

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

STEVE HICKS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

Course Number:	SW 360K/SW 395K	Instructor:	Dr. Nick Wings-Yanez
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Semester:	Summer 2020	Office:	3.XXX
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	Or by appt.		

Spirituality & Disability

I. STANDARDIZED COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course, we will review the intersection of spirituality and disability and the complex historical influences that impact discussions of disability in relationship to religion. We will analyze three major world religions and some ways they conceptualize disability. This course will explore the social justice issues surrounding disability and spirituality using the perspective of social work values and ethics to guide learning. Particular attention will be given to the concepts of diversity and inclusion.

II. STANDARDIZED COURSE OBJECTIVES

Learning objectives for this course are as follows:

- Demonstrate understanding of how religion has played an integral role in defining society's understanding of disability.
- Identify how disability is defined and conceptualized within three of the world's major religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- Demonstrate understanding of the social justice issues surrounding religion and disability.
- Demonstrate understanding, affirmation, and respect for persons and their unique experience from different backgrounds, including age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, class, religious belief or spirituality, family structure, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, national origin, or other issues of diversity related to disability and spirituality.
- Demonstrate understanding of the complexity of disability, spirituality (defined via religion) and intersectionality.
- Apply information from this course to your own discipline or personal life.

III. TEACHING METHODS

This class is entirely online.

In order for this course to succeed, we must all make a commitment to honoring the diversity of the human experience and remaining open to the exploration of this diversity. As part of our commitment to cultivating this kind of environment, we bring the following assumptions to the course:

- Students and professors both bring valuable experience, knowledge, and insights, and our learning this semester will be a collective effort.
- We all have areas of knowledge and mastery. Likewise, we all have gaps. Education is the process of filling these gaps, sharing knowledge, and illuminating new insights, connections, and questions.
- Everyone has the right to voice. We ask that you treat one another professionally, but encourage you all to ask questions, interrogate assumptions, and share your knowledge.
- Critical feedback and evaluation are constructive tools for growth and improvement. Throughout this class, you will be pushed to think deeply and critically about course materials, and to question your assumptions. This is all part of the learning process.
- It is accepted as a given in this course that discrimination, oppression, and marginalization are part of our society. This includes ableism, sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of intolerance. We will not tolerate their expression (in any form) in this course. We will, however, invite these issues into our dialogue for critique and exploration.

(excerpted from Dr. Ben Anderson-Nathe)

IV. REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS

Textbook:

- Brodd et al., *Invitation to World Religions*, 3rd edition (available online and at the bookstore)

All other readings and materials will be provided to students in Canvas.

V. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Critical Thinking: Disability studies is the study of how disability interacts with society, economics, history, politics, and other areas. Disability as an identity and an experience is integral to any discussion of -isms (eg. Racism, heterosexism, classism, etc.). I do not want any work in this course to be busy work. My goal is for students to unpack preconceived notions, biases, and unlearn a lot of misinformation AND THEN figure out how to apply this new information or way of thinking to life; this application can mean professionally or personally or both.

To This End: UNGRADING. What is this? Grading every student on a Universal Standard does not work and is contrary to Critical Disability Studies. Every student engages with material differently. The multidimensional experience of learning requires not a standard rubric, but a discussion – but how to do this? Well, I will give students some assignments during the first couple of weeks and provide a very general rubric of what I’m looking for. Then, students will begin to assess themselves. For each assignment, I will provide a lot of feedback versus a grade. Why? Because generally, once students see their grade, they abandon the feedback part – but the feedback is the most important part!

I expect students to engage a lot with each other through Slack and Canvas. From these interactions and discussions, I will have each student write up a processing paper that discusses

what this provided you and how you engaged with the material and your peers. These papers will be due every two weeks.

At the end of the course, you will write up a paper, do a podcast, create a video – create a final product that discusses what you got out of this course and how you can take this material with you in the future – whether it be the actual material OR how to talk with someone about a very delicate subject (like disability, religion, politics). Each student, in this paper, will also provide the grade they believe they should get based on their interaction with the course*.

*I reserve the right to change any grade a student gives themselves. Students may feel uncomfortable with this process, so this is why I am the backup.

Lesson Assignments: Students will complete all readings or other assigned materials (including videos or additional topical research) for each lesson. In addition, students will complete assignments to demonstrate their understanding of these readings and course materials. Details will be provided each lesson so that these activities can best address the topics at hand.

- **Slack:** SLACK
https://join.slack.com/t/spirituality-fez3010/shared_invite/zt-eql8eak0-8FgNG7NdSMQaIWQ3TMLeKA

You will need to join Slack (app) to have additional group discussions; these discussions are in addition to your group work and self-assessments.

