Hindu Spiritual Care

Course Description

This course of 60 contact hours offers an opportunity for students to study contemplative theory and practice using Hindu scriptures, interreligious resources as well as scientific resources from Transpersonal psychology, Neuroscience and Chaplaincy. Emphasis will be on practical and contemplative approaches to gaining wisdom from these resources (details given in the syllabus below). Students will be encouraged to find a location for Field Work in a Temple or Chinmaya Mission community or local hospital setting, in order to volunteer as a chaplain-in-training. Students will bring their experiences to the class. The course will conclude with an assignment for each student to present a written “verbatim” of a spiritual care interaction (drawn from their Field Work) and understand how the healing in their care is based on practical Vedantic theology.

Course Introduction

The field of Vedanta-informed Chaplaincy explores contemplative approaches to scriptural studies to gain theological knowledge that can be applied in practical spiritual care settings. The field of Spiritual Care, while still emerging, is recognized by the American Academy of Religion, and is increasingly taught both as a university discipline as well as clinical/hospital settings. Students will learn how scholars in contemplative studies use various scientific, interdisciplinary, interpersonal, and comparative-theological tools and methods.

Course Objectives

- The primary objective of this course is to introduce students to the
“Mindfulness to Transcendence” (MT) framework of the clinical chaplaincy/spiritual care process.

- Students will learn how to identify interpersonal narratives in Hindu scriptural texts and study them using the MT framework of the clinical spiritual care process.
- Going between their scriptural studies and interpersonal spiritual care case studies in their Field education (seva or clinical chaplaincy settings), the students will try to gain the practical experiential understanding of Vedanta theology underlying the MT framework of chaplain.

Course Outcome

At the end of the course the students would be able to

- Identify the main themes in Hindu slokas and images.
- Describe the mental state of Brahma and a sthitaprajna as related to chaplaincy.
- Demonstrate ability to interpret yoga sutras using Sanskrit language skills as well as psychology and neuroscience.
- Apply the clinical chaplaincy framework in the study of Bhagavad-gita and Ramayana.
- Analyse the place for Comparative theological studies in the chaplaincy contexts.

Pedagogy

This course employs classroom lectures, weekly reflections, online discussion boards, readings, and class presentations. The student is expected to actively engage in the components mentioned above. The student is also encouraged to practice the clinical skills of chaplaincy in his/her community setting.

Suggested Readings


● P. Ramakrishnan, “Rama in the Forest: A Hindu chaplaincy framework for grief resolution from Valmiki Ramayana.” Hindu Approaches to Spiritual Care, p. 93-104.

● Methodology of Reenactment Hermeneutics: Stueber, Karsten R. “The Psychological Basis of Historical Explanation: Reenactment, Simulation,


Module 1: Understanding Vedanta Theology (12 hours)

This is the introductory module in which the students can learn Vedanta theology through shlokas, hymns and images, and Hindu festivals, pujas and vratas. The topics include – Introduction to Hindu shlokas, study of Hindu images, svadhyaya for chaplaincy purposes.

Students will also learn how to present their clinical interaction in “Verbatim” highlighting the contemplative or mindfulness processes that are involved in it. Such a chaplaincy case study is dubbed as “The Verbatim.”

Required Readings:

- Study of selected dhyana shlokas, regular puja-stotras (worship-hymns) (to be shared)
- Understanding the basics of studying Sanskrit texts (sutra, mantras, and shlokas) and how to interpret them for scholarly studies and clinical chaplaincy.
- Here are a few weblinks handy for Sanskrit dictionary typing and diacritics:
  - https://www.learnsanskrit.cc/
  - https://www.lexilogos.com/keyboard/sanskrit_devanagari.htm
  - https://www.lexilogos.com/keyboard/sanskrit_latin.htm


Suggested Readings


Module 2: Bhagavad-gita Studies and Chaplaincy (12 hours)

This module concentrates on looking inwards, providing glimpses of the nature of Self. Srimad-bhagavad-gita is undoubtedly the best text to know about the Self. This module focuses on Vedic teachings on the Self and the other. We will explore what is the meaning of death, what is loss, what is pain and suffering, and so on. The topics include an introduction to scholarly studies of Hindu scriptures, atman-anatman debate, bhakti and jnana, etc. Upanishads (focus on Chandogya) will be examined as well.

Required Readings

- Chinmayananda, Swami. [no date] *The Holy Geeta*. Bombay: Central Chinmaya Mission Trust. Select Chapters 1, 2, 5, 8, 12, 15, 16
- For Bhagavad-Gita chanting: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XFXFVeQ8dg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XFXFVeQ8dg)
- Chandogya Upanishad: Focus on Uddalaka-Shvetaketu interaction: [https://iami1.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/chandogyachapter6someshlokas.pdf](https://iami1.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/chandogyachapter6someshlokas.pdf)
  - Implications on interreligious chaplaincy
Module 3: Itihasas through the Lens of Chaplaincy (12 hours)

This module concentrates on the application of the concepts learned in the previous module with models available in our itihasas. Its emphasis on learning how the narratives from Hindu itihasas can be profound examples of spiritual caregiving. Students will learn how to study the interaction between Lakshmana and Rama through the clinical chaplaincy lens. The Verbatim methodology to understand how Lakshmana provided spiritual care to Rama.

Students will be encouraged to identify a setting in which to practice Spiritual Care skills, such as a temple, Hindu congregation, university or hospital chaplaincy department, and become familiar with the chaplain’s deep listening skills in his/her interpersonal interaction with the care recipient. This is when they would begin presenting their spiritual care interactions as Verbatim case studies.

Required Readings:

- Selected readings (sargas) from Valmiki Ramayana: Here are a couple of handy websites (1) https://www.valmiki.iitk.ac.in/ (2) http://valmikiramayan.pcriot.com/

Suggested Readings

- Bharata-Muni. The Natyaśastras. Chowkhamba Sanskrit Academy (January
1, 2002)

  https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13528165.2016.1215399


Module 4: Patanjali’s Yoga Sutra (PYS) Studies and Chaplaincy (12 hours)

This module is devoted to practise-based understanding of yogic approach to chaplaincy. The students will be initiated into studying yoga sutras consisting of 4 chapters.

Introduction to the Contemplative Spiritual Care/Chaplaincy Process. The readings in this section will build upon the learnings from the previous three modules to facilitate the students’ skills and understandings on deep/empathic listening. The required readings on PYS will help students identify the contemplative (Mindfulness-based) chaplaincy framework in their spiritual care interactions.

Required Readings


Web Resources:

- [https://yogasutraforinnerwork.wordpress.com/chapter-1-samadhi-pada/](https://yogasutraforinnerwork.wordpress.com/chapter-1-samadhi-pada/)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y87Ktc36R4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y87Ktc36R4)
Module 5: Interreligious Reading and Chaplaincy (12 Hours)

This is the final module of the course where students are made aware of non-Hindu traditions also. The primary objective is to facilitate students to learn and understand how to gain deeper insights in Vedanta theology through the empathetic study of selected narratives from the Holy scriptures of non-Hindu traditions.

Required Readings

- Selected portions of scriptures across religious traditions.