**Journal Assignment Requirements, Grading, and Outline 3-22-2022**

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. Using breath- and body-based spiritual practices while you remember, reflect, write, and then later talk about your experience will be an opportunity to trust the process of *spiritual integration*. The use of calming spiritual practices, our course readings, forum discussions, and zoom meetings, as well as the structure of this assignment are designed to help you trust this process.

You might imagine writing this assignment as opportunities to use all of what you are learning in this course to draw a rough map of your spiritual integration journey through the terrain of an overwhelming life experience. Your partner and I have the sacred privilege of tracing this journey with you.  It is a rough map.  In reading your assignment, if I see ways to prompt you to do a little more work, I will offer you the opportunity to do more work on it before finalizing your grade.

To make sure you are not getting "stuck" in deciding what experience to write about for your journal assignment, in Week 3, you will draft Parts 1 and 2 of your journal assignment and identify terms you will be using to do your literature search. I will give you suggestions on how to describe your experience in ways that will help you partner understand without being overwhelmed. I’ll also make suggestions on search terms for your literature review and might suggest helpful articles.

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 by giving you access to/limiting social support and resources. Such reflections will deepen your capacity for *spiritual and social empathy* of others whose experiences are similar to or different from yours. Understanding how moral stress generates emotions, values, and beliefs that may be life-giving or life-limiting provides an opportunity to be *spiritually reflexive*. Spiritual reflexivity goes beyond theological reflection to understand how a chaplain’s/community faith leader’s and care seeker’s social, religious/spiritual identities interact in the process of exploring contextual intentional values and beliefs about suffering cocreated within relationships of trust in spiritual care, learning circles, and communities of faith.

Drawing upon your literature search and course readings will enhance your search for life-giving beliefs and values that help you share your experience with others in meaningful ways. You will be able to find and use key concepts in scholarship and research that describe aspects of your experience, and how your experience is understood in psychological and religious/theological studies. When moral stress involves core aspects of who you are, especially your vocation as spiritual caregivers, this journal assignment helps you understand and talk about how this experience is part of your story, and perhaps your call. The spiritually integrative process of writing and talking about this experience will help you talk about it with an internship supervisor, clinical pastoral care educator, peers, or those endorsing your vocation.

**Your literature search for relevant research and scholarship**

**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.).**

On the course page title “Literature Search” there are several videos that 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 trauma, 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 overwhelming stress, especially within your own religious and spiritual traditions (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, or humanist beliefs specific to your traditions and practices).

When you find an article that is relevant, look for the *Key Terms* that may be listed after the abstract, to see if any of these would help you in your literature search. For example, in Doehring (2019), there are these key terms after the abstract: spiritual practices spiritual orienting systems, traumatic grief, ambiguous grief, suicide, religious coping, religious and spiritual struggles, music, religious multiplicity. If one of these terms, such as ambiguous grief, is relevant, use that term in your next search. Look also, in the References listed at the end of an article or chapter, to look for helpful articles/books.

Reading research about your experiences of suffering can be unsettling for several reasons.  It can make us feel as though we are under the 'medical/clinical gaze' of those in a professional hierarchy whose access to social resources buffers them from the kind of suffering we have experienced. Our experiences with healthcare professionals may well confirm this experience of the medical gaze.  Our suffering is often caused/exacerbated by intersecting aspects of our identity (e.g., gender, racial, sexual orientation, religious, age identity), and these aspects of our identities are often ignored or discounted by healthcare professionals and in research studies. Pay attention to research studies only drawing upon a sample of psychology undergraduates mostly identified as white. Note these limitations in a footnote.  The research we will read about moral foundations theory uses culturally and globally diverse samples, noting that most of the research on moral reasoning and intuition is done with WEIRD samples (Western, Educated, Industrial, Rich, and Democratic).

Some students have commented on the challenge of incorporating academic/research genres of writing into the personally reflexive writing in your journal assignment.  You can reference research and scholarship in a footnote, as I sometimes did in the sample journal assignment I wrote.

**Drawing upon course readings**

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.

In section 3 you will be identifying beliefs about suffering that often come from childhood and culture. For many people in the US, these beliefs are shaped by Christian and Jewish beliefs about suffering.  For this reason, it may be helpful for you to draw upon any coursework you have done at Iliff (history, sacred texts, ethics, or theology) that describe the ways that Christian beliefs and ethics about suffering are helpful or harmful, particularly in the ways Christianity has been aligned with colonialism. I have found Susan Nelson's (2003) article, "Facing evil: Evil's many faces: Five paradigms for understanding evil" on suffering helpful for identifying Jewish and Christian beliefs about suffering. You'll find this in the Bibliography, where there are more resources about meaning making, including chapters from Rambo and Cadge (2022, which is available as an e-book at the Iliff library.

