**Ministry and Human Sexuality**

**Guidelines for assignment on an educational program**

**Final Assignment (30%) Due Sunday, March 7**

**Word length: approximately 4000 words**

Each course assignment will require students to do a literature search in the ATLA and psychological databases. You will need to substantively use at least five references from your search and at least one needs to be from psychological studies, and/or the journal *Pastoral Psychology*. In assignments like the sermon and educational program, literature search references can be discussed in footnotes/commentaries that elaborate on how these projects utilize your critical thinking skills. Here is a guide to how to do a literature search: [HOW TO DO A LITERATURE SEARCH](https://iliff.instructure.com/courses/3106240/pages/how-to-do-a-literature-search)In this course, we use APA format for citations and references.  [Iliff's writing lab](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://library.iliff.edu/writing-lab/&sa=D&source=calendar&ust=1610624779299000&usg=AOvVaw1DlyxSMrRBgWqhGkQvkaTS) has a link to suggested sites for writing resources and style guides. Use this link to find the Purdue Online Writing Lab, and their guide to APA 7 formatting.

Students will focus on an aspect of sexuality using the [OWL definition of sexuality,](https://iliff.instructure.com/courses/3106240/pages/owl-definition-of-sexuality) which we are exploring in our weekly topics, and will include commentary on how this assignment helps you pursue [Learning Goals](https://iliff.instructure.com/courses/3106240/pages/learning-goals) in socially just, interreligious, evidence-based spiritual care.

This assignment gives you the opportunity to reflect upon some aspects of sexuality that generated religious/spiritual/moral struggles[[1]](#endnote-1)---experiences of tension, strain, and conflict---about sexuality.[[2]](#endnote-2) Religious and spiritual struggles are widespread across a range of faith orientations; for example, among atheists ([Bradley, Uzdavines, Pargament, & Exline, 2016](#_ENREF_2)), Muslims, Jews ([Abu-Raiya, Pargament, Weissberger, & Exline, 2016](#_ENREF_1)), as well as the general population.

Throughout this course we consider life experiences you or others have had that generate religious/spiritual/moral struggles over some aspect of sexuality:

* Aspects of one’s gender and/or sexual orientation identity that do not conform to societal/religious norms and/or that make one a target for prejudice/aggression/violence.
* Work and family balance that generates moral stress over one’s gender roles and responsibilities.
* Experiencing sexual pleasure in ways that do not conform to societal/religious norms.
* Working through conflicts/power struggles in intimate and/or caregiving relationships that generate moral stress/spiritual struggles because of aspects of one’s sexuality (i.e., gender roles).
* Seeking personal and relational wholeness amidst the challenges of being single, dating, negotiating transitions in intimate relationships, and ending intimate relationships.
* Experiencing sexual trauma (abuse, harassment, assault).

These are the kinds of experiences that could be used in developing an education program that enhances spiritual care to those experiencing religious/spiritual/moral struggles arising from some aspect of their sexuality.

**OUTLINE:** *Note: The final assignment should be 4000 words, and single-spaced, including references. Please use all relevant readings and discussions from the course forums, especially the forums early on in the quarter focusing on pastoral and spiritual care. Please refer to the grading rubric to ensure you have done an adequate literature search and demonstrated course learning goals in competing this assignment.* *You will need to substantively use at least 5 references from your search and at least one needs to be from psychological studies.*

**Preface** (50 – 100 words)**:** Why did you choose this assignment and this topic for developing an educational program; what do you hope to gain from doing this assignment?

**Your spiritual practices** (50 – 75 words)**:** Describe the intrinsically meaningful body-aware settling and/or calming practices you used in working on this assignment that

1. Increased self-awareness of one’s stress-based reactions/emotions that give rise to life-limiting, socially oppressive beliefs, values, and consumer ways of coping, especially for coping with academic stress.
2. Increased self-compassion, self-transcendence, and relational systems that support use of meaningful body-aware practices as a basis for searching for meanings about one’s stress responses and life experiences.

