

PC 732 Spiritual and Psychological Dimensions of Suffering:

Healing Potential and Barriers

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Available by Phone Appointment

Course Description

This is an online hybrid course the description of which in the Pastoral Counseling Department catalogue is as follows:

The template through which I will offer this class is through the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual model. In so many words such a model is designed to help one arrive at an “Ecology of the Spirit” whereby one is led to respond to the question, what are the conditions through which a person is more open to be alert to the movements and workings of God’s Spirit (whatever one’s belief)? In effect, this “Ecology of the Spirit” may serve as a useful way of conceptualizing theologically suffering, trauma and evil, that is to say a theodicy.

This particular class is designed to accentuate the spiritual and theological meanings surrounding suffering and trauma. Using the principle of “*gratia perfecta natura*’ (grace perfects nature), I will suggest how God comes to where a person is in and through suffering and even in trauma. Various theological understandings of suffering and trauma will be offered. Through an appropriation of these understandings and incorporating them into your counseling and caregiving responses to people in need, you will learn to become even more skilled in assisting with compassion and competence those suffering individuals and groups you are called to serve.

Required Texts:

Lewis, C.S. (1963) *A Grief Observed* (New York: Bantam Books).

Various articles, audios, videos and websites will also be presented on the class Blackboard.

Specific Educational Objectives

Knowledge: Strategic

- Suffering will be conceived in terms of analytical, analogical, anagogical and ascetical perspectives.
- Students will learn various healing strategies from a variety of religious traditions
- Students will learn the method of the “Ecology of the Spirit” whereby they would see suffering from bio-psycho-social-spiritual perspectives.
- Students will learn how to integrate psychological constructs with theological principles as well as counseling strategies within the context of different systems of beliefs.

- Students will be expected to be familiar with the concept of counter transference and be able to apply it to their counseling and care giving encounters.

Knowledge: Procedural

- Students will become adept at writing a Verbatim in which they will learn how to respond to suffering by means of psychological constructs and theological concepts.
- Students will be able to approach a Person-in-need with cultural sensitivity.

Knowledge: Factual

- Students will be asked to consider a various theodicies in relation to trauma. In other words, have addressed thematically the question, “Why does God allow bad things to happen?”
- A practical knowledge of religious rituals from various religious traditions will be expected to be mastered.
- By attaining an acquaintance with the vocabulary of psychology in relationship to trauma and theology in relationship to suffering and evil, students must be able to demonstrate that they have the capacity to help someone cope psychologically and even theologically with situations of suffering and even trauma.

Requirements and Structure

Methods of Instruction: The approach will be to use online presentations through the Loyola University Maryland Blackboard. You can access blackboard through the internet (www.loyola.edu). You will need your student identification number and password. You must be able to access this site immediately. If you have any difficulty logging on to Blackboard, please contact the technology center on the main campus for assistance.

There are three modules in this course:

Module I: Reflecting on personal encounters with suffering

In this phase of the class students will be asked to consider how suffering has provided profound meanings and growth. By so doing, they will be more able to hear the sufferings of another person with less avoidance or personal anxiety.

Module II: Interfaith responses to suffering

Students will consider different developmental and religious traditions cope with the multifarious meanings of suffering.

Module III: Developing an Ecology for the Spirit: Toward a Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Model of Suffering

Through reflection essays the student will demonstrate how he/.she would respond to theological issues surrounding suffering from both within their religious tradition as well as another tradition not their own.

The student will be assessed by means of creating a PowerPoint lecture on the four dimensions of understanding a suffering person from the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual model and explain how he/she is able to reduce counter transference feelings in the face of trauma. Key question, how would you demonstrate your leadership in an area by presenting a Clinical/Pastoral Case using a Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual approach to professional colleagues?

By means of a Case Study, real or fictional, the student will demonstrate how he/she would help a Person-in-Need to develop resources for coping and hoping in the face of suffering

The student will possess a working knowledge of “language levels” whereby they can make enhance their empathic interventions and clinical strategies.

