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COURSE OUTLINE

PT/TH5/711 - Living Faithfully With Mental Health Challenges: Why theology matters
Vancouver School of Theology, July 12-16, 2021 – 9am-12pm PST

PURPOSE:

The course will explore theological and practical issues around mental health and ill health. Often our perspectives and approaches to mental health are taken from the important fields of psychiatry and psychology. These are significant areas of mental health care. But what exactly does theology contribute to our understanding that these other approaches do not? Does faith in the presence of God actually make a difference either to carers or those cared for? If it does, what does that difference look like? The course will develop a hospitable interdisciplinary dialogue within which these different dimensions of the healing process can come together faithfully with a view to exploring the theology and psychology of mental health challenges. The intention is to enable students to become faithful and hospitable carers and better theologians, who in a real sense continue the healing work of Jesus. Issues explored will include: depression, anxiety, psychosis, bipolar disorder, Christian community, healing, friendship, hospitality, the problem of evil and the centrality of faithful interdisciplinary conversations that seek to care with rather than just for people living with mental health challenges.

COMPETENCE OBJECTIVES:

Students will be expected to learn and demonstrate the ability to:

1. Understand the relationship between theology and mental health
2. Understand the specific role that theology has in relation to mental health care.
3. Be able to sensitively work with Scripture in a mental health context.
4. Understand the real-life experiences of mental health challenges by examining the narratives of people living with them.
5. Understand the meaning and role of Christian healing in relation to mental health challenges.
6. Understand the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to mental health issues.

REQUIRED READINGS: Posted on Canvas Primary sources: **(Please pre-read before course)**

1. Chris Cook *The Bible and Mental Health* (London: SCM, 2020).
2. John Swinton: *Finding Jesus in the Storm* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020).
3. John Colwell *Why Have You Forsaken Me?: A Personal Reflection on the Experience of Desolation* (London: Paternoster 2014).
4. Kathryn Greene-McCreight: *Darkness Is My Only Companion: A Christian Response to Mental Illness*. 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015).

ASSIGNMENTS

For all students:

Attendance (100%) in accordance with VST policies

Thoughtful, engaged participation in class discussion and activities

Completion of assigned readings

For Certificate-level students:

One 1000-1200 word reflection paper demonstrating mastery of course material and engagement with it.

For Basic-level students (MATS, M.Div, MAPPL, MAIS):

A 1500-1875 word research paper on a topic of the student's choice, within the remit and focus of

the course.

Additional for Advanced-level students (Th.M.):

A 3000 word research paper on a topic of the student's choice within the remit and focus of the course.

Further details about assignments will be provided on the classroom "Canvas" site, and handed out in class.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Boivin, Michael J. "The Hebraic Model of the Person: Toward a Unified Psychological Science among Christian Helping Professions." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 1991): 157–65.
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- . *The Spirituality of the Psalms*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002. *Extreme Mood Status and What Can Help*. Leicester, UK: British Psychological Society, 2010.
- Coleman, Monica. *Bipolar Faith: A Black Woman's Journey with Depression and Faith*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016.
- Cook, C. H. *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine: Scientific and Theological Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2018.
- Foggie, Janet. "Orthodoxy or Heresy? A New Way of Looking at Spiritual Care for People with Delusional Beliefs." *Scottish Journal of Healthcare Chaplaincy* 10, no. 1 (2007): 23–26.
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- Hacking, Ian. "Lost in the Forest." *London Review of Books* 35, no. 15 (August 8, 2013): 7–8. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/v35/n15/ian-hacking/lost-in-the-forest>.
- . "Making Up People." In *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, edited by T. Heller, 99–114. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986.
- . *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- Hari, Johann. *Lost Connections: Why You're Depressed and How to Find Hope*. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.
- Luhrmann, T. M. *When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God*. New York: Vintage Books, 2012.
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- . "Symptoms and Beliefs." *Journal of the Royal Society of Health* 112, no. 1 (1992): 42–46.
- Swinton, John, and Stephen Pattison. "Moving beyond Clarity: Towards a Thin, Vague, and Useful Understanding of Spirituality in Nursing Care." *Nursing Philosophy* 11 (2010): 226–37.
- Watters, Ethan. *Crazy like Us: The Globalization of the Western Mind*. New York: Little, Brown, 2011.
- Wilkinson, David. *The Bible and Healing: A Medical and Theological Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.