I. COURSE PURPOSE

The purpose of this course is to introduce transpersonal theory as a framework for social work practice and examine its utility for both explanation and change in regards to human behavior and social functioning. Transpersonal theory explicitly recognizes spirituality and transcendental needs as intrinsic aspects of human nature, and emphasizes their role in the myriad experiences and life challenges inherent to the human condition. It is based on the principle that human beings possess developmental capacities that can lead to greater wholeness and integration beyond attainment of the mature ego and self-actualization. As one of the three combined Masters/Doctoral advanced clinical theory courses, Transpersonal Theory and Social Functioning presents the major conceptual underpinnings of transpersonal theory, provides an overview of its historical development and contemporary theorists, and explores the application of the theory to social work practice. Grounded in scholarly literature, lecture, discussion, and experiential and contemplative exercises, the course challenges students to critique transpersonal theory within the context of social work values and ethics and the profession’s commitment to diversity and social and economic justice.
II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the conceptual framework underpinning transpersonal theory, including identification of its major assumptions and the particular role of consciousness.

2. Articulate the relationship between transpersonal theory and spiritually-sensitive social work practice.

3. Trace the historical development of transpersonal theory and identify the contributions of various theorists to this development.

4. Describe the major tenets of transpersonal theories presented in the course, including both developmental and practice theory approaches.

5. Articulate the unique components of the transpersonal perspective as differentiated from other major psycho-social perspectives.

6. Delineate the explanatory and change concepts of transpersonal theory and apply both to social work practice.

7. Identify aspects of spiritually-sensitive practice, including practice goals, context, and the nature of the helping relationship.

8. Understand different approaches for spiritually-inclusive assessment of human development, functioning, and well-being.

9. Understand various transpersonal or spiritually-oriented social work interventions and identify and apply ethical guidelines for their use.

10. Understand strategies for working with clients’ diverse religious and spiritual support systems, including aspects of referral and collaboration.

11. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethics and values integral to the transpersonal perspective that are in accord with a bio-psycho-social-spiritual orientation of social work.

12. Identify the linkages between social work practice grounded in transpersonal theory and professional commitment to social and economic justice.
II. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. **Required Texts/Readings**


Other **Supplemental Readings** are also assigned throughout the course (see Class Schedule).

B. **Recommended Texts**


C. **Other Recommended Resources and Media**

*Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*. (Journal edited by NCSSS Professor Dr. Fred Ahearn and published by Francis and Taylor – online journal at CUA.)

[http://cssw.cua.edu/](http://cssw.cua.edu/) (NCSSS’s Center for Spirituality and Social Work website. Information on center continuing education and research activities and links to other organizations).

[http://societyforspiritualityandsocialwork.com/](http://societyforspiritualityandsocialwork.com/) (Society for Spirituality and Social Work website. Information on organization, which is open to students, practitioners, and faculty. Also has information about conferences.)
D. Course Assignments: Detailed instructions for all written assignments are included at the end of this syllabus. Assignments are to be submitted to the instructor ELECTRONICALLY on the due date prior to the beginning of the class session, unless prior arrangements have been made. Grades will be marked down one-third letter grade for each day the assignment is late.

Assignment #1: Self-Reflection Journal. Students will complete 6 journal entries that focus on their reactions/responses to both class readings and class activities and their experiences with a selected contemplative practice. DUE: See Course Outline and Instructions.

Assignment #2: Theorist Review. In consultation with the instructor, each student will select a major work by a transpersonal theorist of their choice and will complete a critical review of this work. DUE: Class 9

Assignment #3: DUE: Class 13
- Option #1: Conceptual Framework for Practice;
- Option #2: Literature Critique of Selected Topic; or
- Option #3: Application of Transpersonal Theory to Clinical Practice (Scholarly Paper).

MSW students may choose one of the three options for their 3rd assignment.
Doctoral students must choose Option #3 (Scholarly Paper).

Assignment #4: Attendance/Class Participation. Students are expected to be engaged participants and co-learners in this course. Class participation will be assessed by attendance and active participation in class discussions and activities.
E. **Grading Policy**: The grade for this course will be based on the University Grading System using the following weights for each earned grade.

