

(Abbreviated Course Catalogue Title (*full title listed in caps below*):
“**[Grounding] the Strengths Perspective: Spirituality and Existential-Humanism.**”)

WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

GROUNDING THE STRENGTHS PERSPECTIVE: SPIRITUALITY, the EXISTENTIAL-
HUMANISTIC TRADITION, and the BIRTH OF SOCIAL WORK SCIENCE

SWK 8020 (3 Credits)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this course will be to provide a grounding for the *Strengths-Perspective* in Social Work, supplying it with a much needed, multidimensional theoretical structure, methodology, and model of the person, that is rooted in human experience, and emerges from the world of clinical practice. Toward this end, a number of classical and contemporary practice modalities, famous therapeutic masters, and noted theorists (see below), have been assembled and joined together, creating a spiritually inclusive, holistic, non-reductive, humanistic, paradigm and framework for clinical social work, thereby doing justice to the profession’s core principles and values. Moreover, the course content has been grouped into three primary, though overlapping units (see also below), that are all organized around these common themes.

In line with the above ideas, however, it is important to emphasize that while there will be some time devoted to outlining theory and engaging in conceptual and textual learning (through class lectures and readings), **the overwhelming focus of the course will be on experiential learning and the concrete development of practice knowledge and skills**; i.e., this course has been designed as a systematically integrated (though of course not exhaustive) *survey* of what we have termed herein “Social Work-True” approaches. **As such, the main focus of our study will be experienced-based, centered around, for example, mindfulness and other meditations and exercises done in class and practiced in weekly assignments, real clinical demonstrations of therapeutic modalities and interventions, and related experiential activities done in pairs and in groups, etc.** In other words, the overarching goal will be to provide each of the developing practitioners with a substantial toolkit of *strengths-based* interventions, coupled with a unifying framework and conception of the person to anchor it, as well as a wealth of resources that enable further study in this domain, etc.

WSSW SCHOOL POLICIES:

See below on the last page of this syllabus regarding “PLAGIARISM,” “HIPAA ALERT,” and “STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES.”

THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE OF THE COURSE:

A threefold guiding principle will govern all of the course content, and in particular, the various forms of clinical interventions; this principle has been loosely termed:

“The Person-Centered Empowerment Practice Principle,” and defined, in the following way:

Each experiential exercise, principle of well-being & healthy living, meditation practice, wisdom teaching, and clinical technique, has a triad of application, such that it can be:

- 1.) Applied to one’s own life for awareness, personal growth, and for the sake of “self-care”;
- 2.) Utilized with a client in a therapeutic session or in another direct practice context; and also:
- 3.) Taught to a client, so that the client is empowered to use it outside of the practice setting in real life situations, etc.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

This course has a series of interrelated learning objectives, delineated in three categories (*awareness, relational, and conceptual*), as follows:

1.) Awareness (framed in reference to oneself, though fostered in the other):

- A.) The cultivation of the student’s own self-awareness.
- B.) The awakening of the student’s sense of conscience, integrity, freedom & responsibility.
- C.) The concrete development of empathy, compassion, and emotional intelligence.
- D.) The acquisition of a series of specific self-care tools & principles of well-being, (designed, for example, to provide the resources in professional life to avoid “burn out,” cynicism, and “compassion fatigue”), etc.

2.) Relational (in reference to others, to use with/teach to clients, *and* oneself):

- E.) The thoroughgoing use of mindfulness in itself, as a central principle, and meditation tool, that applies to, and underlies, all therapeutic work, etc.
- F.) The acquisition of several other meditation practices, experiential tools, and interventions.
- G.) The learning of a number of strengths-based, assessment principles and protocols, etc.
- H.) The development of the capacity for culturally sensitive practice through the conscious use of self and the recognition of the shared humanity and intrinsic capabilities of all people.

3.) Conceptual (articulation of the intellectual principles and background):

I.) Learn a comprehensive model of the person & macro/integration framework for humanistic, strength-based, social work practice, anchoring the profession's core values.

J.) Acquire an introductory understanding of the various practice modalities and systems taught in the course.

K.) Gain a basic proficiency in the intellectual and textual background of the various thinkers and traditions that populate the course syllabus.

