**Journal Assignment Requirements, Grading, and Outline Revised 4-1-2021**

**Due Thursday, May 6  (20% of grade)**

This journal assignment and its accompanying spiritual care conversation offer learning opportunities for spiritually integrating an experience of stress that has generated religious/spiritual/moral struggles.[[1]](#endnote-1) Using spiritual practices while you remember, reflect, write, and then later talk about your experience will be an opportunity to see whether you are able to trust the process of *spiritual integration*. The use of calming spiritual practices, our course readings, forum discussions, and zoom meeting, as well as the structure of this assignment, are designed to help you trust this process.

Exploring and writing about your experience of moral stress in a structured way provides an opportunity to become more *spiritually differentiated*---(1) able to separate your past experiences from the present, as well as (2) able to separate your story from another’s. You will be using an intersectional perspective to understand how social advantages and disadvantages alleviated or exacerbated your moral stress. Such reflections will deepen your capacity for *spiritual and social empathy* of others whose experiences are similar to or different from you. Understanding how moral stress generates emotions, values, and beliefs that may be life-giving or life-limiting provides an opportunity to be *spiritually reflexive*. Drawing upon your literature search and course readings will likely enhance your search for life-giving beliefs and values that help you share your experience with others in meaningful ways. For example, when moral stress involves core aspects of who you are, especially your vocation as spiritual caregivers, this journal assignment helps you experiment with how to talk about your process of spiritual integration with a CPE educator, peers, or those endorsing your vocation.

**Your literature search for relevant research and scholarship on moral stress**

**While you draft the sections of your journal assignment, you can begin your literature search for religious, theological, psychological, and cultural studies on the kind of stress/suffering you are describing (e.g., moral, religious, and/or spiritual struggles arising from COVID, racial violence, our climate crisis, complex grief, religiously based prejudice, sexual discrimination and violence, reproductive choices and loss, parental and relational struggles, etc.).** Here is a guide to how to do a literature search prepared by a former Iliff librarian: HOW TO DO A LITERATURE SEARCH. This video will help you identify which subject headings and key terms are most relevant for finding scholarship and research on your experience of stress/suffering. For example, if you are writing about a pandemic experience of moral stress and injury, likely key terms are moral injury, COVID, and pandemic.

You are required to find and quote from at least four references from a literature search in both the ATLA database and psychological databases. At least one of these four references needs to be from psychological studies. The journal *Pastoral Psychology* is often a helpful resource that is included in the ATLA database. Some of the articles from the journal *Religions* draw upon social scientific research. Keep an eye out for references to Ken Pargament’s research in reference lists of the psychological articles, chapters, and books you find in your literature search. Other references from your literature search can be used to help you explore your beliefs and values about suffering and moral stress, especially within your own religious and spiritual traditions (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, or humanist beliefs specific to your traditions and practices).

You will also need to quote from all relevant course readings, in order to demonstrate how you are drawing upon specialized knowledge on religious, spiritual, and moral struggles in spiritually integrating your experience.

While APA formatting for citations and references is preferred, you may use another formatting style as long as you use it correctly and consistently. [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 OnlineWriting Lab, and their guide to APA 7 formatting.

The final assignment should be single-spaced and not exceed 4000 words including references. Word lengths are suggested in the sections below. Some sections may be shorter or longer, but the entire assignment should not exceed 4000 words. Please submit your assignment as a word document, so that your course faculty can download it and add comments to your word file. This enables you to save the file with their comments. Title your word file as follows: Last name\_First name\_Journal\_Assignment: (e.g., Doehring\_Carrie\_Journal\_Assignment)

Please use the subheadings of the outline provided below but do not copy any of the accompanying descriptions of these sections. In listing your values, beliefs, practices, and intersecting aspects of your social identity, you may use bullet points if you wish, followed by sentences that fully describe these.

Here is a rubric that will be used for grading this assignment:

*Demonstrates these learning outcomes:*

* *Spiritual integration*: demonstrates how calming practices increased your awareness of stress-based emotions, values, and beliefs during the completion of the assignment.
* *Spiritual self-differentiation*: demonstrates a capacity to separate your past memories from present circumstances in a process of spiritual self-differentiation (e.g., by detailing the differences between (1) your stress-generated coping, values, and beliefs that accompanied moral stress or re-experiencing of moral stress and (2) your values and beliefs that emerge when calming practices are used.
* *Social empathy*: demonstrates social perspective-taking in describing how intersecting social advantages and disadvantages shaped your experience of suffering and moral stress, and how these aspects of your social identity relate to the family/cultural values and beliefs about suffering and hope you have described in part 3 (the coping, values and beliefs generated by stress).
* *Spiritual reflexivity*: uses key concepts from course readings and your literature review to develop contextual intentional *values* that anchor your vocation and *beliefs* about suffering/hope complex enough to bear the weight of your suffering.

