

SP350: New Frontiers in Spirituality

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Course Description

This course will explore the expanding frontiers of contemporary spirituality beyond conventional religious boundaries. It will consider the phenomenon of spiritual independence or “spiritual but not religious.” The course will look at spiritual practices such as kabbalah and mindfulness, both within their historical communities of origin and outside them, as a dimension of a universalist spirituality. The course will also, the course will look at the ethics of borrowing from traditions not one’s own, at the rise of multiple religious identities, and at new efforts at interspiritual dialogue and cooperation.

Relation of the Course to Other Courses

This course is one of a series of 300-level elective spirituality courses and satisfies an emphasis requirement in the spirituality emphasis. FC101 is a prerequisite.

Goals

- To explore the complexity of “spiritual but not religious”
- To engage the spiritual and religious questions raised by these texts
- To consider the challenges and opportunities of interspiritual dialogue
- To become a reading community

Learning Outcomes

As a result of taking this course, it is intended that participants will have acquired some specific skills. In New Frontiers in Spirituality, participants will grow in their capacity to

- Speak in an informed manner on the contemporary phenomenon called “spiritual but not religious”
- Reflect on the ethics of religious boundaries and borrowing
- Develop critical and sympathetic abilities in the approach to the study of religious and spiritual ideas

Your growth in these skills will be measured through your work for the course, including the quality of your participation in class discussion, written work responding to the complexity of the content of the course, and your research project. Performance in this course will be assessed under the following rubrics: Critical Thinking, Theological Reflection, Personal and Spiritual Formation, and Cultural Dynamics.

Course Requirements and Expectations

Students will pursue a spiritual practice (that is new to you) from the internet (apps, youtube, etc): meditation, headspace, buddhify, calm, calming music, sufi (e.g., www.thesufi.com), examen, kabbalah, and more. You will research its history in a tradition, and reflect on the practice of it outside of that context. This can be a rewarding experience, but it will take some planning and discipline. You will be expected to pursue this practice and to keep a reflective

journal of your experience, from which you will draw for your final essay. You will need to research how that practice fits into a historical community of faith and then to reflect on what it means to engage in that spiritual practice outside the religious and cultural context of its origin. In the final session of this course, you are expected to report your findings to the class. At that time you will also hand in your paper (1500 words).

Schedule

Read in advance of our first class session (all available online):

Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*.

Corinna Nicolaou, *A None's Story: Searching for Meaning Inside Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, & Islam*.

Moodle items for Day One: Linda Mercadante, Rami Shapiro

It is recommended that you read as much as possible of the rest of the assigned readings, in order to have a more productive experience of an intensive course.

1	<p>Reading: Linda Mercadante and Rami Shapiro (Moodle) Leigh Eric Schmidt, <i>Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality</i>, http://earlham.worldcat.org/oclc/815785881, Introduction through Chapter 3. Writing Assignment: Before the first session, write two substantial paragraphs, to be handed in at class time. In the first, summarize Rami Shapiro's understanding of the spiritual life. In the second, reflect on this question: Based on what you know about Judaism, what is Jewish about Rabbi Rami Shapiro's ideas? If you don't feel that you know enough about Judaism to answer this second question, then reflect instead on this question: Do his ideas seem rooted in a single tradition, expanding out from there?</p>
2	<p>Leigh Eric Schmidt, <i>Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality</i> Chapter 4 through the Epilogue Writing Assignment: Write a brief personal response this question: Do you find a sympathetic connection with a person or movement in <i>Restless Souls</i>? If so, where, how, and why? If not, why not? 500-600 words.</p>
3	<p>Nones Reading: Corinna Nicolaou, <i>A None's Story: Searching for Meaning Inside Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, & Islam</i>, Introduction through Judaism Available electronically at http://earlham.worldcat.org/oclc/964290564</p>
4	<p>Continue Corinna Nicolaou, <i>A None's Story</i>, Buddhism through Conclusion Writing Assignment: Imagine Corinna Nicolaou reading Leigh Eric Schmidt's <i>Restless Souls</i>. How would she respond? Where would she find herself among the characters and movements in that book? Draw some specific connections that you find, based on your attention both to details and to broader themes. 900-1100 words.</p>
5	SBNR

