

**Course Syllabus**  
**PSY 4010**  
**Issues in Psychotherapy–Theology Integration**

Fall 2023

Wed, 4:15-6:45

Semester Units: 3

Instructor: *G. Michael Leffel, Ph.D., Adjunct Professor of Psychology*

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## **PLNU MISSION**

### **To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send**

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

The University catalog describes this course as follows: *This foundational course clarifies key issues in human nature and prepares the student for developing a worldview that is consistent with their theological and spiritual orientation.* It is a detailed study of issues in the integration of theological insights and psychotherapy approaches within the therapeutic setting.

The purpose of each class session is to highlight selected topics from the required readings and to supplement this material with related ideas. *Students are responsible for all assigned readings, whether or not discussed in class.* A “graduate style” discussion format will be used in the course. *Each student is expected to have read the assigned reading for class discussion (course Schedule below), and be prepared to think together about the reading in class.*

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION**

### **A. Weekly Reflections (40%)**

Each week you will turn in at least one (1) Reading Reflection. Please check your **Reading Schedule each week** to see which Reflection(s) are due. We will use your Reading Reflections as our guide for discussion in class. Graded 0-7 on completeness and thoughtfulness of your reflection.

### **B. Tri-Semester Take-home Essay Exams (60%)**

There will be three Take-home Essay Exams (format and topics TBD), including your Final Exam.

### **C. Attendance Policy and Contribution to Grade**

Please come to class. When you are not present and participating, the chemistry of our discussion changes. You receive 3 pts. each class you are in attendance. Attendance determined by receipt of your Reading Reflection.

Inconsistent class attendance/tardiness impacts your final grade in the following way:

1. Following two unexcused absences, beginning with the third unexcused absence, five (5) points will be deducted from your Final Total for each absence. In this class this deduction usually has a substantial impact on your grade.

2. In addition: "Whenever the number of accumulated absences in a class, for any cause, exceeds ten percent of classes (equivalent to one and one-half weeks of a 15-week semester course), the faculty member sends a written report to the Associate Provost for Academic Administration

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which may result in de-enrollment" (PLNU Catalog). *That would be after two (2) unexcused absences in this class.*

### **PLNU Attendance Policy and Reporting**

#### What is an "Unexcused" Absence?

1. "There are no allowed or excused absences except when absences are necessitated by certain University-sponsored activities and are approved in writing by the Provost" (Catalog).

2. In addition, the Professor will excuse (legitimate) illness only with MD note. No exceptions please.

3. Medical (check-ups) and Dental appointments ARE NOT excused absences.

4. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university withdrawal date or, after that date, receive an "F" grade.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

To schedule an appointment with me, either: (1) arrange a time with me before/after class, or (2) write me a note with your available times and telephone number. *Making an appointment* will assure that you have the uninterrupted amount of time you wish to speak with me.

### **COURSE READINGS**

1. (Text) Siegel, D. (2010). *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation*.
2. *University Reader*

### **FINAL EXAMINATION POLICY**

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the Class Schedules site. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

### **PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY**

PLNU, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

### **PLNU ACADEMIC HONESTLY POLICY**

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment, examination, or the course, depending on the seriousness of the offense. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See Academic Policies for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

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### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

*“All students are expected to meet the standards for this course as set by the instructor. However, students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should discuss options with the Academic Support Center (ASC) during the first two weeks of class. The ASC will contact professors with suggestions related to classroom needs and accommodations. Approved documentation must be on file in the ASC prior to the start of the semester.”*

Note: This syllabus is not a contract. The Professor reserves the right to modify the syllabus to accomplish the learning objectives of the course.

### **COURSE CREDIT HOUR INFORMATION**

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a \_\_\_ unit class delivered over \_\_\_ weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated \_\_\_ total hours meeting the course learning outcomes. The time estimations are provided in the Canvas modules.

### **STATE AUTHORIZATION**

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point

Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

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*Course Synopsis*

**“Indwelling Goodness”**  
***Psychotherapy and Spirituality in the Age of Relational Neuroscience***

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***Unit 1***

**“The End is in the Beginning”**

***Toward a Spiritual Vision of the Psychotherapeutic Process***

*There are metaphysical assumptions behind our personal theory of therapy, our view of the person, our view of the good life, the nature of good and evil, and our notion of psychological health . . . so it is important that the therapist be conscious of them.*

-L. Corbett, *The Sacred Cauldron*

*Themes to Develop:* Why a spiritual vision of therapy is important; how relational neuroscience is changing how we think about therapy and spirituality; the problem of “reductionism” in contemporary therapeutic and spirituality theory; the ambiguity of spirituality; the concept of spiritually integrative therapy; the meaning and significance of psychotherapy-theology “integration” (clinical integration); Christian theology as a resource for developing a spiritual vision of therapeutic activity.

