

## Learning Covenant

Given our diverse backgrounds and experiences, this learning covenant will help us create and maintain a safe and formative learning community in which we demonstrate respect for what is unique and distinct about each other's values, beliefs, meanings and practices. Our online communications should also reflect this ethos.

### *Academic standards*

All students are expected to abide by Iliff's statements on Academic Integrity, as published in the *Masters Student Handbook* and the *Joint PhD Student Handbook*.

Students should demonstrate academic and professional communication skills that include coherent expression of ideas, use of good grammar, and appropriate citation of sources referenced in responses and assignments. All course participants should use inclusive language and language that respects the diversity of sexuality, gender and sexual orientation.

Discussion posts and responses are also expected to meet these academic standards (vs. more casual standards that apply to other online conversations/emails). Please proofread assignments and discussion posts before you submit. Seek support from the Iliff Writing Lab as needed.

Timely submissions are critical for effective community learning. Notify the instructor if you have an *emergency*. The instructor will only consider arrangements to submit late work without penalty in rare instances. Otherwise these late penalties account for common circumstances that result in late submissions (e.g., sickness, work demands, travel):

<24 hours late: 10% penalty  
24-48 hours late: 20% penalty  
48 hours - 1 week late: 40%  
> 1 week late: 0 points

### *Self-disclosure, Self-differentiation and Self-care*

Unless specified, the purpose of self-disclosure in this course is not to process our own experiences, but to enhance group learning. Students are strongly encouraged to engage in life-affirming spiritual practices and rely on personal and professional support systems to process experiences that arise from emotionally laden course content.

Self-differentiation is the ability to separate our own emotions from another person's emotions and the relational dynamics so that we can respond with compassion without imposing our core values, beliefs, meanings, and practices (i.e., our spiritual orienting system or SOS) on

another person. Ultimately, spiritual caregivers should experience emotional/stress reactions as helpful feedback in their ongoing practice of self-awareness.

There may be moments when we react strongly to each other and/or to the content or dynamics of the course. When this happens, do an internal check-in, process your reactions and discern how to respond in ways that enhances group learning and are not focused on processing your own feelings. Use “I” statements that identify your feelings, not “you” statements that may imply a global assessment of another person. Internal processing is especially important in an online format because responses have the potential to come across as critical or without the intended compassion that we can more readily communicate through body language and tone of voice.

The course instructor is available for general educational guidance in relation to course content. Faculty are not able to offer ongoing counseling or therapy. Faculty will offer support, help students evaluate the extent to which counseling may be helpful and make appropriate referrals if needed.

Word limits/ranges for posts, responses and assignments should help you focus on the most salient and meaningful ways to communicate knowledge, offer self-reflection, and provide spiritual care responses. If you are well under word limits, you may be having difficulty processing your own experiences enough to share them in depth. If you are well over word limits, you may be providing too much detail.

### *Confidentiality*

Personal disclosures and conversations occurring in online discussions and with learning partners are not to be shared outside of the course learning community without permission from the persons involved. Students can talk to people in their support systems about *their own reactions* but not the content of what class members share. Take care to disguise any identifying information about other students while being mindful that Iliff is a small community where other people can be easily identified.

Students must be aware of mandatory reporting laws of the state in which they provide professional care. If students are designated spiritual caregivers within a religious tradition, they also need to be aware of what their religious organization requires. If students have reason to suspect or have first-hand knowledge of recent, current, or ongoing child abuse or neglect perpetrated on a child currently under the age of 18 years, elder abuse, sexual and domestic violence, or threats of homicide or suicide in any of the spiritual care situations they use for fulfilling the requirements of this course, they need to seek immediate consultation with supervisors, denominational leaders, and the course instructor to abide by proper reporting procedures. We will work together to establish an appropriate spiritual care relationship with all parties facing these crises.

Faculty also balance confidentiality with mandatory reporting responsibility. It is Iliff's goal that students feel able to share information related to life experiences in classroom discussions, in written work, and in one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep information you share private. However, faculty are required to share with the Iliff Title IX coordinator information regarding instances of sex/gender-based harassment, discrimination and sexual misconduct in the Iliff community. Students may speak to someone confidentially by contacting our Confidential Reporters: the Dean of the Chapel and Spiritual Formation, the Associate Dean of Admissions and Director of Consultation and Formation.

#### *Helpful references*

[Iliff's Title IX Policy](#)

[State Laws on Mandatory Clergy Reporting](#)

[Colorado Mandatory Reporting](#)