

REL 336: HEALTH, HEALING, AND RELIGION

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In 2015, Dr. Jane Webster participated in a Teaching Interfaith Understanding faculty development seminar, run in partnership between the Council of Independent Colleges and Interfaith Youth Core, and generously funded by the Henry Luce Foundation. For information on future seminars, and to access more resources created by seminar alumni, visit www.ifyc.org/content/ifyc-cic-resources.

Course Description

In this course, you will develop your ability to interact with people of other religious and cultural traditions. You will do this by reading about, participating in, and observing various healing methods through a wide range of cultures. You will identify religious features such as meaning-making, ritual, pilgrimage, and sacrifice, as well as ways that healers build confidence in those they heal. These religious features appear overtly in some religious contexts, and covertly in “non-religious” modern medical and psychological contexts. You will be asked to compare and contrast these features across cultures and to reflect upon their implications for health care in America today. You will also reflect on your own response to interfaith understanding, its value, and its implications for your future career.

Because this is a “critical thinking” course, specific attention will be given to synthesizing big ideas that shape cultural understanding. This course fulfills the requirements of the religion major, the Health Promotions major, a General Education critical thinking course, and/or an exploration course.

¹ In consultation with the author, this syllabus has been edited for length, removing details particular to the author’s context such as office hours and location, absence policies, honor codes, and other instructor-specific (or institution-specific) details.

Learning Outcomes: Critical Thinking Intensive

In this course, you will have the opportunity to develop the following skills:

- ▶ Demonstrate active listening and empathetic inquiry;
- ▶ Identify, analyze, and compare worldviews/ideologies of different people groups, including your own;
- ▶ Extract principles from personal experience and semantic domains;
- ▶ Predict how these principles will affect a new context;
- ▶ Identify and accurately cite appropriate secondary sources;
- ▶ Synthesize observations, hypotheses, and reflections into a coherent argument.

Learning Objectives: Learning in the Disciplines; Interfaith Understanding

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- ▶ Identify, describe, interpret, and compare healing philosophies, values, assumptions, and rituals of several different cultures;
- ▶ Use the language of Religious Studies, Sociology, and Anthropology accurately and appropriately;
- ▶ Engage in civil religious discourse (CRD);
- ▶ Identify the potential, challenges, features, and implications of Interfaith Understanding;
- ▶ Discuss the interrelationship between religion and healing and its implications.

Assessment of Learning

1. Attendance (10%)

- ▶ Your energetic attendance and cheerful participation contributes so much to the success of the course! Please plan to be on time and stay for the duration. “Be present.”
- ▶ According to Barton Policy, your grade will be affected after three absences, excused or not; you may fail the course after excessive absences. Two “partial class attendance” equals one absence.

2. Exploration Questions [EQs] (50% of final grade; the three lowest grades will be dropped)

- ▶ In this course, curiosity is given a high value.
- ▶ These assignments give you an opportunity to capture what you are learning as you proceed through the course and to prepare you for the global thinking and connections required in your midterm and final papers.

- ▶ Select one of the following course questions to stay focused and to gather relevant data:
 1. How is illness and healing explained? What is the story about it (myth)?
 2. What kind of healer is needed?
 - Type of healer (shaman, spirit medium, priest-ritualist, holy person, prescriptionist)
 - How do they become healers? (initiation by ordeal or illness; inheritance; apprenticeship; formal education; position in the family [e.g., 7th son]; signs or portents at birth; revelation during illness, dream, near-death, possession, trance; self-taught)
 - How do they inspire confidence? (sacred time and space, tools, relics, reputation, credentials, testimonies, titles, success stories, caring)
 3. What rituals do they perform? (How do these rituals reflect the cause of the illness?)
 - To diagnose the illness (divination)
 - To identify the cause of illness
 - To create a healing environment
 - To heal
 4. What is expected of the sick person?
 - Pilgrimage
 - Payment/sacrifice
 - Ritual performance (confession, baptism, communion)
 - Testimony
 5. What is expected of the community?
 - Accompaniment
 - Ritual performance
 - Accountability (to group and ancestors)