	<p>Reading: Angie Thurston, Casper ter Kuile and Sue Phillips: <i>How We Gather</i> <i>Something More</i> <i>Care of Souls</i></p> <p>Explore at least three groups discussed in <i>How We Gather</i> and <i>Something More</i>—and be prepared to report on your discoveries.</p> <p>Imagine a group that you would like to initiate. What would it look like? Whom would it serve? Bring a concrete description to share with the class.</p> <p>Where do you see yourself in <i>Care of Souls</i>?</p>
6	<p>Mindfulness—Buddhist and Scientific Perspectives Bhikkhu Bodhi, “What Does Mindfulness Really Mean?” (on Moodle) Martine Batchelor, “Meditation and Mindfulness” (on Moodle) Thich Nhat Hanh, Selections on Mindfulness(on Moodle) Jeff Wilson, “Medicalizing Mindfulness” (on Moodle)</p> <p>Read four of the articles below and be prepared to speak about them to the class: Nicholas T. Van Dam, Marieke K. van Vugt, David R. Vago, et al., “Mind the Hype: A Critical Evaluation and Prescriptive Agenda for Research on Mindfulness and Meditation” (on Moodle)</p> <p>Bruce Lieberman, “Peering into the meditating mind” https://www.knowablemagazine.org/article/mind/2018/peering-meditating-mind</p> <p>Steven Novella, “Is Mindfulness Meditation Science-Based?” https://sciencebasedmedicine.org/is-mindfulness-meditation-science-based/</p> <p>Alvin Powell, “When science meets mindfulness” https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/04/harvard-researchers-study-how-mindfulness-may-change-the-brain-in-depressed-patients/</p> <p>Ephrat Livni, “Our obsession with mindfulness is based on limited scientific evidence” https://qz.com/1100368/the-science-behind-mindfulness-is-mostly-flawed/</p> <p>Bret Stetka, “Where's the Proof That Mindfulness Meditation Works?” https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/wheres-the-proof-that-mindfulness-meditation-works1/</p> <p>Jeremy Adam Smith, Jill Suttie, Hooria Jazaieri, Kira M. Newman, “The State of Mindfulness Science” https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/the_state_of_mindfulness_science</p> <p>Written assignment: Choose two of the articles that you have read on the science of mindfulness. How do you see the authors evaluating the claims made for</p>

	<p>mindfulness practice? Where do you see commonalities in how they have approached the subject, and where do you find differences? Can you account for the latter? What questions will you bring to your future reading about scientific study of religious experience? 700-800 words.</p>
7	<p>Multiple belonging; Redefining Buddhism</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Catherine Cornille, "Double Religious Belonging: Aspects and Questions," <i>Buddhist-Christian Studies</i>, vol. 23 (2003), pp. 43-49); 2. Sallie B. King, "Religion as Practice: A Zen-Quaker Internal Dialogue," <i>Buddhist-Christian Studies</i>, vol. 14 (1994), pp. 157-162; 3. Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse, "What Makes You a Buddhist," <i>Shambhala Sun</i>, Jan. 2007, pp. 50-57, 115; 4. Stephen Batchelor, "A Secular Buddhism," <i>Journal of Global Buddhism</i> 13 (2012): 87-107. 5. Sturla Stålsett, Harvey Cox, and Sung-Gun Kim, <i>Spirits of Globalization</i> (Selections on Moodle) <p>Imagine a conversation—or maybe an argument—among some of these authors. Bring an outline for such a conversation.</p>
8	<p>Lectio rediviva, Sacred Reading for the religiously unaffiliated</p> <p>Background on lectio: https://nds.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/The-Ladder-of-Monks.pdf http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/2000/08/how-to-practice-lectio-divina.aspx</p> <p>Spend at least 3 hours listening to podcasts on http://www.harrypottersacredtext.com/listen-2/</p>
9	<p>LGBTQ Spirituality</p> <p>Reading:</p> <p>Williams, Angel Kyodo. <i>Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation</i>. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2016.</p> <p>Read from Section Two: "Stakeholders" the essay "Bringing Our Whole Selves: A Theory of Queer Dharma" http://earlham.worldcat.org/oclc/951807493</p> <p>Essays from <i>Lion's Roar</i> on Buddhism and LGBTQ (on Moodle)</p> <p>Mona West, "Coming Out as a Sacrament," and "Queer Spirituality." (on Moodle)</p> <p>Mihee Kim-Kort, <i>Outside the Lines: How Embracing Queerness Will Transform Your Faith</i>. Fortress, 2018. Excerpts on Moodle.</p> <p>Yvette Flunder, "Building a Community of Radical Inclusion" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LawcWFi1yc</p> <p>Peterson Toscano, "Tomb Dwellers: LGBTQ and Bearing Witness"</p>

	http://www.meetinghouse.xyz/everything/2018/2/6/tomb-dwellers-lgbtq-and-bearing-witness
10	Student reports on their practice, lead the rest in an experience, and offer their reflections on the ethics of borrowing. A paper, drawing on your reading and experience, is due at class time (1500 words).