

**USem 78A. Praying for a Cure?
Religion, Health, and Healing in America
Brandeis University
Fall 2007**

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Office Hours: Monday 1-2pm, Wednesday 9-10am, and by appointment
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Class Meetings: Monday and Wednesday 2:10-3:30pm, Brown 316

Course Description

Does spirituality promote health as the cover of *Time* magazine asks? Should pharmacists be required to dispense birth control when they feel it conflicts with their religious beliefs? What have scientists learned about the influence of prayers on health? What is it like to be a hospital chaplain? Does religion or spirituality influence the work of doctors and nurses? What do Muslim community healthcare organizations do? How do leaders of local churches, synagogues, mosques and temples respond to the health needs of their congregants?

This seminar investigates these questions and others by looking at the relationship between religion, health, and healing in the contemporary United States. We explore how a wide range of religious and medical organizations understand these relationships and focus specifically on contemporary tensions between religious and medical beliefs. Course materials include academic and popular writings, films and guest speakers.

Course Readings

The following required books are available in the university bookstore.

- Alvord, Lori Arviso and Elizabeth Cohen Van Pelt. 2000. *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Fadiman, Anne. 1998. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Noonday Press.
- Rosenberg, Charles E. 1987. *The Care of Strangers: The Rise of America's Hospital System*. New York: Basic Books.

These books are also on reserve in the university library. All other required course readings are available on-line via LATTE.



Course Requirements

1. **Attendance** is required. Everyone starts with a *class attendance* grade of an A. If you miss two classes you will earn a B, three classes a C, four classes a D and five or more classes an F. The only absences that will not influence your grade are those for religious holidays that you email me about at least one week in advance. Your class attendance comprises 5% of your final grade.

2. **Class participation** is required. This is not a lecture class but primarily a discussion seminar based on your careful reading and preparation for class. You will get out of this class what you put in, and the course will be more enjoyable for all of us if you are actively engaged. If you do not feel comfortable speaking in class, I encourage you to talk with me about class materials during office hours, send related information to the class through the class email list, and otherwise creatively engage with this material. Your class participation comprises 15% of your grade.

3. **Reading** is required. All course readings must be done for the Monday of each week, unless otherwise noted in the syllabus. In addition to your reading, you are required to select *one reading for each week indicated* and write a two-paragraph singled space response to it, due at the beginning of class on the dates noted (**September 17, October 1, October 22, October 31, November 11, November 28**). You should assume that your reader has read the material and asked you a question like, “What was this author’s main point? Did you agree or disagree? Why?” You should end your response with one or two questions that the reading raised for you that you would like to discuss. I will grade these on a check minus, check, check plus basis. Check pluses will improve your final grade in the course, checks will hold your final grade constant and check minuses will lower your final grade. My goal is for these reading responses is to help you understand and think about course material before coming to class and to improve your final grade. Your reading responses will count for 15% of your final grade.

4. **Written Assignments.** You will write two short (4-6 page) papers in this class in response to specific questions I will distribute well in advance of the paper deadlines, as indicated in the syllabus (**Paper assignment 1 will be distributed on October 3, due October 17; Paper assignment 2 will be distributed on November 7, due on November 19**). I am more than happy to work with you on your papers by talking over ideas, helping you to outline your paper, and / or reading and commenting on drafts of papers you submit to me at least four days before the final deadline. Final deadlines must be respected. You will lose one full letter grade for each 24 hours after the due date the assignment is turned in (i.e. if you would have received an A but your exercise is turned in within the first 24 hours after it is due, you will receive a B, etc.). I expect you to properly cite and reference any articles you refer to when completing your paper. We will talk in detail about this when the first paper assignment is distributed. If you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to ask. You are encouraged to visit the Writing Center for additional support and guidance (<http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/writingcenter/index.html>). The first paper will be worth 15% of your final grade and the second paper 20%.

5. **Final Exam.** You will have a take-home final exam. The exam will be designed to assess what you have learned in discussions and course readings and to see how well you can apply what you have learned to new questions and problems. You may use your lecture notes and course materials when completing the exam. The final exam will be distributed on **December 5, due by 5pm on December 13.** Your completed exam can be no more than ten double spaced pages. The final exam will be worth 30% of your final grade.