- **Assignment #1: Self-Reflection Journal** 30%
- **Assignment #2: Theorist Review** 20%
- **Assignment #3: 1 or 3 Paper Options** 40%
- **Assignment #4: Attendance/Participation** 10%

F. **Course and Instruction Evaluation**: NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the semester, the evaluation form may be accessed at [http://evaluations.cua.edu](http://evaluations.cua.edu) using your CUA username and password. Additional, informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to this feedback.

G. **Attendance and Participation**: Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to arrive to class on time. If you know you must be absent for a particular session, please notify the instructor in advance. If absent due to illness, please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Unexcused or multiple absences will result in a reduction of the final grade. Students are responsible for obtaining any class notes or other materials due to absence. **Students are expected to read all required readings listed on the course outlines and be prepared to participate in classroom discussions and exercises.** Students are also expected to take responsibility for being an active part of the learning experiences for themselves and others.

IV. CLASS EXPECTATIONS

A. **Scholastic Expectations**: Please refer to NCSSS Announcements, or appropriate Program Handbook for Academic Requirements, including scholastic and behavioral requirements. All written work should reflect the original thinking of the writer, cite references where material is quoted or adapted from existing sources, adhere to APA format, and be carefully proofread by the student before submission to the instructor for grading.

B. **Academic Honesty**: Joining the community of scholars at CUA entails accepting the standards, living by those standards, and upholding them. Please refer to University Policy and Appropriate Program Handbooks.

C. **Accommodations**: Students with physical, learning, psychological or other disabilities wishing to request accommodations must identify with the Disability Support Services (DSS) and submit documentation of a disability. If you have documented such a disability to DSS that requires accommodations or an academic adjustment, please arrange a meeting with the instructor as soon as possible to discuss these accommodations.
CLASS SCHEDULE

[Text = Textbook; SR = Supplemental Readings are available on Blackboard. Full citations for Supplemental Readings listed at end of syllabus, where there is also a list of Recommended Readings.]

Class # and Date  Class Topic, Readings and Due Dates for Assignments

#1 – 1/17  Introductions and Overview of Course; Knowledge and Research Paradigms; Multiple Ways of Knowing

  **Unit I: Conceptual Framework**

#2 – 1/24  The Meaning of Spirituality for Self and Others and SW Practice

  **Readings:** Text: Canda & Furman, *Guiding Principles* (3-29) and *The Meaning and Significance of Spirituality* (59-97); Pargament, *A Rationale for a Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy* (3-26) and *Spirituality: The Sacred Domain* (29-52); SR: Carroll, *Conceptual Models of Spirituality* (5-21)

  ***DUE: E-mail instructor re: Contemplative Practice.***

#3 – 1/31  The Four Forces of Psychology/Psychotherapies; Major Assumptions of Transpersonal Theory; The Nondual Perspective; Acknowledging the Sacred in Social Work Practice


#4 – 2/7  The Role of Consciousness in Transpersonal Theory; Spiritual Coping

  **Readings:** Text: Cortright, *Consciousness* (51-60), *Meditation and Psychotherapy* (123-153), and *Altered States of Consciousness* (181-204); Pargament, *In Times of Stress: Spiritual Coping to Conserve the Sacred* (94-110) and *In Times of Stress: Spiritual Coping to Transform the Sacred* (111-128); SR: Brenner & Homonoff, *Zen and Clinical Social Work Practice: A Spiritual Approach to Practice* (261-269)

  ***DUE: Assignment #1: Journal Entry #1 (Classes 2 & 3)***

  **Unit II: Major Contributors to Transpersonal Theory**

#5 – 2/14  Early Pioneers: James, Jung, Maslow, & Assagioli

Class # and Date  Class Topic, Readings and Due Dates for Assignments

#6 – 2/21  Transpersonal Developmental Theories & Theorists I: Fowler & Wilber
Readings: Text: Cortright, Approaches to Transpersonal Psychotherapy (64- 90); SR: Sheridan, The Spiritual Person (163-208)
***DUE: Assignment #1: Journal Entry #2 (Class 4 & 5)

#7– 2/28  Transpersonal Developmental Theories and Theorists II: Wilber con’t. and Washburn
Readings: SR: Washburn, The Spiral Path: A Stage View (13-36); Text: Cortright, Approaches to Transpersonal Psychotherapy (97-120)

3/7  Spring Break – Enjoy!