Interact with classmates on Slack for each lesson (in the channels section on the left side of homepage). Discuss the materials, what came up for you, questions, thoughts. I expect students to engage throughout the module (2 weeks) with at least 4-5 posts that are meaningful; i.e., **not** adding one-word responses, or “I agree/disagree”, or “great post”, etc. You can also add various media here to get your point across or engage other students. I ask that you maintain the framing from above (1).

- **Discussion Boards:** This is where students will be in smaller groups to answer a specific prompt or question related to lesson materials.
 - Your post must be at least 2 paragraphs AND add something new to the discussion. Alternately, students can post an audio/video that is at least two minutes long.
 - You must respond to at least one other student (if you are the first to post, ask some questions of your peers regarding the topic). This can also be an audio/video.
 - These discussion posts substitute in-class discussions. Respond to one another, comment, and respectfully and thoughtfully counterpoint. I do read all posts. At times, I will respond and comment as well. However, I try not to interrupt the flow of the conversation between students.
- **Reflection Product:** At the end of each module, students will write a paper or create a video reflecting on the materials AND assignments from the module. What was new? What was surprising? What was uncomfortable? How was the group

interaction? At the end of each paper/video, tell me what grade you think you earned for that module.

- ***Grad Students Only:*** Grad students will have a separate group discussion in addition to the other assignments with different resources to reflect on.
- ***Final Project:*** Each student will write up a paper, create a podcast, create a video – a product that you create about your overall takeaways from this course, the learning process, the self-assessment process, and how to apply the material/skills gained from this class to your profession or your personal life (if you are not yet sure of your profession).

Questions to consider:

1. What was most useful in this class?
2. What was the process of ungrading like?
3. How do you feel about engaging in discussions about disability/spirituality with others?
4. What is something you learned? What surprised you?
5. How is this material useful to you?
6. **REQUIRED** – what grade do you give yourself and why?

EXTRA CREDIT: An extra 2 points (to be attributed to Lesson Assignments) are possible for completing the TCDS survey posted at the beginning and end of the semester in the announcement section of Canvas.

There will be no exams for this class. Students will demonstrate their understanding of the materials and proficiency in the course learning objectives through lesson assignments. I will often ask you to synthesize information from previous lessons in order to build upon what you've already learned.

All due dates will be 11:59pm Wednesday evenings.

VI. GRADES

94.0 and Above	A
90.0 to 93.999	A-
87.0 to 89.999	B+
84.0 to 86.999	B
80.0 to 83.999	B-
77.0 to 79.999	C+
74.0 to 76.999	C
70.0 to 73.999	C-
67.0 to 69.999	D+
64.0 to 66.999	D
60.0 to 63.999	D-
Below 60.0	F

VII. CLASS POLICIES

Late Work: Whenever possible, contact the professor in advance of any anticipated late work. Discussion posts can only occur during the week assigned since class interaction is part of the grade.

Class Participation: Students are expected to participate in any required activities or assignments. Failure to do so will have a negative impact on one's grade. Since this is an online course, student participation will be assessed via assignments, online discussions, and interactions on Slack.

Behavior Expectations: All students are expected to carry themselves in a respectful and professional manner.

Communication: Students are encouraged to contact the professor with any questions or concerns. Email will be the primary form of communication, and the professor will respond to emails received on weekdays (Monday-Friday) within 36 hours.

Grades: Grades received are final and are not subject to negotiation. **An extra 2 points** are possible for the assignments grade by completing both surveys (beginning and end of semester) for TCDS (these will be in announcements).

The professor reserves the right to make changes to course readings, assignments, and due dates detailed in this syllabus.

VIII. UNIVERSITY POLICIES

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HONOR CODE. The core values of The University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the university is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.

DOCUMENTED DISABILITY STATEMENT. Any student who requires special accommodations must obtain a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement (471- 6259 voice or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). A student should present the letter to the professor at the beginning of the semester so that needed accommodations can be discussed and followed. The student should remind the professor of any testing accommodations no later than five business days before an exam. For more information, visit: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND CIVILITY IN THE CLASSROOM. The professor expects students to act as professionals in class. This means students should arrive on time for class, be prepared to participate in the class discussion, and show respect for one another's opinions. A course brings together a group of diverse individuals with various backgrounds. Students are influenced and shaped by such factors as race, ethnicity, gender, sex, physical abilities, religious and political beliefs, national origins, and sexual orientations, among others. We expect to learn from each other in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. This atmosphere includes working intentionally to recognize and dismantle racism, sexism,

heterosexism, and ableism in the classroom. Social Work also deals with complex and controversial issues. These issues may be challenging and uncomfortable, and it would be impossible to offer a substantive classroom experience that did not include potentially difficult conversations relating to challenging issues. In this environment, we will be exposed to diverse ideas and opinions, and sometimes we will not agree with the ideas expressed by others. Nevertheless, the professor requires that students engage one another with civility, respect, and professionalism.