***Unit 2***

**The Sacred Crucible**

***Transformational Change and Relational Spirituality***

*The spiritual quest is, at one level, a psychological quest, and every psychological quest in some way reflects the basic spiritual quest.*

-D. Benner, *Psychotherapy and the Spiritual Quest*

*Themes to Develop:* The lost “moral” vision of S-I therapy; limitations of the presently-dominant “dimensional” model of integration; the “integrative” paradigm of relational spirituality; the distinction between implicit and explicit memory and multiple “levels” of personality; the “psychospiritual unity” of personality; implicit spirituality as alternative model of spiritual integration; the concept of transformational change; principles of relationally-based, experientially-focused therapies; psychotherapy and the “latent capacity to love”

***Unit 3***

**Crafts of Change**

***Models and Processes of Transformational Change***

*A person cannot choose to desire a certain kind of relationship, any more than he can will himself to ride a unicycle, play the Goldberg Variations, or speak Swahili. The requisite neural framework for performing these activities does not coalesce on command . . . A patient doesn't become generically healthier; he/she becomes more like the therapist.*

-Lewis, Amini, & Lannon, (2000). *A General Theory of Love*

*Themes to Develop:* A meta-model of three “common factors” in transformational change; steps in the “memory reconsolidation” process; models of memory reconsolidation therapy

## Issues in Psychotherapy-Theology Integration

### Week 1 (Wed, Aug 30)

*Overview and Introduction to the Course*  
A Prince Who Became a Turkey  
(Class Notes)

### Unit 1

#### ***“The End is in the Beginning”*** **Toward a Spiritual Vision of the Psychotherapeutic Process**

*There are metaphysical assumptions behind our personal theory of therapy, our view of the person, our view of the good life, the nature of good and evil, and our notion of psychological health . . . so it is important that the therapist be conscious of them.*  
-L. Corbett, *The Sacred Cauldron*

### Week 2 (Wed, Sept 6)

#### ***“Citizens of Two Realms”*** **Contrasting Visions of Therapy and the “Spirituality Hypothesis”**

**Reminder:** EACH WEEK check the Syllabus for which readings are REQUIRED. Please bring your typed Reading Reflections to class; *please do not email*. Check your email each week for the Reading Reflections and the Handouts that will be used in class.

Introduction and Overview: What is Psychotherapy For?

Topic 2.1      Swimming Pool or Quest?  
*Two Visions of Life, and Psychotherapy*  
**Reader:** Frattaroli (*Healing the Soul in the Age of the Brain*, Ch. 5)  
**(REQUIRED Reading Reflection)**

Topic 2.2      Psychotherapy as Spiritual Activity  
*The Idea of “Spiritually-Integrative” Therapy*  
**Reader:** Corbett (*The Sacred Cauldron*, Introduction)

### Week 3 (Sept 13)

#### ***Winds of Change*** **The New Conversation on Psychotherapy and Spirituality**

Introduction and Overview: The New View of “Our Interconnected Nature”

Topic 3.1      The Relational and Neurobiological “Turn” in Psychotherapy  
*A Nonmedical Model of Therapeutic Healing*  
**Reader:** Elkins (*The Human Elements of Psychotherapy*, Foreword, Intro, and Ch. 5)  
**(REQUIRED Reading Reflection)**

Topic 3.2      Can You Hear the Music?  
*A Broader Framework for Conceptualizing Spirituality and Spiritual Transformation*  
**Reader:** Vieten (*Spiritual & Religious Competencies in Clinical Practice*, Ch. 5)

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Topic 3.3      The Healing Quest: Introduction to Spiritual Theology for Psychotherapy  
(Class Handout)

**Tri-Semester “Type-As-You-Read” Essay Exam Distributed (Due: Mon, Oct 9)**

**Week 4 (Sept 20)**

***Craft of Life***

**Reimagining the “End” of Life (and Psychotherapy)**

Introduction and Overview: “Changing the Subject”

- Topic 4.1 “Maybe We’re Doing It Wrong”  
*What is Required for a Good Life?*  
**Reader:** Austin (*Living for Pleasure*, Ch. 1 and Ch. 3)
- Topic 4.2 Mental Health, Love, and the Good Life  
*Surprising Wisdom from Some Therapy Masters*  
**Reader:** Chessick (*Intensive Psychotherapy*, Ch. 14)  
**(REQUIRED Reading Reflection)**
- Topic 4.3 Theology Integration Principle #1  
*Forgiveness and Healing Are Not the Same Things*  
(Class Handout)

**Week 5 (Sept 27)**

***The Hand of God***

**Viewing Psychotherapy through the Lens of Spiritual Theology**

Introduction and Overview: What Connects Psychotherapy and Spirituality?

- Topic 5.1 The Vital Link  
*Re-Considering the “End” of Mature Spirituality*  
**Reader:** Armstrong (*Twelve Steps to a Compassionate Life*, Preface)  
**(REQUIRED)**
- Topic 5.2 Spirituality, Moral Goodness, and the Brain  
*Why “Believing” and Loving Are Not the Same Things*  
**Reader:** Vaillant (*Spiritual Evolution*, Ch. 2)
- Topic 5.3 Theology Integration Principle #2  
*“Implicit Goodness” as Ultimate Concern of the Healing Quest*  
(Class Handout)

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**Week 6 (Oct 4)**

***The Sacred Crucible***

## **An Emerging Paradigm in Psychotherapy-Theology Integration**

Introduction and Overview: Transformational Change in Psychotherapy and Spirituality

- Topic 6.1      “Unlocking the Emotional Brain”  
*Introduction to the Concept of Transformational Change*  
**Reader:** Ecker (“Unlocking the Emotional Brain” in *Psychotherapy Networker*)  
**(REQUIRED Reading Reflection)**
- Topic 6.2      “Loved into Loving”  
*The Paradigm of Relational Spirituality*  
**Reader:** Hall (*Relational Spirituality*, Introduction)  
**(REQUIRED Reading Reflection)**
- Topic 6.3      “*Indwelling Goodness*”  
A Moral Embodiment Model of Relational Spirituality  
(Class Handout)

**Tri-Semester “Type-As-You-Read” Exam Due Mon, Oct 9**  
**Place hard-copy in my box in Culbertson Hall by 3:00 Monday afternoon**  
***Please do not email***