#8-3/14  Transpersonal/Spiritually-Integrated Practice Theories & Models
Pargament, Problems of Spiritual Destinations (129-150) and Problems of Spiritual Pathways (151-171); SR: Cowley, Transpersonal Theory and Social Work Practice with Couples and Families (527-534); Hickson & Phelps, Women’s Spirituality: A Proposed Practice Model (43-57); Sheridan, Honoring Angels in My Path: Spiritually-Sensitive Group Work with Persons Who are Incarcerated (31-50).
***DUE: Assignment #1: Journal Entry #3 (Classes 6 & 7)

Unit III: Applications of Transpersonal Theory to Social Work Practice

Readings: Text: Canda & Furman, Creating a Spiritually Sensitive Context for Practice (213-242); Cortright, Principles of Transpersonal Practice (229-243); Pargament, An Orientation to Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy (221-241); SR: Sheridan, Religious and Spiritual Issues in Practice (567-571); Benedict, Creating Sacred Space with Clients (3)
***DUE: Theorist Review

3/28  Holy Thursday - Holiday

#10-4/4  Dimensions of Spiritually-Sensitive Social Work II: Assessment and Addressing Transpersonal/Spiritual Issues in Practice
Readings: Text: Canda & Furman, Understanding and Assessing Spiritual Development (243-285) and Appendix A: Discussion Guide for Detailed Spiritual Assessment (379-383); Pargament, Initial and Implicit Spiritual Assessment (201-220) and Explicit Spiritual Assessment (221-241); Cortright, Spiritual Emergency (155-179) SR: Hodge, Developing a spiritual assessment toolbox: A discussion of the strengths and limitations of five different assessment methods (314-323); Lewandowski & Canda, A Typological Model for the Assessment of Religious Groups (17-38)
***DUE: Assignment #1: Journal Entry #4 (Classes 8 & 9)
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<tr>
<th>Class # and Date</th>
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| #11 – 4/11      | **Dimensions of Spiritually-Sensitive Social Work III: Transpersonal and Spiritually-Oriented Practice Interventions; Spiritual Bypassing**  
  **Readings:** Text: Canda & Furman, *Spiritually Oriented Transformational Practice* (314-358); Pargament, *Addressing Problems of Spiritual Destinations* (276-292) and *Addressing Problems of Spiritual Pathways* (293-311); **SR:** Cashwell et al., *The Only Way Out Is Through: The Peril of Spiritual Bypass* (139-148) |
| #12 – 4/18      | **Dimensions of Spiritually-Sensitive Social Work Practice IV: Ethical Dilemmas and Guidelines**  
  ***DUE: Assignment #1: Journal Entry #5 (Classes 10 & 11)*** |
| 4/25            | No class – Instructor in training in Massachusetts |
| #13 – 5/2       | **Dimensions of Spiritually-Sensitive Social Work V: Working with Clients’ Diverse Religious/Spiritual Sources of Support**  
  **Readings:** Text: Pargament, *Drawing on Spiritual Strivings, Knowledge, and Experience* (260-275); **SR:** Bilich & Carlson, *Therapists and Clergy Working Together: Linking the Psychological With the Spiritual in the Treatment of MPD* (3-11); Dosser, Smith, Markowski, & Cain, *Including Families’ Spiritual Beliefs and Their Faith Communities in Systems of Care* (63-78); Nakhaima & Dicks, *Social Work Practice with Religious Families* (360-368).  
  ***DUE: Assignment #3 – One of Three Paper Options*** |
| #14 – 5/9       | **Transpersonal Theory and Social & Economic Justice; Class Wrap-Up/Closure**  
  ***DUE: Assignment #1: Journal Entry #6 (Classes 12 & 13)*** |
Due Dates of All Assignments, Plus Focus of Journal Entries