Most EQs have 2 parts; write about ½ page for each part:

- ▶ Part A. Complete the EQ noted in the course outline (below) summarizing how the traditions described in the reading, videos, etc. contribute to your course question.
- ▶ Part B. Reflect on your recent learning experiences (in and out of) class especially as they relate to your course question.
- ▶ In your EQs, make sure you make significant mention of the theories and vocabulary terms in the textbook. Cite all your sources. Edit to one page total for concise and precise thinking.
- ▶ After class, reconsider what you have written and add, correct, or nuance your ideas by writing in your ideas by hand. Attach a rubric to your paper copy and submit.
- ▶ All EQs are due at the end of class according to the course outline below. Late EQs will not receive credit. EQs submitted by email by the due date will receive a grade but no feedback.
- ▶ The following rubric will be used for grading:

	0-5	5-6	7-8	9-10
No assignment submitted at the end of class; evidence of plagiarism.		___ handwritten EQ (with instructor's signature) submitted at end of class ___ lacks Part A or Part B ___ does not refer to reading ___ does not address course question ___ citations absent or incomplete ___ lacks organization ___ 3+ spelling/grammar errors ___ inconsistent civil religious discourse	___ typed EQ submitted at end of class ___ unequal Part A and B ___ refers to part of the reading ___ vague reference to course question ___ 1-3 accurate citations ___ inconsistent organization ___ 1-3 grammar or spelling errors ___ uses civil religious discourse	___ typed EQ with notes added submitted at end of class. ___ balanced Part A and B ___ refers to whole reading ___ addresses course question ___ 3+ accurate citations ___ well-organized ___ no grammar/spelling errors ___ empathetic civil religious discourse ___ considers implications ___ connects with larger context ___ shows interfaith understanding

3. Midterm (15%) and Final (25%)

- ▶ At midterm and final classes, you will submit a summary of the various writing assignments you have prepared throughout the semester, focused on the relationship between health, healing, and religion in general, and your course question specifically. Your answers should synthesize and integrate all of the various components in the course, including readings, class discussions, films, and workshops; frame your whole paper with a well-connected organizational theme (thesis). It should be carefully crafted for a clear, dense argument drawing on key, diverse examples. Consider the implications of your thesis in particular for health practitioners, alternative healers, and religious groups, showing how engaging religious difference might both support and challenge contemporary health care.

- ▶ Frame this argument (put it in the introduction and conclusion) with a reflection of why interfaith understanding and empathetic civil religious discourse are relevant and critical in your life plan. For example, if you plan to be a teacher, how might you apply your findings to your future teaching practice? If you plan to be in business, how will you adjust your business practice?
- ▶ Midterm = 5 pages; Final = 8 pages. See the Template for Midterm and Final Essays on the course web site.

Required Reading

- ▶ David Kinsley, *Health, Healing and Religion: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1996).
- ▶ Resources, videos, and links on the course website.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Introduction to the course. Metacognition: assess, plan, monitor [repeat as necessary]. Introduction to the Case Study of a Hmong Child: Why is interfaith understanding important? Introduction to Báfá simulation.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: After class, read over “your role” in the Báfá game and be ready to “enter the room” for next class in your Alpha or Beta.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Simulation game – Báfá

Week 2

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Debriefing Báfá. Engaging with “others.” Exercise in active listening.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 1A) Describe your experience with the Báfá simulation game. (EQ 1B) What “big ideas” did you learn from it?

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Talking about religion - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kdas1Te7sPI>. Introduction to civil religious discourse (CRD). Role play active listening and inquiry: extracting principles from personal experience and semantic domains.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 2A) Describe an experience (real, borrowed, or imagined) when you had a conversation about religion with someone of another religion. (EQ 2B) Connect it to the “big ideas” from the Báfá simulation exercise.