L.) Identify the most common forms of reductionism that contradict the core values of the social work profession and human reason, while developing the means to negotiate the value conflicts that result from this problem.

M.) Develop the ability to "reconstruct" and "reintegrate" non-humanistic, deficit-oriented, modes of practice, incorporating their insights and tools into a strength-based approach.

LEARNING METHODS:

The official course requirements and grading procedures have been designed to facilitate the integration and internalization of practice knowledge, wisdom, and skills; they thus include three main components, as follows:

1.) Regular attendance, and active class participation, with a curiosity and openness to experiential learning, and a willingness to engage in such exercises and activities with the whole class, etc.;

2.) Short weekly written assignments that are linked to in-class learning, and designed primarily to foster the development and acquisition of clinical skills and self-awareness; (these include, for example, practicing meditations learned in class and writing short experiential descriptions of them as directed, and on a small number of occasions during the semester may also include assignments that are a bit longer and slightly more involved, such as watching a video with experiential exercises and giving a report, or having a structured conversation with someone -- students will be notified in advance of any such longer assignments in order to give them ample time to complete them). These weekly written assignments added together, in conjunction with number one above, will substitute for any midterm and final paper requirements that could have been formulated for the course.

3.) Short readings that are composed almost exclusively of primary source texts, along with the occasional supplementary material compiled by the instructor (that combines excerpts from such works with commentary and analysis).

COURSE TEXTS:

The four texts below are available for purchase online in inexpensive paperback editions. As noted, the primary focus of the course is on **experiential learning**; yet some direct exposure to the works of the core theorists and traditions that populate this syllabus, through supplementary reading assignments -- that emphasize *quality* rather than *quantity* -- are integral to the study of this topic. Moreover, it will be necessary for the students to have the required books with them in class for the sake of reference and activities, etc.

In addition, as a service to the students, a selection of *purely optional* primary source texts are cited below, under the course outline. These are listed according to the respective unit in which they are embedded (following the repetition of the four required texts in each one), thereby serving as a guide to the student for further study in every area; this also provides background information regarding the content and design of the course.

Required:

- 1.) **Self-Therapy: A Step-By-Step Guide to Creating Wholeness and Healing Your Inner Child Using IFS [Internal Family Systems], A New, Cutting Edge Psychotherapy, Second Edition; Jay Earley, PhD.** (2009.)
- 2.) **BODY-CENTERED PSYCHOTHERAPY: The Hakomi Method (Updated Edition): The Integrated Use of Mindfulness, Nonviolence, and the Body; Ron Kurtz.** (2007.)
- 3.) **THE WILL TO MEANING: FOUNDATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF LOGOTHERAPY (Expanded Edition); Viktor E. Frankl.** (Newest Version, 2014.)
- 4.) **Personality Types: USING THE ENNEAGRAM FOR SELF-DISCOVERY, Revised Edition; Don Richard Riso with Russ Hudson.** (1996.)

COURSE OUTLINE:

Week 1: Background, Course Overview, and BioPsychoSocial-Spiritual Assessment; Introduction to Mindfulness Meditation.

Weeks 2-5: UNIT ONE: *Contemporary Strengths-Based Modalities:*

Internal Family Systems (IFS);

Hakomi Mindfulness Based Somatic Psychotherapy;

Positive Psychology;

The Possible You Seminar Framework.

Experiential Exercises Include: Mindfulness Meditation, Therapeutic Demonstrations and Practice Dyads, the “Happiness Exercise,” and “Good Points” Meditations, etc.

Required Texts for Unit One:

Self-Therapy: A Step-By-Step Guide to Creating Wholeness and Healing Your Inner Child Using IFS [Internal Family Systems], A New, Cutting Edge Psychotherapy, Second Edition; Jay Earley, PhD. (2009.)

BODY-CENTERED PSYCHOTHERAPY: The Hakomi Method (Updated Edition): The Integrated Use of Mindfulness, Nonviolence, and the Body; Ron Kurtz. (2007.)

Optional Texts for Unit One (for background and further study):

Internal Family Systems Therapy; Richard C. Schwartz. (First Edition, 1995.)