6. **Final Grades** will be based on your class attendance (5%), your active class participation (15%), your reading responses (15%), paper 1 (15%), paper 2 (20%), final exam (30%). The grading scale, as outlined by the University in the Bulletin (p. 35) is as follows:

“The following grades will be used with plus or minus where appropriate:”

A: “High Distinction”

B: “Distinction.”

C: “Satisfactory.”

D: “Passing, but Unsatisfactory.”

F: “Failure.”

****All written work must be completed to receive a passing grade in this class****

5. **University Policy on Academic Accommodations:** If you are a student who has academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and give me a copy of your letter of accommodation in the first two weeks of the semester. If you have questions about documenting a disability, please contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Office (x63470, brodgers@brandeis.edu). Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.

Course Outline

I. Introductions and Initial Considerations

Week 1. September 3 (no class), 5; Week 2. September 10, 12. What is religion? What is health? What is healing?

Wednesday September 5: Introductions

Monday September 10:

- McGuire, Meredith. 1993. "Health and Spirituality as Contemporary Concerns." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Vol. 527, p. 144-154
- Groopman, Jerome. 2004. "Unprepared." p. 3-27 in *The Anatomy of Hope: How People Prevail in the Face of Illness*. New York: Random House.
- Sered, Susan S. "Healing as Resistance: Reflections upon New Forms of American Jewish Healing." P. 231-252 in *Religion and Healing in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 3: September 17, 19: What is (and should be) the relationship between religion and health?

- Groopman, Jerome. 1997. "Matt," p. 88-113 in *The Measure of Our Days: A Spiritual Exploration of Illness*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Sloan, Richard P. 2006. *Blind Faith: The Unholy Alliance of Religion and Medicine*. New York: St. Martin's Press. (Part One "Religion and Health, Yesterday and Today," c. 11 "Is it Practical to Bring Religion into Medicine?" c. 12 "Is There Really a Demand for Bringing Religion into Medicine?")
- Berlinger, Nancy, 2004. "Spirituality and Medicine: Idiot-Proofing the Discourse." *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 29(6): 681-695
- *Reading Response #1 Due on Monday* (* Consider in your response whether you agree or disagree with the arguments Sloan or Berlinger is making and why. How do you think Jerome Groopman would respond?)

Week 4. September 24, 26 (no class): Contemporary Debates: The Case of Intercessory Prayer

- Harris, William S. et al. 1999. "A Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of Remote Intercessory Prayer on Outcomes in Patients Admitted to the Coronary Care Unit." *Archives of Internal Medicine*. 159(19): 2273-8.
- Cadge, Wendy. 2007. "The Medicalization of Religion: Double Blind Clinical Trials of Intercessory Prayer." Working Paper, Department of Sociology, Brandeis University.

Week 5: October 1, 3: Contemporary Debates: Two More Cases

For Monday October 1: The “Obligations” of Medical Professionals?

- Curlin, Farr A. et al. 2007. “Religion, Conscience, and Controversial Clinical Practices.” *New England Journal of Medicine*. 356(6): 593-600.
- Stein, Rob. “Pharmacists’ Rights at Front of New Debate. Because of Beliefs, Some Refuse to Fill Birth Control Prescriptions.” *Washington Post*. March 28, 2005.
- Cantor, Julie and Jen Baum. 2004. “The Limits of Conscientious Objection – May Pharmacists Refuse to Fill Prescriptions for Emergency Contraception?” *New England Journal of Medicine*. 351(19): 2008-2012.
- *Reading Response #2 Due on Monday*

For Wednesday October 3:

- Fadiman, Anne. 1998. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Noonday Press. (Start to read)

****Paper 1. Distributed October 3, due October 17****

Week 6. October 8, 10: Contemporary Debates: *The Spirit Catches You* (continued)

- Fadiman, Anne. 1998. *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. New York: Noonday Press. (Finish reading)

II. Religion / Spirituality in Medical Institutions

Week 7: October 15, 17: Religion and the Rise of the Hospital

- Rosenberg, Charles E. 1987. *The Care of Strangers: The Rise of America's Hospital System*. New York: Basic Books. (c. 1 “To Heal the Sick: The Antebellum Hospital and Society,” c. 4 “Expanding a Traditional Institution: Social Sources of Hospital Growth, 1850-1875,” c. 9 “Healing Hands: Nursing in the Hospital”).
- Lazarus, Barry. 1991. “The Practice of Medicine and Prejudice in a New England Town: The Founding of Mount Sinai Hospital, Hartford, Connecticut.” *Journal of American Ethnic History*. 10(3): 21-42.