**Self-Reflection** (100-200 words)

• Describe any experiences you have had that make me motivated to develop this educational program and which could make you emotionally reactive in leading this educational program.

• Reflect on your competency to self-differentiate, and practice spiritual reflexivity (see our course page on learning goals).

**Learning Objectives** (100-200 words): List the learning objectives of this educational program in bullet form, beginning with this phrase:

At the conclusion of this educational program participants will be able to [use verbs like demonstrate, articulate, identify, utilize…]

**Describe a Group Focusing Activity** (250-300 words): designed to “engage participants with shared focus in a generative theme for the teaching/learning event” (Groome, 1991, p. 155). This could be a settling (Renakem, 2017), calming spiritual practice that helps participants:

* Use a calming practice of deep slow breathing in response to moral, religious and spiritual struggles arising from an aspect of sexuality.
* Understand and pay attention to differences between their bodies’ stress response and the calming effect of deep slow breathing.
* Experience self-compassion during calming practices, for example, through the warmth of touch during slow deep breathing.
* Understand and experience the benefits of self-compassion in helping them pay attention to their stress-related emotions.
* Experience compassionate accountability for (a) using calming practices, (b) paying attention to their particular sources of moral stress (c) experiencing self-compassion, (d) using their support system.

**Movement 1 (500 words): *“****invites participants to ‘name’ or express in some form their own and/or society’s ‘present action’” (Groome, 1991, p. 175).*

How might you help people identify their values and beliefs, and ways of coping with this sexual issue and the kinds of moral, religious and spiritual struggles that may arise.

Add quotations from course readings and from your literature search that help you imagine what their beliefs, values, and coping might look like, using bullet points below these subheadings:

EMOTIONS: arising from the stress of religious/spiritual/moral struggle (e.g., sorrow, shame, guilt, anger, disgust…..)

VALUES: (often in conflict): describe three to four relevant values that generate spiritual struggles/moral stress (see shortened list of values and Moral Foundations Theory if you have difficulty identifying what values were at stake[[3]](#endnote-3)). Add a narrative description of whether/how this value might come from participants’ family’s ethnic/religious/cultural identity. Assess whether/how each value could be helpful in giving participants a sense of purpose, or whether it intensified moral stress.

BELIEFS: What beliefs, particularly about suffering and hope, are participants likely to draw upon to understand moral stress/suffering arising from this aspect of sexuality? Use key readings from our course as well as from your literature search on how religious and theological perspectives have been used to understanding stress/suffering related to this aspect of sexuality. Nelson (2003) provides a helpful orientation to traditional and contemporary ways of understanding suffering and evil in theistic traditions. Assess whether/how these perspectives are relevant and meaningful or harmful.

COPING: How might participants be coping with moral stress, and /or religious and spiritual struggles arising from this aspect of sexuality? What ways of coping would likely be habits from the past/childhood/our consumer culture that are often default ways of coping? Add a narrative description of whether/how such coping might be shaped by participants’ ethnic/religious/cultural identity (e.g., traditional gender roles, intergenerational arts of using substances/eating to cope with stress.) Assess the pros and cons of likely coping.

**Movement 2 (350-500 words):** How might you invite participants to engage in critical reflection on their embedded/lived values, beliefs and coping likely generated by moral stress and its related emotions. Drawing upon course readings and your literature search, how might you help participants explore their life-giving shared values and beliefs about moral stress and suffering related to this sexual issue?

**Movement 3: (250 words)** How might you invite participants to explore this sexual issue and its religious, spiritual or moral struggles using critical reflections on sacred texts, shared faith perspectives in communities of faith (e.g., particular Christian or Buddhist traditions/communities) as expressed by the church/community of faith, understood communally?