Internal Family Systems Therapy; Richard C. Schwartz & Martha Sweezy. (Second Edition, 2020.)

Weeks 6-10: UNIT TWO: The Existential-Humanistic Tradition:

Carl Rogers *Client-Centered Therapy* and the origins of the *Strengths Perspective*;

Martin Buber's theory of knowledge -- the core philosophy cited explicitly by Rogers and the *Existential-Humanistic* theorists (e.g., Maslow, Frankl, and Perls) as their foundation;

Abraham Maslow on *Deficiency vs. Being, Spirituality, and Peak Experiences*;

Viktor Frankl's Threefold Model of the Person, *Dimensional Ontology*, and its essential role in grounding the *Strengths-Perspective* and overcoming the problem of *reductionism*;

R. Dr. J. B. Soloveitchik's formulation of *Cognitive or Epistemological Pluralism*; that is, the innovative, multifaceted, inclusive, theory of knowledge he created, that outlines and reconciles the different but complimentary methods of natural science, social/human science, ethics, and religious experience, etc. His philosophy is treated here as an original part of, and an extension and contribution to, the *Existential-Humanistic* tradition. For it provides a fundamental theoretical grounding of the methodology and approach to practice implicit in the *Strengths Perspective* -- including the recognition of the importance of spirituality within social work -- in conjunction with its development and expansion of Frankl's model, coupled with that of the other *Existential-Humanistic* theorists;

Frankl, along with others, on *free will* and *responsibility, authenticity* ("self-generation") vs. *inauthenticity* ("others-generation"), *meaning & ultimate meaning*, and the concrete implications of all of this in the world of clinical practice, and with respect to the core values of social work (e.g., "self-determination"), etc.;

(Brief Introduction to Frederick Perls and *Gestalt*, and J. L. Moreno and *Psychodrama*, time permitting, etc.)

Experiential Exercises Include: Therapeutic Demonstrations followed by Practice Dyads, Group Meditations, and also Special Clinical Case Presentations provided for the students to elucidate the content and its applications to social work practice.

Required Text for Unit Two:

THE WILL TO MEANING: FOUNDATIONS AND APPLICATIONS OF LOGOTHERAPY (Expanded Edition); **Viktor E. Frankl**. (Newest Version, 2014.)

Optional Texts for Unit Two (for background and further study):

(Rogers/Buber.)

The CARL ROGERS READER: Edited by Howard Kirschenbaum and Valerie Land Henderson. (1989.)

The Martin Buber--Carl Rogers Dialogue: A New Transcript with Commentary; **Rob Anderson** and **Kenneth N. Cissna**. (1997.)

Moments of Meeting: Buber, Rogers, and the Potential for Public Dialogue; **Kenneth N. Cissna** and **Rob Anderson**. (2002.)

I and Thou; **Martin Buber** (Walter Kaufmann Translation).

(Maslow.)

TOWARD A PSYCHOLOGY OF BEING, Second Edition; ABRAHAM H. MASLOW. (1968.)

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SCIENCE: A Reconnaissance; **Abraham H. Maslow**. (1966.)

(Frankl.)

MAN'S SEARCH FOR MEANING; Viktor E. Frankl. (Originally German Edition, 1946; 2006 English Version.)

THE DOCTOR AND THE SOUL: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy; **Viktor E. Frankl, M.D., Ph.D.** (Third Edition.)

On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders: An Introduction to Logotherapy and Existential Analysis; **Viktor E. Frankl**. (2004.)

(R. Dr. Soloveitchik.)

THE HALAKHIC MIND: An Essay on Jewish Tradition and Modern Thought; **Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik**. [Primary work in epistemology; the first three parts are on the theory of knowledge, and the formulation of "*Cognitive or Epistemological Pluralism*." These are thus of *general* interest, while *only* the fourth part applies all of this to Judaism.]

FATE AND DESTINY (Kol Dodi Dofek); **JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK**.

THE LONELY MAN OF FAITH; **JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK**.

(Other Authors.)

General Psychological Theory: Papers on Metapsychology; Sigmund Freud.

ECLIPSE OF REASON; MAX HORKHEIMER. (1947; Continuum Edition, 1974.)

