Pastoral Care

Rabbi Fredda Cohen, BCC, JD

Pluralistic Rabbinical Seminary

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Contact information: (914-391-1655); fredda.cohen@gmail.com

Course Description: To develop and deepen the understanding, comfort, experience and skill level of rabbinical students in offering pastoral care and counseling in various settings and contexts. During the semester, we will apply both theoretical and practical approaches to the discipline of pastoral care. The course will consist of 9 on-line classes (participation is crucial), assigned readings to be read prior to class (including prior to the first class), weekly reflections integrating that week's class reading materials with one's own personal experiences (and, at your option, you may submit an addendum anytime during the following week reflecting your reactions to the class discussion), and pastoral care encounters of various sorts that you will draw upon to develop your skills.

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, students should (i) have deepened their listening and reflections skills; (ii) be familiar with various models to develop one's own spiritual assessment competence; (iii) have cultivated a toolbox of interventions to allow for effective pastoral caregiving; (iv) understand various concepts necessary for sustained pastoral caregiving, including: transference, self-care, theological reflection, ethical decision-making; (v) be able to discern when additional referrals are indicated.

Course Requirements:

1. weekly reflections (600-700 words, double spaced) integrating one's own personal experiences with the classroom discussion and reading material, other than on weeks when another written assignment is due

2. Spiritual Assessment (due 6/30)

3. Verbatim (due 7/14)

4. Theological Reflection (due 8/4)

Required Reading Materials (please purchase:

Dayle Freedman, Ed., *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional and Contemorary Sources,* 2nd Edition (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing 2005) [*Jewish Pastoral Care*]

Carrie Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press 2015) [*The Practice of Pastoral Care*]

Stephen B. Roberts, Ed., *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care: A Practical Clergy and Chaplain's Handbook* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing 2012) [*Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care*]

I. June 9 - Introduction to Pastoral Care

We will begin the course by first introducing ourselves, ascertaining specific learning objectives of participants, and establishing a class contract to ensure a sacred space during these sessions. We will review the development of the field of pastoral care and how it pertains in the context of contemporary settings – Jewish and otherwise.

Readings:

1. Naomi Kalish, "Jewish Healthcare Chaplaincy" in *Judaism and Health : A Handbook of Practical, Professional and Scholarly Resources* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing 2013) [Kalish, "Jewish Healthcare Chaplaincy]

2. Jewish Pastoral Care, pp. xiii-xxiii, 1-70

Assignment due 6/9 - weekly reflection

2. June 16 – Jewish Views on Suffering; Response to Suffering: Bikur Cholim

How do we experience suffering? What do we suffer? How does suffering inform our spirituality and, conversely, how does our spirituality inform our suffering? We will delve into Jewish texts that explore these questions. Let these questions guide you as you read and contrast J*ob* and *Ruth* (pay particular attention to the interventions of Job's friends and Ruth's community). How do the rabbis view suffering as reflected in Talmud *Brachot 5b?*

Readings:

1. The Book of Job

2. The Book of Ruth

3. BT Berachot 5b (beginning with the sugya "Rabbi Chiya bar Abba fell ill"

Assignment due 6/16 – weekly reflection

3. June 23 – Listening and Responding Skills

Active listening – it is not a paradox. Many rabbis are by nature extroverts and, as such, are accustomed to teaching, leading and often deciding. It takes effort and skill to be able to be truly present and guided by the person receiving care. In this session, we will explore the skills necessary to be an active listener and provide meaningful pastoral care. We will also learn about impediments to active listening; why do we as pastoral caregivers become "stuck"?

Readings:

1. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care,* Chapter 7: 92-102

2. *Jewish Pastoral Care,* pp. 95-122

3. *The Practice of Pastoral Care,* Chapter 3, pp. 53-72

Assignment due 6/23 – weekly reflection

4. June 30 – Spiritual Assessments

Being able to conduct a spiritual assessment of a patient is of paramount important for a pastoral caregiver. In a clinical setting, for instance, the health care team relies on the chaplain to assess the patient's spiritual beliefs and needs. It is widely recognized that a patient's spiritual state can impact (either positively or negatively) his or her recovery and prognosis. During this session, we will review several well-accepted spiritual assessment models for clinical application.

Readings:

1. Puchalski, C.M & Romer A.L. Taking a spiritual history allows clinicians to understand patients more fully. *Journal of Palliative Medicine* 2000; Vol. 3, 1: 129-137

2. Anandarajah, G. & Hight, E. Spirituality and Medical Practice: Using the HOPE Questions as a Practical Tool for Spiritual Assessment. *American Family Physician* 2001, Vol. 63,1: 81-88

3. Shields, M., Kestenbaum, A. & Dunn, L. Spiritual AIM and the work of the chaplain: A model for assessing spiritual needs and outcomes in relationship. *Palliative and Supportive Care 2015*, Vol. 13, 1: 75-89

4. Kalish, "Jewish Healthcare Chaplaincy" - review section on Mordecai Kaplan as it pertains to spiritual assessment

Assignment due 6/30 -Spiritual Assessment. Conduct an actual spiritual assessment (i) on a friend, family member, classmate or another person, or (ii) on a biblical, literary or historical figure, using your imagination.