In Section 5, you will be searching for life-giving beliefs about suffering that are clarified through using your spiritual practices and your literature search for how scholars and practitioners understand the kind of suffering you are writing about (e.g., complex grief, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, childhood abuse, spiritual abuse, harassment). Your spiritual self-care practices will help you experience a *felt* sense of spiritual trust in the process of lifelong learning that grounds you in what is life-giving within your own religious and/or spiritual heritage, identity, and communities (Doehring & Kestenbaum, 2022). Your literature search may help you identify beliefs in your own faith tradition that help you understand the suffering you describe in this journal assignment.

While APA formatting for citations and references is helpful if you want to copy and paste references from the course bibliography, you may use another formatting style if you use it correctly and consistently. If you go to Iliff’s library website, under Resources” you will find a link to suggested sites for writing resources and style guides. There are links there for the Purdue OnlineWriting Lab, which has helpful formatting summaries.

**Requirements**

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.

* uses a spiritually integrative process grounded in intrinsically meaningful body and breath-based practices
* uses key concepts from course readings
* completes a literature search that yields meaningful religious, theological, and psychological references that are used to elaborate each section of the assignment fully.

*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[[1]](#endnote-1) 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/spiritual struggles 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. 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. Edit your narrative account carefully to consider whether particular details could overwhelm your learning partner. See whether there are general ways of describing a kind of overwhelming experience (e.g., sexual violence, intimate partner violence, childhood abuse).

**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:***

*Moral Foundations:*Using the five moral foundations identified in the most recent research on moral foundations theory,[[2]](#endnote-2) 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. 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 overwhelming stress.

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[[3]](#endnote-3)). 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. 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**

Atari, M., Haidt, J., Graham, J., Koleva, S., Stevens, S. T., & Dehghani, M. (2022). Morality beyond the WEIRD: How the nomological network of morality varies across cultures. *PsyArXiv* (March 4). https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/q6c9r

Rambo, S., & Cadge, W. (Eds.). (2022). *Chaplaincy and spiritual care in the twenty-first century: An introduction*. University of North Carolina Press.

Doehring, C. (2019). Searching for wholeness amidst traumatic grief: The role of spiritual practices that reveal compassion in embodied, relational, and transcendent ways. Pastoral Psychology, 68(3), 241-259. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-018-0858-5

Doehring, C., & Kestenbaum, A. (2022). Practicing socially just, interreligious, and evidence-based spiritual care In S. Rambo & W. Cadge (Eds.), *Chaplaincy and spiritual care in the twenty-first century: An introduction*. University of North Carolina Press.

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

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., & Exline, J. J. (2021). *Working with spiritual struggles in psychotherapy: From research to practice*. Guilford.

1. 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-1)
2. 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.”

A recent, yet to be published, study titled “Morality Beyond the WEIRD: How the Nomological Network of Morality Varies Across Cultures” by Mohammad Atari, Jonathan Haidt, Jesse Graham, Sena Koleva, Sean T. Stevens, Morteza Dehghani (Atari et al., 2022) proposes a revision of the ‘fairness’ foundation. In the Moral Foundations Questionnaire-2 (MFQ-2) the “fairness” foundation is now conceived as two different foundations—equality and proportionality—with the other foundations remaining the same as the NFQ-1 developed 20 years ago.

**Conceptual Definitions of Six Moral Foundations in the MFQ-2**

*Foundation Definition*

Care Intuitions about avoiding emotional and physical damage to another individual.

Equality Intuitions about equal treatment and equal outcome for individuals.

Proportionality Intuitions about individuals getting rewarded in proportion to their merit or contribution.

Loyalty Intuitions about cooperating with ingroups and competing with outgroups.

Authority Intuitions about deference toward legitimate authorities and the defense of traditions, all of which are seen as providing stability and fending off chaos.

Purity Intuitions about avoiding bodily and spiritual contamination and degradation.

**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.

**Equality:** Equality may be understood in terms of enforcing even balance and in-kind reciprocity in social relations, and that it requires equal treatment, equal say, equal

opportunity, equal chance, and identical shares

**Proportionality**—people should be rewarded in proportion to what they contribute, even if that guarantees unequal outcomes” (Haidt, 2012), ensuring that, in social relations, for each party rewards or punishments are proportional to their costs, contributions, effort, merit, or guilt (

Related virtues are justice and/or trustworthiness.

**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 disgust/reverence/awe. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. |  |
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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*. 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-3)