Assignments:

Weekly sharing on Blackboard: 30 pts (12 weeks). Each student is asked to post on BB a response to the weekly assigned question by 6:00 PM the Sunday before class and then they are to make responses to their fellow students by Tuesday @9:30 AM, the morning of the scheduled class. Besides one’s own posting there should be at least two response postings to one’s fellow students per week. Such postings are meant to serve as ways of class members interacting with one another. The length of each sharing should be at least one paragraph consisting of at least three sentences. The *Sharings* should be posted under the Discussion link on the class Blackboard.

Three Reflection papers: 30 pts (2-3 pages Lesson Learned Paper pertinent to class assignments or *Sharings*)

Verbatim: 10 pts (Consists of Introduction (1 page), transcript (at least 2 pages), Pastoral Interpretation (2-3 pages)

Suffering Service Presentation: 10 points (Presentation Service should show how one would help a person or a group cope with a suffering or a traumatic event by means of a service (e.g. a funeral or a ritual of a rite of passage).

Final presentation: 20 pts

In papers all outside references must be acknowledged. Please consult the APA manual for guidance with references as well as with paper formatting and writing style.

Grading Distribution:

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A (96-100) Excellent; performance far beyond course objectives

A- (90-95)	High Achievement
B+ (87-89)	Very good work; exceeds objectives
B (83-86)	Good; meets course objectives
B- (80-82)	Less than satisfactory
C+ (78-79)	Indicates remedial performance
C (75-77)	Unsatisfactory
F	Failure

Grading Categories:

Content- In the written material of the paper how well has the author presented what has been asked for in the assignment?

Expression- How creative has the author presented the material/

Grammar- Has the author avoided mistakes in spelling, syntax or APA reference style.

Academic Integrity

As a Jesuit, Catholic university, integrity and honesty are integral components of Loyola's core values. This commitment to integrity and honesty is manifested in an atmosphere of open, civil discourse and careful, respectful listening where freedom of thought and expression are valued and protected. The University also supports honesty and integrity by striving in various ways to foster respect for oneself and one's own work, as well as respect for others, their work, and their basic human rights.

Students are expected to conduct themselves honestly on all academic assignments. University-wide information about academic integrity as well as procedures for addressing alleged violations can be found in the [Graduate Catalogue](#).

All Registered students of Loyola University Maryland are bound to uphold the principles of academic integrity, and students are expected to understand the meaning and standards of academic integrity. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, the following offenses as described in the [Graduate Catalogue](#): cheating, stealing, lying, forgery, and plagiarism. Ignorance of any of these offenses is not a valid reason for committing an act of academic dishonesty.

Academic Standards and Dismissal

A student must maintain minimum academic standards. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the program. Information about academic standards, probation, and dismissal can be found in the [Graduate Catalogue](#).

Grade Appeal

You have the right to appeal a final course grade. Grade appeal information is located in Loyola University's [Graduate Catalogue](#).

Class Absences/Tardiness

The department policy is that students are required to attend class and the instructor will reduce grades for absences. Instructors have the authority to reduce course grade when a student has been absent more than one time or consistently late that equals one class period.

Blackboard

All course materials including PowerPoint slides and additional readings, for this course have been placed on **Loyola University's Content Management System (Blackboard)**. You can access Blackboard through (www.loyola.edu). You will need your student identification number and password. Contact Information Services (410-617-5555) if you are not familiar with Blackboard and need help with access. To get the most out of class, please reference course materials placed on Blackboard for a particular session or assignment prior to coming to class. Downloading slide handouts and bringing them to class is recommended for lectures.

- **Referencing Slides:** All course materials have been copyrighted. Please use appropriate citations in all your current and future work. No slides may be copied or used in any way (either during or after the course is over) without permission of the professor.

