** We expect students to attend and participate respectfully in all class activities.

Your constructive assessment of this course plays an indispensable role in shaping education at Georgia State University. Upon completing the course, please take time to fill out the online course evaluation.

**Departmental policy on cultural and ethnic diversity:**

The Department of Counseling and Psychological Services values diversity and is committed to fostering and maintaining an educational environment which appreciates individual differences in all areas of departmental operation including selection and admissions, hiring, classroom instruction, texts, and materials, clinical practice and supervision, research, departmental administration, and policy formation.

To this end, CPS will not tolerate or condone any, actions, practices, or processes by any CPS faculty member, staff person, or student which discriminates against or is prejudicial toward any person or group based on race, sex, age, religion, ethnicity, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

**Policy on academic honesty:**

Students are expected to recognize and uphold the highest standards of intellectual and academic integrity. For explicit coverage of this policy students are advised to read the Education Graduate Bulletin. This policy discusses plagiarism, cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification, and multiple submissions of material for credit without permission.

**Attendance policy:**

Students are expected to attend all pre and post trip meetings, and full participate in all trip activities.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities:**

Students who wish to request accommodation for a disability may do so by registering with the Office of Disability Services at 404-413-1560, (Suite 230 New Student Center). Students may only be accommodated upon issuance by the Office of Disability Services of a signed Accommodation Plan and are responsible for providing a copy of that plan to instructors of all classes in which an accommodation is sought. Any student with a disability who may require special accommodations is requested to make an appointment with the instructors upon acceptance into the class to discuss strategies and options. We are committed to being as

inclusive as possible during this class, but we will be visiting historical sites not all of which are completely accessible. All housing and transportation in Israel is accessible.

**Course Policies:**

**Changes to syllabus:** The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.

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**Choose one of the following for Book Club Assignment (Christian Perspectives)**

- Merritt, K. (2015). *The Zen Christian: Faith and Meditation: The Spiritual, Physical, and Psychological Benefits of Christian Meditation*. Kent Merritt.
- Merton, T. (1998). *The seven storey mountain*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
- Rohr, R. (2003). *Everything belongs: The gift of contemplative prayer*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company.
- Rohr, R. (2011). *Falling upward: A spirituality for the two halves of life*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rohr, R. (2009). *The naked now: Learning to see as the mystics see*. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company.

**Choose one of the following for Book Club Assignment (Non-Christian Perspectives)**

- Kapstein, M. T. (2013). *Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction* (Vol. 373). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rinpoche, S. (2009). *The Tibetan book of living and dying*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Singer, M. (2007). *The untethered soul: The journey beyond yourself*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.
- Tift, T. (2015). *Already Free: Buddhism Meets Psychotherapy on the Path of Liberation*. Louisville, CO: Sounds True.
- XIV Bstan-'dzin-rgya, D. L., & Jinpa, T. (1995). *The world of Tibetan Buddhism: An overview of its philosophy and practice*. Somerville, MA: Simon and Schuster.

### Tentative Schedule

Day	Theme	Assignments Due
Day 1	Introduction	
Day 2	Perspectives of integration of spirituality into counseling	
Day 3	Overview of the influence of eastern spirituality in psychology	
Day 4	Christian contemplative practice	
Day 5	Model of Cultural Humility regarding Spiritual Diversity	
Day 6	Cultural Humility: Assessment	
Day 7	Contemplative Interventions #1	
Day 8	Contemplative Interventions #2	
Day 9	Cultural Humility: Adaption of interventions to the Client's Spiritual Identity	
Day 10	Experiential engagement: Spiritual Leader #1 (TBD)	
Day 11	Experiential engagement: Spiritual Leader #2 (TBD)	
Day 12	Experiential engagement: Spiritual Leader #3 (TBD)	Submit Expressive Writing Journals
Day 13	Presentations	Book Club Presentations
Day 14	Interview presentations and Closing	Interview presentations