Week 3

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: What is religion? What does it mean to believe something? Alston's Nine Religion-Making Characteristics. Semantic domains: different types of words describe the same thing—or a different thing? Role play active listening, inquiry, and CRD. How is CRD related to interfaith understanding?
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 3A) What is your (religious) worldview? With a very brief reference to your larger tradition (e.g., that of your family or ethnic group), describe what you personally believe about the world: How did the world come into existence? How is the world sustained? Is the world basically good or bad? How can we know? What is the role of humans in the world? What is the purpose of community? How should we live? What happens when people are born and die? (EQ 3B) Connect this to the “big ideas” from the Báfá simulation exercise.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: What are health and healing? Is there a crisis in modern medicine? What do you know about it? Do you care? Who are healers? A survey of your assumptions about healing practices. How do religion and healing connect?
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 4A) Read Kinsley 1-21 (Shamanic Healing). (EQ 4B) Kinsley is a conversation partner with us in this course. Describe how you needed to exercise empathetic active listening as you were reading. During class, we will do a poll on-line. Bring a smart phone, tablet, or lap top to class.

Week 4

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Establishing the categories of our study using Curanderismo as our base study. (The “course questions.”)
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 5A) Identify some of the assumptions that surfaced for you during the poll last class about healing and illness. Connect them to the “big ideas” from the Báfá simulation exercise. (EQ 5B) Before class, watch the film: *Eduardo the Healer*. Describe specific rituals Eduardo uses to build confidence and trust from his clients.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Meaning-making through stories – myths. Introduction to shamanic healing.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 6A) Read Kinsley 22-38. (EQ 6B) Alberto Villoldo, “Shamanic Wisdom and Healing: Cleaning Up Your River: A Conversation with Alberto Villoldo.” Kripalu-online May 1, 2007. <https://kripalu.org/article/423/>. Listen to <https://soundcloud.com/ifyc/from-the-spirit-world-discussing-the-values-of-shamanism>.

Week 5

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Workshop – guided meditation and journeying. You will have an opportunity to experience the creation of a story that lends meaning to life experience.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 7A) Read Kinsley 39-53; see the videos about the Kung and Navaho: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wff3TH0mh9c> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyLF3y1YJKA>. (EQ 7B) Read Kinsley 54-59 (Zinacanteco). Come to class in comfortable, modest, and flexible clothing; bring a yoga mat, blanket, or beach towel.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Traditional Healing – spirit medium and prescriptionist healers, trance states, transference.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 8A) Watch the film *Secrets of Voodoo* (120 min), paying particular attention to the rituals involving transference (dolls), possession, the use of herbs, and appeasing the gods. Consider ways that people have “demonized” voodoo and its rituals in order to limit the power of the religion to bring people together in a community and provide healing. What cost does this “marginalization” have on the rest of society? (EQ 8B) Include a description and your response to the guided meditation from last class.

Week 6

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Workshop – Transference. You will have an opportunity to send your healing energy to others through a variety of transference rituals. What does it mean to “send healing” and “get rid of illness”?
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 9A) Read Kinsley 60-70 (Demonology). (EQ 9B) Include a description and response to the class discussion on transference.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Introduction to Yoga.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 10A) Read Joel Kramer, “Yoga as Self-Transformation,” *Yoga Journal* (May/June 1980): 1-10. (EQ 10B) Include a description and response to the transference workshop, making connections to the Voodoo film.

Week 7

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Workshop - Yoga. You will have an opportunity to experience the grounding techniques, stretches, mantras, challenges, and restorative healing practices of yoga.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: No EQ. Come to class in comfortable, modest, and flexible clothing; bring a yoga mat if you have one.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Introduction to Ayurveda. You will have an opportunity to assess your own constitution (*dosha*).
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 11A) Read Kinsley 71-83 (Central Themes). (EQ 11B) Include a description and response to the yoga workshop.

Week 8

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Workshop – consider ways that Ayurveda might help you to find balance and healing through diet and daily practices.
- ▶ Exploration Question: Complete the Ayurveda Intake Questionnaire and bring it to class.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Workshop – Chakra Balancing. You will have an opportunity to assess your energy flow using a chakra meditation, and to consider ways to restore your balance.
- ▶ Exploration Question: Submit your midterm, integrating a description and response to the Ayurveda workshop.