*Fulfills these assignment requirements:*

* Includes quotations from at least four references from a literature search in the ATLA and psychological databases available through Iliff’s library.
* At least one of the four references is from psychological studies, preferably involving research (e.g., Pargament’s research of spiritual struggles).
* All quotations cite key concepts/findings (not tangential concepts or findings).
* Uses consistent formatting (APA formatting preferred)
* Word count does not exceed 4000 words

*Submission requirements:*

* Submitted as a word document
* Word file titled: Last name\_First name\_Journal\_Assignment

**JOURNAL OUTLINE**

**Part 1.** **Spiritual practices** (*150-250 words*)**:** Describe the intrinsically meaningful body-aware calming and/or settling[[2]](#endnote-2) practices you used in working on this assignment that:

1. Increased self-awareness of your stress-based reactions/emotions that give rise to life-limiting, socially oppressive beliefs, values, and consumer ways of coping.
2. Increased self-compassion and spiritual trust in the process of searching for meanings about one’s stress responses and life experiences.

**Part 2. Describe a life-changing experience of moral stress that involved core values and beliefs (***150 - 300 words***)**

Describe a life-changing experience that was stressful and/or transformative because it involved core beliefs and values.[[3]](#endnote-3) Keep in mind that you will continue to draw upon narrative details of this experience in other sections of the journal assignment when you describe your values and beliefs.

**Part 3: Elaborate the stress/emotion-based beliefs and values, and ways of coping that arose in the immediate aftermath of this experience by answering the following questions (1000-1500 words)**

**Stress-based *Emotions:*** describe what emotions (like shame, guilt, anxiety, fear of causing harm or being judged, anger, loneliness, sadness, relief, guilt, or joy) shaped your immediate response.

***Values:***

1. *Moral Foundations:*Using the six moral foundations identified in moral foundations theory,[[4]](#endnote-4) identify any of these foundations that were meaningful in this experience of moral stress. Add a narrative description of whether/how each value might come from your family’s ethnic/religious/cultural identity. Assess whether/how each value was helpful in giving you a sense of purpose, or whether/how it intensified moral stress.
2. *Describe* three to four relevant particular values that did or could have generated spiritual struggles/moral stress (see the shortened list of values if you have difficulty identifying what values were at stake[[5]](#endnote-5)). Add a narrative description of whether/how each value might come from your family’s ethnic/religious/cultural identity. If you are describing a recent experience, use this section to identify immediate values and beliefs and whether these came from childhood/family or from your current relationships and communities. Assess whether/how each value was helpful in giving you a sense of purpose, or whether/how it intensified moral stress.

***BELIEFS:*** what beliefs, particularly about suffering and hope, did you initially have about this experience? Use key readings from our course as well as from your literature search to use readings 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 did you cope? If you are describing a more recent experience, see if you can separate out ways of coping that were automatic 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 your family’s ethnic/religious/cultural identity. Assess the pros and cons of the ways you coped.

**Part 4:** **How was your experience of moral stress shaped by intersecting social systems, like religious sexism, heterosexism, racism, classism, ableism….? (200 to 300 words).**

Describe aspects of your social identity that shaped your experience by giving you social disadvantages or social advantages. See if you can identify layers from childhood: like social advantages or disadvantages that shaped your parents’ religious/spiritual existential identities in ways that helped or harmed their coping with life-changing events; and the extent to which you internalized and still experience these dynamics inter-generationally.

**Part 5.** **Describe the intentional beliefs and values** that are energized by positive emotions like compassion, joy, gratitude, hope, or sadness experienced in spiritual practices. Your spiritual practices and these intentional values and beliefs help you integrate this experience in ways that resist/protest embedded family, cultural/religious values/beliefs/coping that perpetuates sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and other forms of social oppression. These intentional beliefs and values may be what you want to experience, and/or may have evolved for you over a long-term process of using spiritual practices and searching for meanings that helped you integrate this life-changing experience into your life. **(1000 – 2000 words).**

***Emotions*** *(emotions that arise from life-giving coping and spiritual practices identified below):*

***Spiritual practices:***

***Values:***

***Beliefs:***

***Coping:***

**References** (100-200 words): Reference at least four references from your search. At least one of the four references needs to be from psychological studies. Other references from your literature search can be used to help you explore your beliefs and values about suffering and moral stress. Include also relevant course readings which you have cited.

**References for this journal outline**

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*.

Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. Pantheon Books.