**Movement 4: (250 words)** How might youput participants’ critical understanding of current praxis and Christian/ faith group story/vision or faith tradition stories/vision into dialogue with one another (i.e. Movements 2 and 3)

**Movement 5:** **(250 words)** How might participants arrive at the decision/response for live faith, which can be cognitive, affective, or behavioral decisions that could be on personal, interpersonal, or social/political levels. This could be a process of clarifying core values and beliefs that give a sense of purpose to integrating struggles with this aspect of sexuality and/or finding ways to seek justice.

**Conclusion (250-300 words):** Use the following questions to describe how this assignment helped you practice socially just, interreligious, evidence-based spiritual care.

***Spiritual integration***: how did this assignment help you use intrinsically meaningful body-aware settling and/or calming practices that:

* Increased self-awareness of your stress-based reactions/emotions that give rise to life-limiting, socially oppressive beliefs, values, and consumer ways of coping.
* Increased self-compassion, self-transcendence, and relational systems that support use of meaningful body-aware practices as a basis for searching for meanings about one’s stress responses and life experiences.

**Self-differentiation and self-reflexivity:** How did this assignment deepen these interpersonal capacities by helping you understand how stress-related emotions generate values, beliefs, and ways of coping that may be life-giving or life limiting? Were you more about to self-differentiate and not become reactive to this current event in ways that could easily overwhelm you and limit your understanding and response?

**Social and spiritual empathy:** How did this assignment deepen these interpersonal capacities by helping you step into the moral orienting systems of those different from you and understand how their stress-related emotions generate values, beliefs, and ways of coping that may be life-giving or life limiting?

**Interreligious competencies:** How did your use of course readings and your literature searches in religious/ theological and psychological databases help you develop interreligious competency that integrates:

-*Knowledge* of the socially constructed nature of religious beliefs, values, and rituals

-*Attitudes of cultural humility* toward cultural, religious, moral, and spiritual differences, and the ineffable mystery of the other; antiracist attitudes for understanding systemic racism and white privilege.

*-Interpersonal capacities* in spiritual empathy enabling understanding the religious, spiritual, and moral orientation of others.

-*Skills* in spiritual and emotional self-care for coping with the anxieties/losses of letting go of absolute meaning/value systems that avoid, polarize, or minimize religious and spiritual differences.

**Evidence-based spiritual care:** How did your use of course readings and your literature search help you practice evidence-based spiritual care by drawing upon research on aspects of religion and/or spirituality may be helpful or harmful people, especially when there are power struggles over aspects of sexuality that generate religious, spiritual, and moral psychological struggles?

**Socially just spiritual care:** How did your course readings and literature searches help you articulate spiritual care that pays attention to interacting social advantages and disadvantages that may harm others, contributing to systemic social injustice? How did your spiritual practices help you manage the moral distress of practicing socially just spiritual care that is always unfinished?

**References**

Abu-Raiya, H., Pargament, K. I., Weissberger, A., & Exline, J. (2016). An empirical examination of religious/spiritual struggle among Israeli Jews. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 26*(1), 61-79. doi:10.1080/10508619.2014.1003519

Bradley, D. F., Uzdavines, A., Pargament, K. I., & Exline, J. (2016). Counseling atheists who experience religious and spiritual struggles. In A. Schmidt, M. Chow, P. Berendsen, & T. O’Connor (Eds.), *Thriving on the edge: Integrating spiritual practice, theory, and research*.

Pargament, K., Wong, S., & Exline, J. (2016). Wholeness and holiness: The spiritual dimension of eudaimonics. In J. Vittersø (Ed.), *The handbook of eudaimonic wellbeing* (pp. 379-394): Springer.