Due 1/24  Email Instructor: Selection of Contemplative Practice

Due 2/7   **Journal #1:** Class 2 - The Meaning of Spirituality for Self and Others and SW Practice; Class 3 - The Four Forces of Psychology/Psychotherapies; Major Assumptions of Transpersonal Theory; The Nondual Perspective; Acknowledging the Sacred in Social Work Practice

Due 2/21  **Journal #2:** Class 4 - The Role of Consciousness in Transpersonal Theory; Spiritual Coping; Class 5 - Early Pioneers: James, Jung, Maslow, & Assagioli

Due 3/14  **Journal #3:** Class 6 – Transpersonal Theories & Theorists I: Fowler & Wilber; Class 7 - Transpersonal Developmental Theories and Theorists II: Washburn

Due 3/21  Theorist Review

Due 4/4   **Journal #4:** Class 8 - Transpersonal/Spiritually-Integrated Practice Theories & Practice Models; Class 9 - Goals and Context of Practice & the Nature of the Helping Relationship

Due 4/18  **Journal #5:** Class 10 - Assessment and Addressing Transpersonal/Spiritual Issues in Practice; Class 11 - Transpersonal and Spiritually-Oriented Practice Interventions; Spiritual Bypassing

Due 5/2   One of Three Paper Options

Due 5/9   **Journal #6:** Class 12 – Dimensions of Spiritually-Sensitive Social Work Practice IV: Ethical Dilemmas and Guidelines; Class 13 - Working with Clients’ Diverse Religious/Spiritual Sources of Support
Assignment #1: Self-Reflection Journal
(See Schedule of Due Dates and Focus of Each Journal Listed on Page 9)

All students will be expected to keep a self-reflection journal that records their reactions or responses to course readings, class activities, and their selected contemplative practice. Each student will complete 6 “journal entries” to be turned in every 2 or 3 weeks (see schedule). Students will have a choice of one of two class sessions to write about for each journal entry. You may select both a reading and class activity from one class session or you may choose aspects of different class sessions (like a reading from Class #2 and a class activity from Class #3). Just make it clear what you are writing about. You will also be reflecting on your selected contemplative practice.

Each entry must include reactions/responses to:

a) **one reading** (specify by title and author); and

b) **some aspect of the class session** (specify lecture, class discussion, class exercise, etc.).

c) **their experiences with contemplative practices** (individually selected)

For each entry, include the **number and topic of the class session(s) being discussed and the date the journal is being turned in.** (e.g., Class #2: The Meaning of Spirituality for Self and Others; turned in 2/7).

- For reflections on the **reading** and the **class activity**, address the following: (Address each of the 4 areas for both the reading and the class activity separately.)

  1) Summarize one idea (if reading) or experience (if class activity) that was most significant to you. Limit this to no more than 2-3 sentences.

  2) What was your immediate reaction to the reading/activity? What is your reaction as you reflect upon it now?

  3) What insights or questions come up for you as you reflect on this reading or activity?

  4) What next steps related to your personal or professional development are suggested by your reflections on these questions? (BE SPECIFIC)

- For reflections on your **contemplative practice**, address the following:

  1) How is the practice going? What is the pattern of your involvement in this contemplative practice? Are there any changes you’d like to make?

  2) What effects, if any, do you notice in your personal and/or professional life?

Journal entries are expected to move beyond description to demonstrate self-analysis based on thoughtful reflection. Simply stated, the point of this assignment is to turn “the eye inward” on your own process. It is important to note that students’ entries will be kept confidential and will not be graded on the content of their entries, but rather on students’ ability to thoughtfully reflect about their reaction/responses, which will require willingness to engage in both deep thinking and deep feeling.
Journal entries should be approximately **4-5 pages long, typed, and double-spaced.** They will be assessed based on the following criteria:

a. Comprehensive coverage of the noted areas for a reading, a class activity, and experience with contemplative practice.
b. Evidence of thoughtful and critical self-reflection and analysis.
c. Ability to produce readable, well-organized journal entry. *(APA not required here)*

**Points assigned as follows:**

5 points = Thorough coverage of all aspects of assignment, in-depth self-reflection & analysis, and well-organized & well-written.

