

**SPIRITUALITY AND THE HEALTH SCIENCES**  
**University of Florida Honors Program**

**IDH 3931 (Section LR01)**

Class Number: 29488

PLACE & TIME: 117 Little Hall, Wednesdays, 5:10-8:10PM (Periods 10-E1)

CREDITS: 3 Semester Hours

**Instructor:**

Louis A. Ritz, Ph.D.

Associate Professor Emeritus

Department of Neuroscience, College of Medicine

Director, UF Center for Spirituality and Health

Office: L1-116, McKnight Brain Institute

Office Hours: By appointment

Office phone: 352-273-5533

Email: [lritz@ufl.edu](mailto:lritz@ufl.edu)

**Course Overview:**

The Honors Spirituality and Health course is intended for all students, particularly those engaged in pre-medical, pre-counseling, pre-health, or pre-law majors, who are interested in exploring the interface of spirituality and the health sciences. Interest in the intersection of spirituality and health is rapidly growing in our society, as we seek meaning and purpose in our lives and a more holistic approach to our wellness and our health challenges. Course topics will include stress reduction through non-judgmental living in the present moment (mindfulness); mind-body relationships; links between religion/spirituality and health; brain-based drug addiction and the spiritually based 12-step program; scientific evaluation of the impact of prayer on our health; spiritual approaches to our lives; lessons on living from those who are dying; and stories that heal. This student-centered discussion course is, at its heart, a semester-long dialogue about how various aspects of spirituality impact our health at the level of body, mind, and spirit.

**Course Objectives:** By the end of the course, students will be able to do the following.

- 1) Discuss the qualities of a spiritual individual and definitions of "spirituality".
- 2) Compare and contrast spirituality with health, religion, and science.
- 3) Discuss the concept of mindfulness, its application to everyday living, and the factors that prevent us from being mindful.
- 4) Discuss the role of mindfulness in interrelationships, either personal or professional.
- 5) Discuss Roger Walsh's essential spirituality – the seven spiritual approaches to our lives
- 6) Describe Dossey's three eras of medicine, including concepts of mind-body relations.
- 7) Assess different perspectives and definitions of "health".
- 8) Describe Jeff Levin's links between spirituality/religion and health.
- 9) Discuss addiction as a biological disease (at least in part) and the spiritual aspects of the 12-step program as a therapeutic intervention.
- 10) Discuss what prayer is and how its effects on health can be evaluated scientifically.
- 11) Describe Paul Kalanithi's challenges to living (his work) and to dying.
- 12) Discuss how telling and listening to stories, including life's challenges, can be healing.
- 13) Discuss a potential expansion of our personal belief systems to incorporate a holistic view of the entire human being.
- 14) Appreciate healthcare as applied spirituality.

## **Requirements, Assessment, and Grades:**

### **I - Attendance, Participation, and Internet Research Presentation: 20%;**

- 1) You are expected to complete assigned readings prior to each class.
- 2) Attendance will be taken each class. You may miss 1 class or 2 halves; more than that you will lose points. Please plan your Wednesday evenings accordingly.
- 3) The course is a semester-long, student-centered conversation, facilitated by the Course Director, about the “gray” areas of life. We hope to facilitate a “collective self-discovery” during this course through our group discussions. As such, participation from each student is critical.
- 4) Starting in the fourth week and continuing for the remainder of the course, we will have three five-minute student presentations based on internet research. Each student will present a unique website and discuss a new aspect of a topic that has been covered in class.

**II - There will be 5 4-page reflection papers (1200 words), each worth 16% (80% total).** The papers are based on an integration of your reflections, understanding, and insights of our readings and classroom discussions.

### **UF Class Attendance Policies:**

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

### **Students with Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **UF Grading Policies:**

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

### **Course Evaluation:**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at

<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/](http://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/).

### **Class Culture:**

- 1) This is a paperless course. All discussion materials, other than the books, will be sent to the students as a PDF. The reflection papers will be emailed to the Course Director as a WORD document (**.doc or .docx only**).
- 2) Out of respect for each student’s contributions to our discussions, we will give everyone our full attention. Please do not check your email during class time. There will be a break during each class session.

**Required Reading List – Please purchase these books new or used, share with a classmate, get them on your e-reader, etc. Note that it is the “big” ideas in these books that we should focus on.**

Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (2005)

Roger Walsh, *Essential Spirituality: The 7 Central Practices to Awaken Heart and Mind* (2000)

Larry Dossey, *Reinventing Medicine: Beyond Mind-Body to a New Era of Healing* (2000)

Paul Kalanithi, *When Breath Becomes Air* (2016)

Rachel Naomi Remen, *Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories that Heal* (2006)

### **Course Schedule:**

Jan 11 (class 1) – *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (Part 1) Meditation and Mindfulness

Jan 18 (class 2) – *Wherever You Go, There You Are* (Part 3) Meditation and Mindfulness

Jan 25 (class 3) – Handouts: *What is Spirituality?* Is God All in Our Head?

#### **Paper 1 – TBA**

**Due via email by 4PM on Wed, Feb 1**

**Return via email by 4PM on Wed, Feb 8**

Feb 1 (class 4) – *Essential Spirituality* (Section 1-14)

Feb 8 class 5) – *Essential Spirituality* (Section 15-26)

Feb 15 (class 6) – *Essential Spirituality* (Section 27-36)

#### **Paper 2 – TBA**

**Due via email by 4PM on Wed, Feb 22**

**Return via email by 4PM on Wed, Mar 1**

Feb 22 (class 7) – *Reinventing Medicine* (chapters 1-3); Experimental Approaches to Prayer

Mar 1 (class 8) – *Reinventing Medicine* (chapters 4-6); Jeff Levin handout

Mar 8 – (class 9) – Addiction and Spirituality; Handouts

Mar 15 – Spring Break

Mar 22 (class 10) – Addiction and Spirituality; Handouts

#### **Paper 3 – TBA**

**Due via email by 4PM on Wed, Mar 29**

**Return via email by 4PM on Wed, Apr 5**

Mar 29 (class 11) – *When Breath Becomes Air*

Apr 5 (class 12) – Selective handouts on death and dying

#### **Paper 4 – TBA**

**Due via email by 4PM on Wed, Apr 12**

**Return via email by 4PM on Wed, Apr 19**

Apr 12 (class 13) – *Kitchen Table Wisdom*

Apr 19 (class 14) – *Kitchen Table Wisdom*

Apr 26 (class 15) – *Kitchen Table Wisdom*

#### **Paper 5 – TBA**

**Due via email by 4PM on Wed, May 3**

**Grades in by Friday, May 5**

**Apr 27 – Optional visit to the Temple of the Universe 7-9:30PM**