Theological Education for Specialized Ministries: 
Teaching Intercultural Competency within a 
Paradigm of Evidence-Based Spiritual Care

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Paradigms of Pastoral Care: HISTORICAL

WHY: To save souls (salvation) through faith in God/Jesus Christ
WHO: By ordained priests/ministers; endorsed chaplains
HOW: Directing/guiding people to belief (teaching adherence)
    Reconciling people to God/Jesus (through ritual/discipline)
    Healing souls (care of souls)
WHAT: Ministry of guidance/witness that guides through witness 
    to bible (the textual/exclusive source of authority/truth)
    Ministry of presence that heals/reconciles through personal 
    relationship with God/ Jesus
Paradigms of Pastoral/Spiritual Care: **THERAPEUTIC**

**WHY:** Holistic healing of body & soul  
**WHO:** Ordained/endorsed chaplains/pastoral counselors  
**HOW:** Holistic healing through intensive one-on-one therapeutic relationships that psychodynamically explore emotional issues & traumatic memories  
**WHAT:** Ministry of therapeutic presence that heals/reconciles through personal relationship with chaplain or counselor or supervisor that incarnates presence of God/ Jesus

Paradigms of Spiritual Care: **INTERCULTURAL**

**WHY:** Liberative spiritual integration of persons/communities/world  
**WHO:** Theologically educated & professionally qualified/licensed  
**HOW:** Intercultural presence that builds trust by respecting religious, spiritual, and cultural differences  
**WHAT:** Ministry of intercultural presence that uses spiritual practices to increase compassionate awareness of embodied life-limiting cultural meanings of suffering in order to co-create contextual intentional beliefs, values, and practices that foster liberative goodness.
Paradigms of Spiritual Care: EVIDENCE-BASED

**WHY**: Spiritual integration, physical and behavioral health, patient satisfaction and shortened hospital stays

**WHO**: Healthcare professionals with clinical pastoral education;

**HOW**: Uses evidenced based assessments and interventions proven to promote positive spiritual coping, reduce chronic spiritual struggles, and shorten hospital stays

**WHAT**: Spirituality is a search for the sacred and “... the journey people take to discover and realize their essential selves and higher order aspirations” (Pargament, 2007, p. 58). Religions offer organizational contexts for pursing this search for the sacred, providing historical and contemporary systems of beliefs, values, symbols, sacred texts, and practices like personal and communal worship.

**HOW does pastoral/spiritual care help?**

1. **PRESENCE**: Respect & trust helps people find spiritual practices that foster embodied experiences of goodness & self-compassion

2. **LIFE-GIVING MEANINGS** (Intentional theologies/orienting systems) integrate compassion/care, counteracting life-limiting embedded oppressive fear- & shame-based theologies/orienting systems

**OUTCOMES**

- HEALTH: Physical, Behavioral
- HOSPITAL stay & satisfaction
- SPIRITUAL Integration
1. An Intercultural Capacity & Differentiation of Self

Understanding and responding to the unique contextual ways people live out values, beliefs, and ways of coping/connecting to the sacred (their relational spirituality and orienting systems).

Moving from being *Ethnocentrically oriented* by defending one’s culture and/or minimizing cultural differences to *Ethnorelative orientations* of (1) accepting one’s own worldviews as one among many valid worldviews, (2) being respectful guests entering into another’s worldview, and (3) adjusting one’s behaviors in ways that communicate respect and intercultural empathy.
1. An Intercultural Capacity & Differentiation of Self

Identifying stress/emotional reactions in the midst of care conversations
Discerning whether these reactions arise from
- within themselves (and their ‘lived theologies/orienting systems’)
- between them and the care seeker
- from intersecting aspects of either their or the care seeker’s social identities (i.e. implicit biases about race, gender, orientation).

Differentiation of self is needed for theological empathy: stepping into another’s spiritual orientation and respecting unique values, beliefs, ways of coping and connecting and with sacred.

2. Theological Fluency & Reflexivity

Theological literacy: knowing about various theological perspectives, methods, or second-order ways of reflecting upon religious and spiritual experiences (e.g., comparative studies of religions, biblical studies, historical studies, theological and ethical studies and practical theological studies).