Iyer, R., Koleva, S., Graham, J., Ditto, P., & Haidt, J. (2012). Understanding Libertarian Morality: The Psychological Dispositions of Self-Identified Libertarians. *PLOS ONE*, *7*(8), e42366. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0042366>

Menakem, R. (2017). *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and bodies*. Central Recovery Press.

Nelson, S. L. (2003). Facing evil: Evil's many faces: Five paradigms for understanding evil. *Interpretation, 57*(4), 399-413. doi:10.1177/002096430005700405

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. Religious and spiritual struggles are widespread across a range of faith orientations; for example, among atheists (Bradley, Uzdavines, Pargament, & Exline, 2016), Muslims, Jews (Abu-Raiya, Pargament, Weissberger, & Exline, 2016), as well as the general population. Pargament et al. (Pargament, Wong, & Exline, 2016) 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)

There are three types of spiritual or religious struggles (Exline, Pargament, Grubbs, & Yali, 2014):

	* *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:* conflicting values, ultimate meanings, and doubts about aspects of our sexuality
	* *Interpersonal 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. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Black therapist Resmaa Menakem describes settling practices that increase awareness of body memories of systemic oppression. He draws on research in trauma to describe how memories of systemic racism are stored in our bodies “as wordless stories about what is safe and what is dangerous.” He describes the skill of “settling one’s body” as essential for the work of socially just care. Menakem describes a simple settling practice of slowly looking over each shoulder and surveying your surroundings while paying attention to your breathing and how you experience stress in your body. This practice helps community faith leaders become aware of their own bodily memories of overwhelming stress and deepens their awareness of life threat arising from systemic oppressions. Those who have experienced sexual harassment, abuse, or assault may find that settling practices raise awareness of how body memories may be re-awakened to create a sense of pervasive threat and danger. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. As our learning covenant notes in referencing levels of self-disclosure: The purpose of self-disclosure is to develop competencies in spiritual care, especially a commitment to one’s own process of spiritual integration that enhances self-differentiation and a capacity for empathy. In deciding how to use/disclose personal experiences in assignments, students need to track their levels of stress as they work on assignments, and to not use/disclose experiences that overwhelm their capacities for self-differentiation, spiritual integration, and critical thinking skills. Students need to use their support systems when they become overwhelmed and in making decisions about what personal experiences to share in journal assignments. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Moral Foundations Theory is described on the website <https://moralfoundations.org/>. On this page, you will also find a link to Chapter 7 in Jonathan Haidt’s (2012) *The Righteous Mind.*

**From 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.”

Moral foundations theory and research can be used to help religious leaders and chaplains spiritually differentiate between their moral foundations and another’s. This research demonstrates six moral foundations that shape foundational/core values. The first three moral foundations are described as individualizing and often form the moral foundations of those who identify politically as Democrats as well as Libertarians

**Care**: protect and care for the vulnerable. “Everyone—left, right, and center— cares about Care/harm, but liberals care more [and are] more disturbed by signs of violence and suffering, compared to conservatives and especially libertarians” (Haidt, 2012, p. 182). Related virtues: kindness, gentleness, and nurturance. Related emotions are compassion and/or anger.

**Fairness:** “there are two major kinds. On the left, fairness often implies equality, but on the right it means proportionality—people should be rewarded in proportion to what they contribute, even if that guarantees unequal outcomes” (Haidt, 2012). Related virtues are justice and/or trustworthiness. Related emotions are gratitude, guilt, and/or anger.

**Liberty/oppression**: “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” (moralfoundationstheory.org).

Libertarian moral intuitions endorse “individual liberty as their foremost guiding principle, and weaker endorsement of all other moral principles [emphasizing] lower interdependence and social relatedness” (Iyer et al., 2012, p. 1).

Conservative moral intuitions “sacralize the word *liberty*, not the word *equality*” (Haidt, 2012, p. 176)

Those who identify politically as Republicans tend to give equal weight to six moral foundations: the three above and these three binding foundations with “the basic social unit [as] the family rather than the individual, and in which order, hierarchy, and tradition are highly valued” (Haidt, 2012, pp. 184-185. Liberals have ambivalence about these three moral foundations.

**Loyalty**: is related to “our history as tribal creatures able to form shifting coalitions. Related virtues: patriotism and self-sacrifice for the group. It is active anytime people feel that it’s ‘one for all and all for one.’” Related emotions are group pride and/or betrayal.

**Authority**: “underlies virtues of leadership and followership, including deference to legitimate authority and respect for traditions.” A related virtue is obedience. Related emotions are respect and/or fear.

**Sanctity**: is “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).” Related virtues are cleanliness, chastity, temperance, and piety. Related emotions are disgus/reverence/awe.

 [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. |  |
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| 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  |

 [↑](#endnote-ref-5)