PSY630 Psychology in Relation to Theology I

Reformed Theological Seminary - Orlando
When: Alternating Thursdays 10am-12pm - starting August 23rd
Instructor: Rev. Chuck DeGroat
Office Hours: By appointment
Telephone for Chuck DeGroat: 407-461-1366
E-mail for Chuck DeGroat: cdegroat@rts.edu

PURPOSE

As the first course in a three-course track in psychological and theological integration, we focus on Scripture as the central text of the Christian counselor. It is in Scripture that God’s Story gives form and context to our stories. Through this course, we will understand how God’s word comes to bear in the counseling room.

OBJECTIVES

At the completion of this course, students will:

1. Understand psychology as one form of Christian soul-care
2. Articulate a more balanced and complete understanding of the role of Christian Scripture in counseling

FORMAT

Teaching will include lecture, discussion, video and visual aids where applicable, and some student presentation. The first hour of class will feature student presentations on the connection between ancient spirituality (and therapy) and contemporary psychology. The second hour will feature an applicable lecture/discussion on a biblically-related issue.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. David Benner, Care of Souls
   Why? This is a great introduction to Christian soul-care as a concept broader than twentieth-century psychology.

2. Shults and Sandage, Transforming Spirituality: Integrating Theology and Psychology
   Why? This is the best text to date on integrative issues. It may be a tough read, but press on through it. It’s worth it.

NON-REQUIRED, ESSENTIAL TEXTS for BIBLICAL INTEGRATION ISSUES

Allender, D. & Longman, T. The Cry of the Soul
Holmes, P.R.  *Becoming More Human*

Plantinga, C.  *Not the Way Its Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*

Roberts, R.C. & Talbot, M.R.  *Limning the Psyche: Explorations in Christian Psychology*

Seamands, S.  *Ministry in the Image of God*

Shults, F.L., & Sandage, S.J.  *Faces of Forgiveness*

Theissen, G.  *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology*

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Students will strive to be present (physically-emotionally-spiritually) and participate actively throughout class presentations and discussions. Differing perspectives and questions will not be ignored, but are encouraged to be shared with the whole class. Discussion will be a major component of the class. Students are expected to speak to the topic based on the class readings to foster a thoughtful discussion.

Students will complete assignments (below) with quality and in a timely manner.

**Assignment 1 - Presentations**

20 minute class presentations (2-3 per group for presentation) on how a particular aspect of classic Christian soul care might interact or apply to your counseling practice today. Sign up for topics and dates. See schedule below.

**Assignment 2 - Experiential Project**

Choose one of the topics above, and do it with at least one other person. For instance, go to an “Art for the Heart” seminar with Debbie Miller. Or, find a few friends and go do the labyrinth at San Pedro. Or spend the semester praying through biblical texts of lament. Whatever you choose, do it with someone else, and then make an appointment to de-brief with me on what you experienced.

**Assignment 3 - Book Reading Reviews**

Write a one-page, single spaced review of each book assigned. Submit it to me via email by the term paper deadline.
Class Schedule

August 23 - Introduction to the course

September 6 - Lectio Divina - The *lectio divina* is an ancient way of praying the Scriptures that values human emotion, group interaction, and more. There are a variety of online resources and/or books that deal with the subject. Help the class understand what it is and how it might be valuable. See Eugene Peterson’s *Eat This Book*.

September 20 - Prayer Labyrinth - The labyrinth is an ancient way of praying. There is a local labyrinth at San Pedro Retreat Center. It was an ancient “therapy” that allowed a person to deal with sin, and move back in to the world in a new and more free way. See [http://www.labyrinth.org.uk/](http://www.labyrinth.org.uk/).

October 4 - Silence and Solitude - In a busy and noisy world, there is little room for contemplative life, even among Christians. Why is this so valuable? How might it help a client? See Henri Nouwen’s *Out of Solitude*, or *With Open Hands*.

READING WEEK

October 18 - Lament - Lament is a biblical mode of complaint or grievance before God. When is complaint legit, and when does it cross the line into blasphemy? See Renee Alton’s *Stumbling toward Faith*, Dan Allender’s article ([http://www.leaderu.com/marshall/mhr01/lament1.html](http://www.leaderu.com/marshall/mhr01/lament1.html)), or my article on lament.

November 1 - Creative arts - There is an increased use of poetry, art, story, metaphor, and more in counseling. How does this fit in with a biblical form of counseling? See Joy Sawyer’s *Art of the Soul*, or talk to Debbie Miller about *Art for the Heart* at Grace Clinic ([Debbie.miller@graceclinic.org](mailto:Debbie.miller@graceclinic.org)).

November 15 - Confession/Repentance - The role of confession and repentance may seem medieval to the modern psychologist, and may be language that doesn’t have a place in humanistic theories. But it is an ancient practice of soul formation. See Dan Allender’s sections on sin and repentance in the *Wounded Heart*. See also Shults and Sandage, *Faces of Forgiveness*.

GRADING SCALE

Listed below are the assignments that will determine your final course grade.

Class Participation  20 points (class attendance is crucial)
Class Presentations  30 points
Experiential Projects 20 points
Book Reviews 15 points each

A (97-100), A- (94-96), B+ (91-93), B (88-90), B- (86-87), C+ (83-85), C (80-82), C- (78-79), D+ (75-77), D (72-74), D- (70-71), F (below 70)
ACADEMIC STANDARDS

If you should miss a class, you are expected to contact another student regarding the information covered.

All assignments will be due on the date specified in the syllabus. For each day a paper is late, 2 points will be deducted from the score of the assignment. Papers may be emailed to me at cdegroat@rts.edu.

Plagiarism/cheating will result in the failure of the course.