Paper Submission Formats

The following formats for your written work products will be accepted:

- a. Email attachment in Microsoft Word format only sent to (KGillespie2@LUC.edu
- b. Papers may be dropped in Blackboard's "Drop Box".
- c. Traditional paper

Learning Disabilities or Differences

To request academic accommodations due to a disability or difference; contact the Disability Support Services Office at (410) 617-2062. If you have a letter from the Disability Office indicating that you have a disability, which requires academic accommodations, present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations that you might need for this class.

Loyola Writing Center

To request assistance with writing papers, call 410-617-5415 or email lwc@loyola.edu. This center provides one-to-one consulting for students and offer services on the Columbia Campus.

Incompletes

- Incompletes will only be given for extreme emergencies. Grades are due to Records within 72 hours of the end of the final class.
- Therefore, your final work products must be turned in on time.
- Valid incomplete requests are a death in your family, extreme illness (not colds and flu), military activation, or anything outside of your control.
- Failure to plan ahead, panic over many papers being required at the same time, etc. are not valid for incomplete requests.
- Incompletes are granted for two weeks only. If the student's work products are not completed and submitted by the end of two weeks then the student will receive an 'F' for the course and will not be able to register for another semester until the 'F' is removed. The 'F' can only be removed when the student has submitted all work and the faculty member has graded the work and assigned a grade higher than an 'F'.
- Due to planned vacations and breaks, faculty members are not always available to read a late work product immediately upon receiving it from the student.

Requests for extensions or making up work

Requests for test make-ups and/or assignment deadline extensions are strongly discouraged. Requests for make-ups or extensions will be granted except in cases of documented illnesses (verified by a doctor or his designee) and other extreme circumstances. Consistent with department policy, failure to provide such verification can result in an assignment or test grade penalty. In cases of authorized test make-up, a distinct version of the examination will be given.

Withdrawal from Course

Students, who find themselves in the position of having to withdraw from the course and receive a grade of 'W', may do so no later than the date reflected in the [University's academic calendar](#). This date is BEFORE 85% of the class has been completed. For our department that means that the withdrawal date is before the 13th class. Failure to comply with the official withdrawal procedure will result in a permanent grade of F. Please consult the graduate catalogue for more information.

Course Evaluation at the end of the semester

Students have the opportunity to evaluate the course and instructor at the end of each semester. This evaluation is extremely helpful in the on-going improvement of our department's striving for educational excellence in our courses. Please participate in this important process.

Class Schedule

September 7- Suffering and the Self: Varieties of Suffering; Kushner's book "Why do Bad Things Happen to Good people (Provoking the question; recognizing counter transference in the face of suffering)

September 14- Suffering and the beloved: "A Grief Observed" and "Shadowlands"

September 21- Psychological Responses to Suffering: Plurality of Evils (Death, Divorce, Disease (medical), Disorders (clinical); Trauma and its history (**First Reflection Paper Due by 9:30 AM, September 15)**)

September 28- Jewish Scriptures responses to Suffering (Book of Job); contemporary responses to The Holocaust

October 5- The New Testament responses to Suffering (Mt. 25ff; Jesus before the tomb of Lazarus; Passion narratives; Road to Emmaus)

October 12-Philosophical Response to Suffering (various theodices) (**Second Reflection Paper due by 9:30 AM, October 6**)

October 19- Theological Responses to Suffering (traditional and contemporary responses)

October 26- Responses to Suffering in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam

November 2- Literature and Suffering (selected poetry and fiction) **Verbatim assignment due at the beginning of this class)**

November 9-Film and Suffering (Movies as well as U-Tube) (**Third Reflection Paper due by 9:30 AM, October 27)**)

November 16-Music and Suffering (classical, contemporary and religious music)

November 30- Political Responses to Suffering (the phenomena of 9/11) (**Suffering Service Presentation paper due, by 9:30 AM, November 17)**)

December 7-Coping with Suffering through the body

December 14-Final Class (Final Presentation)