Theological fluency: being able to use these perspectives in a fluid and embodied way in the practice of pastoral and spiritual care (Doehring, 2002).
2. Theological Fluency & Reflexivity

**Self-reflexivity:** the process of reflecting upon one’s own story from multiple diverging standpoints take into account one’s privilege and disadvantage within intersecting social systems like sexism, racism, and heterosexism.

**Theological reflexivity:** (1) Tracking one’s personal theology/orienting system (stress-related and intentional beliefs, values and practices for coping) and discerning how it shapes a care-giving relationship.

(2) Using one’s theological education to assess whether one’s personal theologies are life-giving or life-limiting in particular contexts of care.

(3) Being accountable for drawing upon one’s theological education to assess the care seeker’s embedded and espoused beliefs, values, and practices.

(4) Drawing upon personal as well as public theologies to collaborate with care seekers in co-constructing life-giving contextual beliefs and values that can be tested in practice.

3. Spiritual Integration

- **Using spiritual practices** (communal/personal) to experience love or **goodness or benevolence** from God (in theistic traditions) and others, especially in one’s bodies

- Experiencing goodness reveals the **life-limiting embedded orienting systems** shaped by intersecting social oppressions, and helps people **co-create complex intentional meanings** about suffering

- Experiencing goodness and complex meanings make people use **more flexible coping** that counteracts consumerism

- **Integrating spiritual practices and intentional meanings** into daily life has liberative ripple effects

*Pargament, Desai & McConnell, 2006; Doehring, 2015a, Doehring, 2015b*
**Attitude:** “The implicit and explicit perspectives and/or biases people hold about spirituality and religion and how they relate to the practice of [spiritual care]” (Vieten et al, 2013, p. 4).

*Radical Respect for Religious Differences*

- Respect irreducible differences without searching for “one God”
- Focus on *lived* practices, values, and beliefs
- Dialogue with full awareness of biases & “intractable otherness”


**Knowledge**

“Information, facts, concepts, and awareness of research literature [spiritual caregivers] should possess about spirituality and religion as it relates to the practice of [spiritual care]” (Vieten et al, 2013, p. 4).

- Pastoral & practical theology
- Spirituality and health (research literacy & evidence-based chaplaincy care)
- Religious and theological studies (traveling knowledge from various religious/theological methods)
Skills

• Explore spiritual practices that connect with goodness
• Co-create meanings
• Communication skills using motivational interviewing to help people explore the value of change (why change) and tools for change (how to change)

Intercultural Military Ministry

• **Values of Caring/Preventing Harm** have priority in teaching military ministry. These cornerstone values generate complex theologies of caring that respect theological/ideological/political differences exaggerated by values like loyalty/betrayal, authority/subversion, liberty/oppression (see [www.moralfoundations.org](http://www.moralfoundations.org))

• **Values of Caring/Preventing Harm** bring clarity to issues of conscience in that protection of those seeking care becomes central to military ministry

• **Intercultural spiritual care interfaces with evidence-based behavioral health**, especially to understand and respond to religious and spiritual struggles and moral injury (see the research of Ken Pargament)

• **Ethical use of institutional power** is rooted in values of care/preventing harm

• **Critical thinking on social and military issues** is enriched by complex theologies (values & beliefs) of caring

• Theory and practice of leadership need to draw upon all of these resources
Military Ministry: More than Ministry of Presence

- Ministry of Presence: when chaplains do their own work of spiritual integration they can be a compassionate presence with service members/veterans, prompting them to use practices fostering self compassion.

On its own, a ministry of presence “is a minimalist, almost ephemeral, form of empathic spiritual care that is, at the same time deeply rooted in religious histories...It is religion stripped to the basics. Religion naturalized. Religion without code, cult, or community, Religion without metaphysics. It is religion for a state of uncertainty. As is typical of American religion, it both resists specific theological elaboration and is deeply rooted in a specifically Christian theology of incarnation” (Sullivan, 2014, p. 174)

Military Ministry: Presence + Co-creating Meaning

1. Ministry of Presence: when chaplains do their own work of spiritual integration they can be that compassionate presence with service members/veterans, prompting them to use spiritual practices fostering self compassion, goodness and love.