UNANTICIPATED DISTRESS. Students may experience unexpected and/or distressing reactions to course readings, videos, conversations, and assignments. If so, students are encouraged to inform the professor. The professor can be responsive and supportive regarding students' participation in course assignments and activities, but students are responsible for communicating clearly what kind of support is desired. If counseling is needed, students may contact a service provider of their choosing, including the UT Counseling Center at 512-471-3515 or online at <https://cmhc.utexas.edu/>.

POLICY ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION. Public social networks are not private. Even when open only to approved or invited members, users cannot be certain that privacy will exist among the general membership of sites. If social work students choose to participate in such forums, please assume that anything posted can be seen, read, and critiqued. What is said, posted, linked to, commented on, uploaded, subscribed to, etc., can be accessed and archived, posing potential harm to professional reputations and prospective careers.

Social work students who use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and other forms of electronic communication (e.g. blogs) must be mindful of how their communication may be perceived by clients, colleagues, faculty, and others. Social work students are expected to make every effort to minimize material which could be considered inappropriate for a professional social worker in training. Because of this, social work students are advised to manage security settings at their most private levels and avoid posting information/photos or using any language that could jeopardize their professional image.

Students are asked to consider the amount of personal information posted on these sites and are obliged to block any client access to involvement in the students' social networks. Client material should not be referred to in any form of electronic media, including *any* information that might lead to the identification of a client or compromise client confidentiality in *any* way. Additionally, students must critically evaluate any material that is posted regarding community agencies and professional relationships, as certain material could violate the standards set by the School of Social Work, the Texas Code of Conduct for Social Workers, and/or the NASW Code of Ethics.

Social work students should consider that they will be representing professional social work practice as well as The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work program while in the classroom, the university community, and the broader area communities.

POLICY ON SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY. Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly

enforced. For further information, the student may refer to the Web Site of the Student Judicial Services, Office of the Dean of Students: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/>.

USE OF COURSE MATERIALS. The materials used in this course, including, but not limited to exams, quizzes, and homework assignments, are copyright protected works. Any unauthorized duplication of the course materials is a violation of federal law and may result in disciplinary action being taken against the student. Additionally, the sharing of course materials without the specific, express approval of the professor may be a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty, which could result in further disciplinary action. This sharing includes, among other things, uploading class materials to websites for the purpose of distributing those materials to other current or future students.

CLASSROOM CONFIDENTIALITY. Information shared in class about agencies, clients, and personal matters is considered confidential per the NASW Code of Ethics on educational supervision and is protected by regulations of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as well. As such, sharing this information with individuals outside of the educational context is not permitted. Violations of confidentiality could result in actions taken according to the policies and procedure for review of academic performance located in sections 3.0, 3.1, and 3.2 of the Standards for Social Work Education.

USE OF E-MAIL FOR OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE TO STUDENTS. Email is recognized as an official mode of university correspondence; therefore, students are responsible for reading their email for university and course-related information and announcements. Students are responsible for keeping the university informed about a change of e-mail address. Students should check their e-mail regularly and frequently—daily, but at minimum twice a week—to stay current with university-related communications, some of which may be time-sensitive. Students can find UT Austin's policies and instructions for updating their e-mail address at <http://www.utexas.edu/its/policies/emailnotify.php>.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS. By UT Austin policy, students must notify the professor of a pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If the student must miss a class, examination, work assignment, or project in order to observe a religious holy day, the professor will give the student an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

TITLE IX REPORTING. In accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the University of Texas at Austin is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free from discriminatory conduct on the basis of sex <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>. Faculty, field instructors, staff, and/or teaching assistants in their supervisory roles are mandated reporters of incidents of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, or any other forms of sexual misconduct. Students who report such incidents will be informed of University resources. Incidents will be reported to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Further information, including student resources related to Title IX, may also be found at <https://titleix.utexas.edu/>.

CAMPUS CARRY POLICY. The University's policy on concealed firearms may be found

here: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu>. You also may find this information by accessing the Quick Links menu on the School’s website.

SAFETY. As part of professional social work education, students may have assignments that involve working in agency settings and/or the community. As such, these assignments may present some risks. Sound choices and caution may lower risks inherent to the profession. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and adhere to policies and practices related to agency and/or community safety. Students should notify the professor regarding any safety concerns.

BEHAVIOR CONCERNS ADVICE LINE (BCAL). If students have concerns about their behavioral health, or if they are concerned about the behavioral health of someone else, students may use the Behavior Concerns Advice Line to discuss by phone their concerns. This service is provided through a partnership between the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center (CMHC), the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and The University of Texas Police Department (UTPD). Call 512-232-5050 or visit <http://www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal>.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION POLICY. Occupants of buildings on the UT Austin campus are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuation:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors in the classroom and the building. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform the professor in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow the professor’s instructions.
- Do not re-enter a building unless you are given instructions by the Austin Fire Department, the UT Austin Police Department, or the Fire Prevention Services office.