1. There are three types of spiritual or religious struggles ([Exline, Pargament, Grubbs, & Yali, 2014](https://iliff.instructure.com/courses/1914534/discussion_topics/12762589#_ENREF_15)):

	* *Struggles with God* (e.g., questioning God’s love, feeling angry at God, feeling like God has abandoned or is punishing us because of some aspect of our sexual lives)
	* *Intrapsychic struggles within us*: moral stress over conflicting values, ultimate meanings, and doubts about aspects of our sexuality
	* I*nterpersonal struggles between us and our significant others* over aspects of our sexuality.These three kinds of religious and spiritual struggles are interconnected. For example, spiritual doubt can lead to interpersonal struggles. Interpersonal struggles lead to guilt and shame. Guilt and shame lead to fear of being punished by God and/or religious authorities/others. Fear of punishment and hell can lead to anger at God and organized religion. Pargament et al. ([Pargament, Wong, & Exline, 2016](#_ENREF_3)) note that spiritual struggles are common and can have either life-giving or life-limiting outcomes:

Spiritual struggles have to do with the most fundamental issues of life – questions of ultimate meaning, good and evil, religious doubts, intimacy, the divine and one’s relationship with a higher power (Exline et al., 2014). These struggles are fundamentally dis-orienting; they shake people to their very core.  A number of studies have linked struggles in the spiritual domain to psychological, social and physical signs of distress (Exline, 2013).  But distress and dis-orientation are not the end of the story.

As people struggle, they try to re-orient themselves to the challenges posed by internal transitions and external events.  Although popular culture has sentimentalized the value of difficult life experiences, as we hear in statements such as “no pain, no gain” and “suffering builds character,” it must be stressed that efforts to re-orient following difficult life experiences are not necessarily successful. Some people experience only pain, suffering, and brokenness through their struggles.  In this regard, higher levels of spiritual struggles have been associated with decline in immune functioning (Trevino, Pargament, Cotton, Leonard, Hahn, Caprini-Faigin, & Tsevat, 2010), increases in depression (e.g., Pirutinsky, Rosmarin, Pargament, & Midlarsky, 2011), and even greater risk of dying (Pargament, Koenig, Tarakeshwar, & Hahn, 2001).

It is true, however, that spiritual struggles can be a source of growth and greater wholeness… Empirical studies have shown some ties between spiritual struggles and reports of growth following trauma and major life events (e.g., Gall et al., 2011; Magyar-Russell et al., 2013; Trevino et al., 2012).  We suspect this growth is manifested by shifts in orienting systems that become more whole; that is, more deeply purposive, broader and deeper, more flexible, more coherent and discerning, and more benevolent and life-affirming.  In support of this notion, Desai and Pargament (2015) compared college students following a period of spiritual struggle who experienced growth or decline.  Those who reported greater growth were able to find greater meaning from their struggle, were able to draw on more positive religious coping resources, had a more secure relationship with God, and had integrated religion more fully into their lives. (Pargament et al., 2016, pp. 387-388)

Emerging research is demonstrating that if these kinds of struggles remain private, they tend to become a source of shame, anger, and guilt that generate life-limiting theologies/orienting systems of sexuality triggered by stress.   [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. We are using the *Our Whole Lives* curriculum to define these five aspects of sexuality: *sensuality* (bodiliness and touch), *intimacy* (relationality), *sexual identity* (orientations and roles), *sexual health/reproduction* (physiology, procreation, etc.), and *sexualization* (power dynamics). [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. |  |
| --- |
| Here are examples of values. This is a shortened list taken from Zuckoff, A., & Gorscak, B. (2015). *Finding your way to change: How the power of motivational interviewing can reveal what you want and help you get there*. New York, NY: Guilford Press. |
| Achievement: to have important accomplishments  |
| Adventure: to have new and exciting experiences  |
| Authenticity: to be true to who I am  |
| Autonomy: to determine my own actions  |
| Belonging: to feel like a part of something  |
| Challenge: to take on difficult tasks and problems  |
| Contribution: to add something to the world  |
| Creativity: to have original ideas and create new things  |
| Dependability: to be reliable and trustworthy  |
| Duty: to carry out my duties and obligations  |
| Family: to have a happy, loving family |
| Generosity: to give what I have to others |
| God’s will: to seek and obey the will of god |
| Growth: to keep changing and growing |
| Justice: to promote fair and equal treatment for all |
| Knowledge: to learn and add to valuable knowledge |
| Passion: to feel strongly and live with intensity  |
| Purpose: to have meaning and direction in my life  |
| Responsibility: to make and carry out responsible decisions  |
| Risk: to take risks and chances  |
| Spirituality: to live and grow spiritually  |
| Tradition: to follow respected patterns of the past  |
| Work: to work hard and well at my life tasks  |