2. Co-creating meanings, especially about suffering: Experiencing goodness reveals the life-limiting embedded orienting systems shaped by intersecting social oppressions, prompting service members/veterans to co-create complex intentional meanings about suffering, which generate flexible coping and spiritual integration
Intercultural Co-Creation of Meanings

• Chaplains need to be literate in religions of the world, especially their spiritual and religious practices and ways of understanding suffering

• Chaplains need to be theologically reflexive about how they themselves spiritually integrate personal suffering

• Chaplains need to respectfully step into the existential/religious worlds of service members/veterans and deeply respect whatever is sacred for them

• Once trust is established, chaplains need to follow the service members’/veterans’ lead in co-creating meanings (if appropriate) and/or referring to those in that person’s tradition

 İliff’s Theological Education for Military Chaplains at İliff began in 2004 with Larry Graham’s course on the Impact of War on Families

Who in your family was involved in the military or impacted by military service and/or war?
Graham’s Scholarship and Research on Pastoral and Public Theologies of War

“My immersion into the culture of families as they face war over several generations is public pastoral theology because it identifies and evaluates the multiple (and sometimes contending) core meaning systems about war operating within families and between families and their religious and national environments over time.”

“I seek to identify the way these value systems and contexts mediate practical strategies for healing, sustaining, guiding, and liberating individuals, cultures, and the natural order ravished by war.”

“I suggest ways to modify some of our core theological commitments and moral assessments about the nature and impact of war as an enterprise in relation to the common good.”

US Air Force funds 1-year Degree on Military PTSD

Doehring and Graham propose a Post-M.Div. 1-year Masters of Arts in Military PTSD for Air Force Chaplains

Iliff faculty: What would this mean in relation to Iliff’s social justice orientation?

Degree proposal adopted by faculty and trustees in 2009
US Air Force Chaplains at Iliff

2006 Graham’s Course
2008-9 MA Military PTSD
2009-12 USAF Chaplains

2009-10 USAF Chaplain Dallas Little
2010-11 USAF Chaplain Matt Boarts
2010-11 USAF Chaplain John Sackett
2010-11 USAF Chaplain Glenn Bright
2010-11 USAF Chaplain Erik Harp
2011-12 USAF Chaplain James Parrish

Online Graduate Certificate in Military Chaplaincy Ministry

16 credits include

- Pastoral Theology and Care
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Pastoral, Psychological and Theological Responses
- The Impact of War on Pastoral Care and Theology
- Moral Stress, Resilience, and Spiritual Integration

Residential and online formats feature self-reflection, small group interactions, pastoral care skills and theological discussions about suffering
Weekend Praxis Courses Military Chaplaincy Ministry

- Spiritual Care in the Combat Zone
- Spiritual Care of Military Families
- Spiritual Care of Women in the Military
- Spiritual Care of Gays and Lesbians in the Military

Pathways to Military Chaplaincy Conference

2006 Graham’s Course
2008-9 MA Military PTSD
2009-12 USAF Chaplains
2014 Pathways Conference

Strategic Document inviting “theologically centrist and left-of-center Christian seminaries, theological schools, and divinity schools” to become more invested in educating military chaplains
Iliff’s Military Ministry Online Courses ➔
Available to All ATS students

6 online courses
2-year cycle

- Post-Traumatic Stress: Pastoral, Psychological & Theological Perspectives
- The Impact of War on Pastoral Care & Theology
- Moral Stress, Resilience & Spiritual Integration
- Crisis Care & Pastoral Theology
- Spiritual Care in Pluralistic Contexts
- Ethical Perspectives on War and Peace

Goals of Iliff’s Military Ministry Programs

• Advance diverse theological perspectives

• Practice intercultural spiritual care in multicultural and pluralistic contexts

• Address theological and psychological issues related to war and military service

• Equip religious leaders as competent intercultural caregivers who can work within an evidence-based approach to spirituality and health
Our human race is constructed by war....

Our beings, [our families], our nations, our cultures, our religions—they are constructed, infused by, built and rebuilt by war.... The fact that we are not aware of that doesn’t mean that it’s not true. What we have not found is a way in our culture to productively engage the multi-layered ways we have experienced war—it has impacted us, we’ve endured it, we’ve recovered from it, we are passing on our legacies from it, and all of that is part of who we are.

Larry Graham (2014). Lecture on war: Theology and religious practice. Denver, CO.

References


References