3 to 4 points = Limitations in 1 or 2 areas: coverage, reflection & analysis, or organization/writing.

1 to 2 points = Limitations in more than 2 areas: coverage, reflection & analysis, or organization/writing.

**Assignment #2: Theorist Review**

**DUE: Class Session #9**

This assignment is designed to allow students to consider a particular transpersonal theory in more depth. Students will select a **contemporary transpersonal theorist** and one of his or her major works to critically review. The instructor will provide a listing of theorists and writings; students may suggest additions to this listing. Final selection must be approved by the instructor.

The review should include the following areas: (Page numbers are provided as guidelines.)

1) Provide a brief **overview of the theory or theoretical framework**, including its **name** and **major focus** (1/2 to 1 page)
2) Identify whether the proposed theory or theoretical framework is primarily a **developmental or human behavior theory** (addresses explanation of human development or behavior) or a **practice theory or practice model** (offers principles and techniques for change). Provide a **rationale** for your choice. (1-2 pages)
3) Describe the **major tenets** of the proposed theory or theoretical framework. Be sure to define **major concepts** and provide **examples** for illustration. (2-3 pages)
4) Identify what you consider to be the **major contribution(s)** of this theorist, as represented by the selected reading, to the field of transpersonal theory. (1-2 pages)
5) Assess its **“utility” for social work professionals** (“fit” with social work knowledge base, practice methods, values, and ethics). Given examples or rationales for your assessment. (1-2 pages)

Papers should be **typed, double-spaced, and range between 7-9 pages**, not including the title page and reference list.

**Grading Criteria:**

* Comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the assignment
* Demonstrated understanding of key concepts of theory and its contributions as developmental/human behavior theory or practice theory/model
* Organization, clarity and demonstration of graduate-level writing
* Correct grammar, spelling, and use of 2010 APA referencing style (6th ed.)
Option #1: Conceptual Framework for Practice

This assignment is designed to help students apply course learning to the process of developing a conceptual framework for transpersonally-oriented, spiritually-sensitive practice. Therefore, it requires thoughtful and critical application of knowledge and insight gained through the class (readings, discussion, exercises, etc.) with a particular client system and practice situation. “Client system” refers to practice with an individual, couple, family, or small treatment group. Course textbooks, supplemental readings, and class handouts can serve as the primary sources for the development of this assignment, although additional sources may also be utilized. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, and range between 10-12 pages, excluding title page and references.

- **Conceptual Framework** (2-3 pages): Articulate your own understanding or definition of “transpersonally-oriented, spiritually-sensitive” social work practice. Identify the major components of a conceptual framework for such practice, specifying key areas of knowledge, skills, and values. Include a diagram that illustrates your proposed conceptual framework.

- **Practice Situation** (2-3 pages): Describe a professional (or volunteer, if necessary) social work practice situation that will be the focus for application of your proposed conceptual framework for practice (either a practice situation that you are working with now or have in the past). Give the background of the client system, including the presenting problem, issue, or goal to be addressed. Discuss the transpersonal or spiritual/religious aspects of the client system’s situation, including existing strengths/supports and/or limitations/barrriers operating within both the client system and the surrounding environment.

- **Plan for Practice** (4-5 pages): Explain how your proposed conceptual framework in Part A could be utilized to provide transpersonally-oriented, spiritually-sensitive social work with the practice situation described in Part B. Discuss how you would use transpersonal theory to both understand the client system’s development or behavior (explanatory function) and as a guide for practice (principles/strategies for change function). Also address implications of the conceptual framework for goals and context for practice, nature of the helping relationship, strategies for assessment, the use of spiritually-based interventions, the process of referral and/or collaboration with religious/spiritual support systems, and use of ethical guidelines.

- **Diversity/Social & Economic Justice Issues** (2-3 pages): What specific diversity (both religious/spiritual diversity and other aspects of human diversity) and/or social and economic justice issues need to be considered in the application of your conceptual framework to this particular practice situation? How should these issues be addressed or handled?