IX. COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Assignment Due (Every Wednesday by 11:59pm)	Readings, etc.
6/04	Lesson 1: Introduction	<p><i>Due 6/10: Privilege Pie</i></p> <p><i>Getting to Know you</i></p> <p><i>Canvas Discussion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Syllabus • Bennett, J.M. & Volpe, M.A. (2018). Models of Disability from Religious Tradition • “Special needs” is an ineffective euphemism • APA Language

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clare, E. Excerpt on Privilege
6/11	Lesson 1: Introduction to Disability Introduction to Spirituality	<p>Due: 6/17 <i>Slack discussion</i></p> <p><i>Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>*Grad Student Canvas Discussion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Invitation to World Religions p. 8-21 • Harvard Religious Literacy Project, "Four Principles," • Disability (Keywords to Disability Studies) pp. 5-11 • Crip (Keywords to Disability Studies) pp.46-48 • Disability Justice
6/18	Lesson 2: Christianity	<p>Due 6/24 <i>Slack Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>*Grad Student Canvas Discussion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Harvard Religious Literacy Project, "Christianity" • Invitation to World Religions: Christianity pp. 419-477 • Tillotson, N., Short, M., Ollerton, J., Hearn, C., & Sawatzky, B. (2017). Faith matters: From a disability lens.
6/25	Lesson 2: Christianity and Disability	<p>Due 7/01 <i>Slack Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>*Grad Student Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Reflection product</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Gayes, D. (2012). No beauty or truth excluded • Dingle, S. (2017). This is why disabled people were so devastated by Christian silence on health care

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cole, A. (2017). Seeing adversity from the back of a sanctuary. • Liberation, Inclusion, and Justice: A Faith Response to Persons with Disabilities <p>Grad Only: Trans/Crip Religion</p>
7/02	Lesson 3: Judaism	<p><i>Due 7/08</i> <i>Slack discussion</i></p> <p><i>Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>*Grad Student Canvas Discussion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Invitation to world religions: Judaism (pp. 361-417) • Harvard Religious Literacy Project video: Judaism
7/09	Lesson 3: Judaism and Disability	<p><i>Due 7/15</i> <i>Slack Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>*Grad Student Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Reflection product</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Imhoff, S. (2017). Why disability studies needs to take religion seriously. • Jones, M. (2007). Judaism, theology and the human rights of people with disabilities • Disability Visibility Podcast <p>Grad Only: Video on Judaism, Disability Justice</p>
7/16	Lesson 4: Islam	<p><i>Due 7/22</i> <i>Slack discussion</i></p> <p><i>Canvas Discussion</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Invitation to world religions :Islam (pp. 479-535)

		<i>*Grad Student Canvas Discussion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harvard Religious Literacy Project video: Islam • Ibrahim, I. & Ismail, M.F. (2018). Muslims with disabilities: Psychosocial reforms from an Islamic perspective
7/23	Lesson 4: Islam and Disability	<p><i>Due 7/29</i></p> <p><i>Slack Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>*Grad Student Canvas Discussion</i></p> <p><i>Reflection product</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Bazna, M.S. & Hatab, T.A. (2008). Disability in the Qu'ran • Al-Aoufi, H., Al-Zyoud, N., & Shahminan, N. (2012). Islam and the cultural conceptualization of disability. • Disability Visibility Blog Post <p>Grad Only Disability Visibility Podcast</p>
7/30	Final week	<i>Due 7/31 Final Project</i>	

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY (not complete)

Adams, B. Reiss, and D. Serlin (Eds.) (2015) *Keywords for disability studies*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Al-Aoufi, H., Al-Zyoud, N., & Shahminan, N. (2012). Islam and the cultural conceptualization of disability. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 17(4), pp. 205-219.

- Brodd, J., Little, L., Nystrom, B., Platzner, R., Shek, R., & Stiles, E. (2019). *Invitation to world religions* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Cole, A. (2017). Seeing adversity from the back of a sanctuary. PD Wise. <https://pdwise.com/stories/seeing-adversity-from-the-back-of-a-sanctuary/>
- Imhoff, S. (2017). Why disability studies needs to take religion seriously.
- Lewis, V. A. (2015). Crip. Disability. In R. Adams, B. Reiss, and D. Serlin (Eds.) *Keywords for disability studies* (pp. 46-48). New York, NY: New York University Press.
- Watts Belser, J. (2016). Judaism and disability. In D.Y. Schumm & M. Stoltzfus (Eds.) *Disability and world religions: An introduction* (pp. 93-114). Baylor University Press.