Week 9

Midterm Break

Week 10

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Introduction to Sacred Space: Pay attention to the space where healing happens. Sacred space (shrine, temple, congregational space), features (axis mundi, portal, gardens, labyrinths), pilgrimage, rituals.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: What is the relationship between healing and space?

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Workshop - Feng Shui. You will have an opportunity to assess and realign your space to find peace, prosperity, health, and good relationships.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: Draw a floor map of your personal space (dorm room, apartment, etc.) to scale. Locate East-West-North-South as close as you can, preferably with a compass. In class, you will consider ways to balance your energy with your environment.

Week 11

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Introduction to divination; herbalism; Reiki; spells; home altars.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 12A) Write a response to the Feng Shui workshop. (EQ 12B) Using the vocabulary from 2 classes ago, identify the features of a sacred space which you have visited, such as a garden, tower, labyrinth, pilgrimage, shrine, temple, congregational space, etc.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Field Trip to Truely Unique, a store that specializes in the “stuff” used in rituals.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: Consider bringing some money to make purchases and/or take advantage of services.

Week 12

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Healing in the Christian Tradition: What causes illness, according to the New Testament?
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 13A) Read Kinsley 85-95 (Jesus healing traditions). (EQ 13B) Include a description and response to the Truely Unique field trip and your own experiences with divination rituals.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Healing in the Christian Tradition: Contemporary Christian healing. How is healing like a performance?
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 14A) Before class, view *Healing* (57 min), a film about Kathryn Kuhlman, a famous Christian healer. (EQ 14B) Analyze her approach to healing using the course questions. Read Kinsley 96-107.

Week 13

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Sacramental principle: Saints, healing shrines, pilgrimages, labyrinths.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 15) Read Kinsley 108-118.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Protestant Principle: Christian healers.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 16A) Read Kinsley 119-149. (EQ16B) Include a description and reflection on your own experience of healing in the Christian context, if relevant, or interview a friend about their experience.

Week 14

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Healing in the Modern Medical Context: The Placebo Effect.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 17) Read Kinsley 151-167.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Healing in the Modern Medical Context: the Psychotherapeutic Relationship.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 18A) Read Kinsley 168-184. (EQ 18B) Include a description and reflection on your own experience of psychotherapy, if relevant, or interview a friend about their experience.

Week 15

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Healing in the Modern Medical Context: rituals of childbirth; healing as power discourse.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 19A) Read Kinsley 185-198. (EQ 19B) Include a description and reflection on your own experience of child birthing, if relevant, or interview a friend about their experience.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Healing in the Modern Medical Context: The Cloak of Competence.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 20A) Read Jack Haas and William Shaffir, "Becoming Professional: Learning and Adopting the Cloak of Competence," pages 53-82 in *Becoming Doctors: The Adoption of a Cloak of Competence*. (Victoria, BC: Jack Haas Publishing, 2009). (EQ 20B) Include a description and reflection on your own experience of modern medicine healing, if relevant, or interview a friend about their experience.

Week 16

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Myth-making: who controls the story?
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 21) Before class, watch the video of David Kinsley (<https://drive.google.com/a/bulldogs.barton.edu/file/d/OBy1ZtUnWNM3yZUtyTUc3ZndNWWc/view?usp=sharing>)². Answer the questions on the study guide.

² If you are an educator interested in accessing this link, please contact Jane Webster (jwebster@barton.edu), who is happy to provide access to this Google folder.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: When worlds collide: case study.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: (EQ 22) Read Anne Fadiman, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, Giroux, 1997), pp. 260-277.

Week 17

Tuesday:

- ▶ Class Topic: Conclusion and Review. Identify the potential, challenges, features, and implications of Interfaith Understanding. Why is it relevant and urgent in your proposed profession? Discuss the interrelationship between religion and healing.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: Bring your draft final exam to class.

Thursday:

- ▶ Class Topic: During the time set aside for your exam, we will reflect on the larger understandings acquired in the class. Celebrations.
- ▶ Exploration Questions: Submit your final paper.