

TPM 643 Ministry and Addictions

Dr. Joyce Ann Mercer
Spring/3rd Quarter 2011
Thursdays 9:00-11:50 am
Addison 111

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Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to the dynamics of addictions in the lives of persons, families, and communities. We will survey historical, cultural, and ecclesial perspectives on alcoholism and other chemical abuse/addiction, as well as "process addictions" such as gambling and internet addiction, with a focus on contemporary understandings of the spiritual and theological implications. We will also consider various frameworks for promoting recovery and focus upon the knowledge, skills, and role of pastoral caregivers in the process of recovery. The course includes some experiences outside of the classroom (visits to AA/Al-Anon/ACOA meetings) in addition to classroom time. Class time will include active discussion, some lectures, student presentation and response to seminar papers.

Intentions for Student Learning:

At the completion of this class, participants will:

1. be able to articulate a basic theoretical understanding of the dynamics of addiction in individuals and family systems, from theological and psychosocial perspectives;
2. be knowledgeable about the spirituality of addiction and recovery;
3. be able to recognize possible addiction problems, and know appropriate basic pastoral care responses when recognizing the problem of drug and alcohol abuse/addiction and process addictions;
4. demonstrate increased awareness and insight into the participants' own experience with alcohol and other drugs and how one's personal history might affect attitudes toward, and pastoral care with, others;
5. understand addiction not only as a personal matter but as a phenomenon affecting entire communities; be aware of the differential impact of addiction on particular groups within the wider society, and analyze the relationships between oppression and addiction/drug abuse in human experience;
6. have reflective and experiential knowledge of Alcoholics Anonymous as a significant ministry resource for helping persons with recovery.

Texts:

Howard Clinebell, *Understanding and Counseling Persons with Alcohol, Drug, and Behavioral Addictions* (Nashville: Abingdon), 1998.

James Nelson, *Thirst: God and the Alcoholic Experience* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 2003.

Linda Mercadante, *Victims and Sinners: Spiritual Roots of Addiction and Recovery* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 1996.

Nancy Van Dyke Platt and Chilton R. Knudsen, *So You Think You Don't Know One?: Addiction and Recovery in Clergy and Congregations* (New York: Morehouse Publishing), 2010.

Additional Recommended/Suggested Resources:

AA World Service, *Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book 4th edition*

Sharon Wegscheider Cruse, *Another Chance: Hope and Health for the Alcoholic Family* (Palo Alto, CA: Science and Behavior Books), 1989.

Kimberly S. Young and Cristiano Nabuco de Abreu, *Internet Addiction: A Handbook and Guide to Evaluation and Treatment* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons), 2011.

Course Requirements:

We will operate this course in a seminar/learning community format. That is, each participant is viewed as an active agent of her/his own learning and a contributor to the learning of others. For that reason, attendance and full participation is the most basic course requirement. Only excused absences for unavoidable reasons will be permitted. If you have an emergency requiring your absence, please try to notify the professor by email or telephone prior to the class. Participants should come to class sessions prepared to critically discuss assigned readings for the day, having completed any assigned readings or written work prior to class.

Requirements:

A. There are *brief* written assignments that focus around course texts and are as follows:

1. In relation to **Clinebell**: A *short research paper* of 5-7 double spaced, typed pages on standard 8 ½ x 11 inch paper using 1 inch margins. The subject of this research paper may be chosen by students in relation to their own interests as these arise from the overview offered by Clinebell's text, subject to the approval of the professor. Suggested topics include specific process addictions, vulnerable populations, or controversial topics (e.g., GLBT youth, elderly women, internet, gambling, harm-reduction alternatives to abstinence, feminist critiques of AA's 12 steps), etc. Criteria for evaluation of this assignment include: (1) well researched topic in which substantive information is conveyed succinctly, using *at least two library resources* in addition to course texts [you may also use credible internet sources in addition to these]; (2) well written, including use of standard forms of academic citation; (3) paper includes reflection on implications of the research for ministry. (Note: this is not a personal reflection paper; it is an academic research paper in which you relate the topic and findings of your research to the work of ministry). Papers are due in Dr. Mercer's box in the Welcome Center by 5:00 pm **Friday, February 18th**.