**Grading Criteria:**
- Comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the assignment
- Ability to use key course concepts in developing conceptual framework and apply appropriately to practice situation
- Organization, clarity, and demonstration of graduate-level writing
- Correct grammar, spelling, and use of 2010 APA referencing style (6th ed.)
Option #2: Literature Critique of Selected Topic

This assignment is designed to allow students to conduct more in-depth study of a particular topic covered within the course. Students will select 8 articles related to this topic for review and critique. Articles should be selected primarily from recent, peer-reviewed social work or related journals and must include both empirical research and conceptual writings. Writings may not include required readings listed on the syllabus or assigned readings from other classes. (You may use readings listed under “Recommended Readings” at the end of this syllabus if they are relevant to your selected topic.)

Final topic areas must be approved by the instructor.

Papers should be typed, double-spaced, and range between 10-12 pages, excluding title page and references.

- Identify the area selected for study and describe the process of your literature search (targeted journals and data bases, years of search, inclusion/exclusion criteria) (1/2 - 1 page)

- Provide a 1-page summary for each article. For empirical research, this should include a succinct overview of the purpose of the study, a brief description of the methodology (research questions or hypotheses, sample, design, data collection, and a synopsis of major findings). For conceptual writings, identify the key concepts or theoretical frameworks proposed by the author(s).

- Include a 2-3 page critique of the selected readings, including analysis of their contributions to our knowledge of the targeted area and implications for clinical practice. Identify how the selected literature has expanded your understanding of the topic.

- Include an alphabetized reference listing of the 8 articles and submit copies of each article with your paper.

Grading Criteria:
- Comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the assignment
- Ability to produce succinct summaries of readings and critique analysis of contributions to the knowledge base/clinical practice
- Organization, clarity, and demonstration of graduate-level writing
- Correct grammar, spelling, and use of 2010 APA referencing style (6th ed.)
Option #3: Application of Transpersonal Theory to Clinical Practice (Scholarly Paper)

This assignment is designed to help students extend course learning into a particular area of social work practice. Examples of suitable topics include: understanding specific aspects of spiritual development; various approaches to clinical assessment; the use of spiritually-based interventions; working with clients’ diverse religious/spiritual perspectives and/or sources of support; ethical issues/dilemmas; practitioner-client relationships; specific problems in living or life transitions that clients may encounter; or issues of practitioner ongoing growth and development. Regardless of topic, the focus of this paper is a critical analysis of the relevance or application of transpersonal theory to the targeted area of social work practice.

Final topic areas must be approved by the instructor.

As an assignment that can fulfill the “Scholarly Paper” requirement for MSW students, it involves a substantial search of the literature and must adhere to the following guidelines:

- Papers must be typed and double-spaced, and range between 12-15 pages, exclusive of title page, references, tables, and appendices.

- A minimum of 12 references is required, with the majority of references coming from recent, peer-reviewed social work and related journals, beyond those listed as required readings on the course syllabus. Secondary references may include books and book chapters, technical and research reports, proceedings of meetings, doctoral dissertations, audiovisual media, and electronic media.

- Format must follow the most recent edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, including guidelines for parts of a conceptual manuscript; formal writing style; organization and headings; margins, spacing, and font size; reference citations in text; figures and appendices; and reference list.

Grading Criteria:
- Comprehensive coverage of all aspects of the assignment
- Ability to synthesize relevant literature and provide critical analysis of selected practice issue within the lens of transpersonal theory
- Organization, clarity, and demonstration of graduate-level writing
- Correct grammar, spelling, and use of 2010 APA referencing style (6th ed.)
Required Supplemental Readings


**Recommended Additional Readings: Examples in Selected Practice Areas**
(In Texts and Supplemental Articles)

**Religious/Spiritual Diversity**


**Substance Abuse and Addictions**


**Illness, Death, and Other Losses**


**Trauma**


**Interpersonal Relationships**


**Mental Health/Mental Illness**


**Stress Reduction and Wellness**


[Revised 1/10/13]