Week 8. October 22, 24: The Experiences of Hospital Chaplains

- Angrosino, Michael. 2006. *Blessed With Enough Foolishness: Pastoral Care in a Modern Hospital*. West Conshohocken: Infinity Publishing. (“Introduction,” “c. 4 The World of the Hospital Chaplain,” c. 5 “On the Trail of the Living Document: Chaplains at Work,” c. 6 “Floors!...and CenterMed Too”).
- Norwood, Francis. 2006. “The Ambivalent Chaplain: Negotiating Structural and Ideological Difference on the Margins of Modern-Day Hospital Medicine.” *Medical Anthropology* 25(1): 1-29.
- *Reading Response #3 Due on Monday*
- **Wednesday, Guest Speaker**, Katherine Mitchell, Staff Chaplain, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston, MA.

Week 9. October 29, 31: The One Family's Experience

- On Monday we will watch the film, *Hold Your Breath: A Journey Into Cross-Cultural Medicine*. For more information see:
<http://medethicsfilms.stanford.edu/holdyourbreath/>
- *Reading Response #4 (your response to the film) due on Wednesday*
- (Since there is no reading this week, it would be a good idea to start reading the book for next week).

Week 10. November 5, 7: One Physician's Experience

- Alvord, Lori Arviso and Elizabeth Cohen Van Pelt. 2000. *The Scalpel and the Silver Bear*. New York: Bantam Books.
- *Reading Response #5 due on Wednesday*

****Paper 2. Distributed November 7, due November 19****

III. Health and Healing in Religious Organizations

Week 11. November 12, 14: Praying for a Cure?

Monday November 12:

- Orsi, Robert A. 1996. *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes*. New Haven: Yale University Press ("Preface," "Healings," "There's Miracles, and Miracles, and Miracles:" The Cult of Hopeless Causes")

Wednesday November 14:

- Numrich, Paul David. 2005. "Complementary and Alternative Medicine in America's 'Two Buddhisms,'" p. 343-357 in Linda Barnes and Susan Sered Eds. *Religion and Healing in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- "Submerging Buddhism." TricycleBlog, September 17, 2004.

Week 12. November 19, 21 (no class): Parish Nursing

Monday November 19:

- Vandecreek, Larry and Sue Mooney. 2002. *Parish Nurses, Health Care Chaplains, and Community Clergy: Navigating the Maze of Professional Relationships*. New York: Haworth Press. (c.1 "Who are Parish Nurses?," c.4 "Spiritual Formation for Parish Nursing," c.11 "Spiritual Care: Bridging the Disciplines in Congregational Health Ministries")

Wednesday: No class.

- Over the break, ask someone the question we have talked about in this course so far that most puzzled you or most led you to reconsider your beliefs / opinions. Be prepared to share your question and the response the person you spoke with gave in class on Monday.

Week 13. November 26, 28: Should religious organizations be used as places for public health campaigns?

- Chatters, L. et al. 1998. "Public Health and Health Education in Faith Communities." *Health Education & Behavior*, 25: 689-699.
- "Engaging Faith Communities as Partners in Improving Community Health." 1999. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Practice Program Office.
- Voorhees, C. et al. 1996. "Heart, Body, and Soul: Impact of Church-Based Smoking Cessation Interventions on Readiness to Quit." *Preventative Medicine*. 25: 277-85.
- Griffith, R. Marie. 2004. *Born again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. (c. 4 "Pray the Weight Away: Shaping Devotional Fitness Culture").
- *Reading Response #6 due on Wednesday*

IV. Conclusions

Week 14. December 3, 5: Wrapping Up

Monday December 3: Muslim Community Healthcare Organizations

- **Guest Speaker, Lance Laird**, Fellow in General Pediatrics, Boston University School of Medicine, Senior Consultant, Boston Healing Landscape Project

Wednesday December 5: Conclusions

Final Exam Distributed **December 5 in class**, due to my mailbox in Pearlman Hall by 5pm on **December 13**