2. In relation to **Platt & Knudsen, (and Wegscheider Cruse)**: A family drug and alcohol **genogram + one page analysis/interpretation**. The purpose of this assignment is for you to identify and explore patterns of chemical use/abuse/addiction, *including co-dependency*, in your own family system, using critical thinking skills toward articulating how your personal experience may be a resource and/or hindrance for you in ministry. *This assignment will be kept confidential between you and the professor unless you choose to share elements from it.* Your genogram should map what you know about use/abuse/ addiction/ treatment/ recovery among parts of your family system for at least two generations. How, when, and how much are alcohol and other drugs used? Are there positive uses of substances? Harmful ones? Who in the system supports or enables unhealthy chemical use? Are there "secrets" in the system related to drug or alcohol use? Your 1 page analysis should discuss what the genogram depicts, including: (1) the *meaning(s)* of chemical use in the system (e.g., what meanings does drinking alcohol hold for this family system?); what attitudes have been passed down about drug and alcohol use? (2) the role of religion/church in relation to alcohol and drug use? Last, (3) In what ways does your experience in this family system comprise a *resource* for you in your pastoral ministry with persons struggling with addiction? In what ways might your experience become a hindrance or create difficulties?
****Due by Monday, March 7th by 5 pm in Dr. Mercer's mailbox in the Welcome Center.**

3. In relation to **Nelson/ Mercadante**: (a) Write a brief (3 double-spaced pages) critical comparison of how each of these authors understands addiction as a theological problem. What are the similarities and differences in their perspectives? What difference might holding Nelson's or Mercadante's theological perspective make for ministry with persons suffering from addictions? **Due by Monday March 14th by 5:00 pm in Dr. Mercer's mailbox in the Welcome Center.**

Expectations of Learners:

1. Attend class regularly. Come to class prepared, meaning that reading and written assignments have been completed prior to the start of class to facilitate engaged participation.
2. It is expected that students in this course will use gender-inclusive language in written and spoken expression about people. Similarly, when writing or speaking of God, all are asked to practice a fuller range of imagery and metaphor than the use of male language alone allows.
3. Observe seminary policies on intellectual integrity/plagiarism: students are expected to provide appropriate citation for sources, including internet sources, in written materials. Plagiarism will result in automatic failure of the course.
4. Please inform the professor as soon as possible about any documented learning disabilities or issues.

LAPTOPS AND CELLPHONES: This is a small class where face-to-face relationships are both our reality and in an important way, our subject matter--and we are meeting in a WiFi environment, where temptations to wander off into cyberspace are rife. Laptop computers and WiFi have transformed the way that we study, listen and write. But in a course like ours, laptop use can be distracting both to the instructor/students trying to make eye contact with you and to the computer-less student sitting next to you. We will be moving around the classroom in role plays, pairings, etc. and you may or may not be near an electrical outlet. So please, for the brief minutes that we are together, go ahead and use your laptop if you must, but please stay off the internet unless it is for purposes directly related to our class, and remember that we are all in this discussion together. If you have a cell phone, kindly set it to its "stun" mode during class or turn it off.

Plan of Work:

Session I: Thursday, February 3rd

Introduction to the Course and each other

Basics: definitions, historical perspectives, overview of frameworks for understanding addiction

Assignment: This week: Attend an AA/NA Meeting between now and the next class.

Recommended before you go: Skim through the AA "Big Book" (on reserve) so that you will have a basic familiarity with it. Also, visit the web sites of recovery groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Adult Children of Alcoholics.

Session II: Thursday, February 10

Issues in addiction

Reading for 2/10 class: Clinebell, Chapters 1-3, 5, 7, 9 & 10

Session III: Thursday, February 17

Christian Theology, Spirituality and Addiction

Read: Nelson, pp.1-122

Extra credit: also attend an Al-Anon or ACA meeting; report back to class on how this compares to the AA or NA meeting you attended.

****Note: Research Paper Due on or before Feb. 18th at 5 pm.**

Session IV: Thursday, February 24

Journey of addiction and recovery for individuals, families, organizations

Read: Nelson, pp. 123-191

Suggested: Wegscheider Cruse selections esp. pp. 44-57, 76-103

Session V: Thursday, March 3

Addiction and family systems, continued

Process/behavioral addictions

Read: Platt and Knudsen

Suggested:

Greenfield, "The Addictive Properties of Internet Usage" p. 135-153 , Griffiths, "Gambling Addiction on the Internet," pp. 91-112, Whitty, "Internet Infidelity: A Real Problem," pp. 191-204, all found in Young & de Abreu

****Note: genogram assignment due on Monday, March 3rd**

Session VI: Thursday, March 10

The Social Context of Addictions & Alternative theological perspectives

Read: Mercadante

**** Note: Nelson/Mercadante paper due on or before March 14 in Dr. Mercer's box in the Welcome Center.**