5. July 7 – Interventions and Pastoral Care Plans

Once a spiritual assessment has been conducted and the patient's spiritual concerns identified, the pastoral caregiver must provide appropriate interventions. These interventions can be quite varied, ranging from counseling/ prayer/ritual to quiet accompaniment. Along those lines, the same type of pastoral interventions may resonate with some pastoral caregivers, but not others. In this session, we will explore different interventions, some of which might test our own personal comfort zones.

Readings:

1. *Jewish Pastoral Care,* pp. 125-222

2. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care,* Chapter 5, pp. 61-80

3. Massey, K., Barnes, M., et al. What do I do? Developing a taxonomy of chaplaincy activities and interventions for spiritual care in intensive care unit palliative care. BMC Palliative Care 2015, Vol. 14, 10: 1-8

4. Peery, B. Chaplaincy Interventions Defined. Texas Medical Center Project 2012

Assignment due 7/7 – weekly reflection

Also, begin to schedule a pastoral visit with someone who is in need. It can be someone you know or someone who is a stranger. You might want to consult with your own clergy to ascertain whether there is a congregant who could benefit from the visit.

6. July 14 – Verbatims

A verbatim is a written account of a pastoral care encounter. Its purpose is to capture an event for the purpose of review by classmates and instructor for the benefit of the presenter. It is often helpful to submit a verbatim representing an encounter that was problematic in some way for the presenter in order to learn what might have made the experience more meaningful. Most importantly, one must be honest with his or her representation in order to grow from the verbatim experience. Please use the template provided. We will be reviewing your verbatims in class this week.

Readings:

1. Kestenbaum, Allison. "Students, Please Submit Your Worst Work" – The Role of Verbatims. Seminarium: The Elements of Great Teaching. Posted July 4, 2014. http://seminariumblog.org/general/semclass/the-role-of-verbatims

2. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care,* Chapter 7, pp. 92-102

Assignment due 7/14 - Verbatim. Your verbatim should follow one of the templates provided. Please remember to add your own feelings in parentheses to the conversation. Notice if there are changes in your feelings as the conversation pursues. Try to reflect as accurately as possible the exact conversation, as well as your own feelings (put in parentheses) even if those feelings do not reflect your part of the conversation.

7. July 20 – End of Life

How do we provide support for those who are near the end of their lives and for their loved ones. Very often, it is at this stage where we are asked to assist our congregants in making difficult decisions. During this session, we will discuss how we might best provide comfort and support and assist at a time that is often quite fragile for families.

Readings:

1. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care,* Chapter 11, 12: pp. 149-177

2. *Jewish Pastoral Care,* pp. 374-432

3. Popovsky, Mark. Jewish Ritual, Reality and Response at the End of Life: A Guide to Caring for Jewish Patients and Their Families, Duke Institute on Care at End of Life (2007) - skim

4. Weiner, Jason, Jewish Guide to Practical Medical Decision-Making (Jerusalem, Israel: Urim Publications 2017), pp. 113-29

Assignment due 7/20 - weekly reflection

8. July 27 – The Unblemished Blemish: The Silent Causes of Despair

Within our own communities, many people suffer in silence. While people often will disclose physical illness, they are often reticent about other difficult situations: mental illness, addiction, domestic abuse, chronic illness, gender/sexual confusion, prolonged grief. As rabbis, it is incumbent upon us to be aware that these situations exist in every community, but may not be made known to us.

Readings:

1. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care,* Chapter 22,23,24,25, pp. 282-325

2. *Jewish Pastoral Care,* pp. 275-343

3. *The Practice of Pastoral Care,* Chapter 6, pp. 117-53

Assignment due 7/27 - weekly reflection

9. August 4 - Theological Reflections

Although one must never impose his or her own theology upon another, it is irrefutable that our theological beliefs form a lens through which we encounter people, places and experiences. In fact, as Carrie Doehring notes, "The use of theology is what makes pastoral care distinct from other forms of care." It is only by discerning our own theology that we can room for the theology of another.

Readings:

1. *The Practice of Pastoral Care,* Chapter 5, pp. 85-115

2. *Jewish Pastoral Care,* pp. 28-41

3. *Professional Spiritual & Pastoral Care,* Chapter 1,2, pp. 3-18

Assignment due 8/4 - Theological reflection (500-1000 words, double spaced). "I lift my eyes up to the mountains. From where does my help come?" (Psalm 121). Reflect on what you experience as sacred. How do you understand blessing, forgiveness, despair, hope? How do you think your theology might guide your pastoral caregiving? Are there any Jewish sacred texts (or parts thereof) that inform your theology? Has your theology been shaped by any of the readings or class discussions? How might your beliefs be a part of self-care as you bear witness to the pain of others?