You may also find it helpful to think in broader terms about values, using Moral Foundations Theory, described on their website <https://moralfoundations.org/>:

**Moral Foundations Theory** was created by a group of social and cultural psychologists to understand why morality varies so much across cultures yet still shows so many similarities and recurrent themes. In brief, the theory proposes that several innate and universally available psychological systems are the foundations of “intuitive ethics.” Each culture then constructs virtues, narratives, and institutions on top of these foundations, thereby creating the unique moralities we see around the world and conflicting within nations too. The five foundations for which we think the evidence is best are:

**1) Care/harm**: This foundation is related to our long evolution as mammals with attachment systems and an ability to feel (and dislike) the pain of others. It underlies virtues of kindness, gentleness, and nurturance. *[Emotions: compassion; fear of causing harm]*
**2) Fairness/cheating**: This foundation is related to the evolutionary process of reciprocal altruism. It generates ideas of justice, rights, and autonomy. [Note: In our original conception, Fairness included concerns about equality, which are more strongly endorsed by political liberals. However, as we reformulated the theory in 2011 based on new data, we emphasize proportionality, which is endorsed by everyone, but is more strongly endorsed by conservatives] *[Emotions: anger, gratitude, guilt]*
**3) Loyalty/betrayal:** This foundation is related to our long history as tribal creatures able to form shifting coalitions. It underlies virtues of patriotism and self-sacrifice for the group. It is active anytime people feel that it's "one for all, and all for one."
**4) Authority/subversion:** This foundation was shaped by our long primate history of hierarchical social interactions. It underlies virtues of leadership and followership, including deference to legitimate authority and respect for traditions. *[Emotions: respect, fear]*
**5) Sanctity/degradation:** This foundation was shaped by the psychology of disgust and contamination. It underlies religious notions of striving to live in an elevated, less carnal, more noble way. It underlies the widespread idea that the body is a temple which can be desecrated by immoral activities and contaminants (an idea not unique to religious traditions).  *[Emotions: disgust, reverence/awe]*

We think there are several other very good candidates for "foundationhood," especially:

**6) Liberty/oppression**: This foundation is about the feelings of reactance and resentment people feel toward those who dominate them and restrict their liberty. Its intuitions are often in tension with those of the authority foundation. The hatred of bullies and dominators motivates people to come together, in solidarity, to oppose or take down the oppressor….

Much of our present research involves applying the theory to political "cultures" such as those of liberals and conservatives. The current American culture war, we have found, can be seen as arising from the fact that liberals try to create a morality relying primarily on the Care/harm foundation, with additional support from the Fairness/cheating and Liberty/oppression foundations. Conservatives, especially religious conservatives, use all six foundations, including Loyalty/betrayal, Authority/subversion, and Sanctity/degradation. The culture war in the 1990s and early 2000s centered on the legitimacy of these latter three foundations. In 2009, with the rise of the Tea Party, the culture war shifted away from social issues such as abortion and homosexuality and became more about differing conceptions of fairness (equality vs. proportionality) and liberty (is government the oppressor or defender?). The Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street are both populist movements that talk a great deal about fairness and liberty, but in very different ways, as you can see [here, for the Tea Party](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703673604575550243700895762.html), and [here, for OWS](http://reason.com/archives/2011/10/20/the-moral-foundations-of-occup).   You can find out your own moral foundations profile at [www.YourMorals.org](http://www.yourmorals.org/).   [↑](#endnote-ref-3)