THE LOGIC OF THE CULTURAL SCIENCES: FIVE STUDIES; Ernst Cassirer.
(1940; 2000.)

GESTALT THERAPY VERBATIM; Frederick S. Perls.

**TOTALITY AND INFINITY: AN ESSAY ON EXTERIORITY; EMMANUEL
LEVINAS.** (English Edition, 1969.)

**FINDING FLOW: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ENGAGEMENT WITH EVERYDAY
LIFE; MIHALY CSIKSZENTMIHALYI.** (1997.)

Weeks 11-14: UNIT THREE: Integration Frameworks (building upon the previous units):

The Philosophy of Ken Wilber and the *Spectrum of Consciousness* as a profound, multidimensional, spiritually inclusive, macro-framework that joins together the whole range of different (often seemingly disparate) approaches and schools of thought in psychology and social work, including Western and Eastern traditions;

The Enneagram as a compact, extremely efficient, strengths-conscious, typology of personality, assessment tool, and integration structure;

The “Blueprint Model,” that provides the most comprehensive, experientially grounded, framework of the person and of consciousness and psychology, sufficient to anchor and explain every different type of therapeutic intervention and meditation practice (this will serve to bridge and unite all of the course content).

Experiential Exercises Include: Enneagram Type Activities, Group Meditations, along with Closing Reflections, etc.

Required Text for Unit Three:

**Personality Types: USING THE ENNEAGRAM FOR SELF-DISCOVERY, Revised
Edition; Don Richard Riso with Russ Hudson.** (1996.)

Optional Texts for Unit Three (for background and further study):

The SPECTRUM of CONSCIOUSNESS; Ken Wilber. (1993.)

**Understanding the Enneagram: The Practical Guide of the Personality Types
(Revised Edition); Don Richard Riso and Russ Hudson.** (2000.)

AN OUTLINE OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS; Sigmund Freud.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES; C. G. JUNG.

GIFTS DIFFERING: Understanding Personality Type; Isabel Briggs Myers with Peter B. Myers. (1995.)

PLEASE UNDERSTAND ME II: *Temperament, Character, Intelligence*;
David Keirse. (1998.)

The 7 HABITS of HIGHLY EFFECTIVE PEOPLE (Revised and Updated):
Powerful Lessons in Personal Change; Stephen R. Covey. (1989, 2004, 2020.)

THE POWER OF NOW: A GUIDE TO SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT;
Eckhart Tolle. (2004.)

A NEW EARTH: *Awakening to Your Life's Purpose*; ECKHART TOLLE.
(2005, 2016.)

WSSW SCHOOL POLICIES:

PLAGIARISM

Students should remember that the school will not condone plagiarism in any form and will sanction acts of plagiarism. A student who presents someone else's work as his or her own work is stealing from the authors or persons who did the original thinking and writing. Plagiarism occurs when a student directly copies another's work without citation; and when a student paraphrases major aspects of another's work without citation; and when a student combines the work of different authors into a new statement without reference to those authors. It is also plagiarism to use the ideas and/or work of another student and present them as your own. It is not plagiarism to formulate your own presentation of an idea or concept as a reaction to someone else's work; however, the work to which you are reacting should be discussed and appropriately cited. Any student who can be shown to have plagiarized any part of any assignment in this course will automatically FAIL the course and will be referred to the Associate Dean for disciplinary action that may include expulsion.

HIPAA ALERT

In line with the new HIPAA regulations concerning protected health information, it is important that you understand that any case information you present from your work, will need to be de-identified. What this means is that any information that would allow another to identify the person needs to be changed or eliminated. This includes obvious things like names and birth dates but may also contain other information that is so unique to the person that it will allow for identification, including diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender. If diagnosis, race/ethnicity, or gender is directly related to the case presentation it can be included if it will not allow for identification.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who are enrolled in this course and who will be requesting documented disability-related accommodations are asked to make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services, Rochelle Kohn, Beren Campus, 917-326-4828, rkohn1@yu.edu, Abby Kelsen, Wilf Campus, 646-685-0118, akelsen@yu.edu, during the first week of class. After approval for accommodations is granted, please submit your accommodations letter to Disability Services Office immediately.