

WURZWEILER SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK. OF YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

**JEWISH MEDITATION & PSYCHOTHERAPY**

SWK 6120/SWK 8120 (3 Credits)

Summer 2023

Rabbi Dr. Alex Glassman  
alexander.glassman@yu.edu

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course builds upon the success of "Grounding the Strengths Perspective" and "Spiritual Therapy," while rebooting an entirely new and updated version of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work's founding tradition of *Jewish Social Philosophy*. Thus, it embodies the same *Social-Work True*, Humanistic, non-reductive, holistic, and *Strengths-Based* approach to theorizing as these prior courses, with their ***experiential, clinical skill focused, curriculum design***, yet coupled with Yeshiva University's motto, i.e., the core value and commitment to *Torah U'Madda*. That is, it utilizes the Jewish tradition as an extraordinary wellspring of strength, whose rich heritage of spirituality, wisdom, and knowledge, in general, and its comprehensive map of consciousness, psychology, and experience, and its profound meditative traditions, in particular, supply an integrative model and a series of rich clinical tools for social work practice.

To be more specific, the course features a whole array of meditation practices and an integrative macro-model of the person (the "Core Faculties of Consciousness"), derived from traditional Jewish sources, that work in tandem with, and clarify the mechanisms of efficacy within, a variety of the most profound, spiritually inclusive, mind-body, experiential healing modalities (e.g., IFS, EMDR, etc.). Though the primary focus of the course will be on learning, practicing, and developing therapeutic proficiency with a rich body of original Jewish meditations, time will be devoted to the learning of explicit clinical applications of this content, with clients in individual and group settings.

Please note: While a version of mindfulness *does* play a crucial role as one very basic skill set and type of meditation practice -- and one that is generally, in some form, a prerequisite to other meditations, and that *will* be practiced regularly in the course -- there are a whole variety of other types of meditations that build upon it, and add additional depth and therapeutic power; (thus, this is not merely a "Jewish Mindfulness" course). Many of these meditations are unique to the Jewish tradition, and operate on different principles than mindfulness, yet they are accessible and relatively easy to learn, practice, and apply therapeutically. Moreover, while this course may be of particular interest to students of Judaism, it is important to note that it is **open to students of all backgrounds**, who have a desire to learn therapeutic meditation; there are no prerequisites, such as Jewish learning, observance, or knowledge of Hebrew.

The course cites the "Buddhism to Mindfulness" analogy. That is, *just as* mindfulness meditation and practices have become universal in contemporary western, academic, professional, and therapeutic settings, though they were imported into these contexts originally from the Buddhist tradition, *so too*, the material in this course derives from the Jewish tradition, following Yeshiva University's aforementioned motto and core values, and can be learned in the same manner. (Though it can, of course, also be understood from the standpoint of the traditional Jewish backdrop from which it sources, and **those students who wish to approach it that way will be guided and supported in such an approach to this learning.**) In addition, students of all backgrounds will discover a wealth of original material, such as the comprehensive map of consciousness and experience, the "Blueprint Model," that shows how all systems of psychology, therapy, and meditation, work off of one fundamental infrastructure and its core principles; this is an original Jewish contribution to humanity, and need not be understood as a dogma (this is based largely on the pioneering work of Rabbi Doniel Katz, and his organization, the *Elevation Project*).

#### 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:

As in its above cited companion courses, a threefold guiding principle will govern all of the content in this course, and in particular, the various forms of clinical interventions learned in it; this principle has been loosely termed:

"The Person-Centered Empowerment Practice Principle," and defined, as follows:

*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 what is termed "self-care";
- 2.) Utilized with a client (or a group of clients) in a therapeutic session or in another direct practice context; and also:
- 3.) Taught to a client (or a group of clients), so that the client (or group of clients) can be 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 sensitivity to ***spirituality*** and 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.

E.) The ability for a student to utilize consciously, any background and learning in the Jewish tradition (including the course content), such that it can be drawn upon as a profound source of *strength*, and a creative wellspring of experience, knowledge, wisdom, and values, for humanistic, and spiritually inclusive, social work practice.

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

F.) The thoroughgoing use of spirituality, as a core therapeutic principle and clinical tool, that applies to, and underlies, all therapeutic work, etc. (This includes the rich tradition of spirituality learned in the course from the Jewish tradition.)

G.) The acquisition of several meditation practices, experiential tools, and interventions, including a whole body of original meditations learned from traditional Jewish sources.

H.) The learning of a number of strengths-based, assessment principles and protocols.

I.) 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; this is deeply enhanced by the perspectives of spirituality learned in the course.

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

J.) Learn a comprehensive model of the person & macro/integration framework derived from traditional Jewish sources; this is what has been termed the "Blueprint Model" or the "Core Faculties of Consciousness," and it forms the foundation of humanistic, strength-based, social work practice, thereby anchoring the profession's core values.

K.) Acquire an introductory understanding of the core model used in the course, and how the various meditation practices taught in it, as well as the various outside practice modalities and systems of therapy and meditation cited, work according to this model.

L.) Gain a simple proficiency and orientation to the intellectual and textual background of this model and the meditation practices in the course.

M.) 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.

N.) Develop the ability to “reconstruct” and “reintegrate” spiritually exclusive and deficit-oriented, modes of practice, incorporating their insights and tools into a spiritually inclusive (and strengths-based) approach, through the model taught in the course, and with reference to parallel thinkers and traditions.

#### 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. This includes, in particular, learning and practicing together the meditations that are the core of the course.

2.) Short written assignments after each session that are linked to in-class learning, and are designed primarily to foster the development and acquisition of clinical skills and self-awareness; (these include, primarily, practicing the meditations learned in class and writing experiential reports of them as directed). These weekly written assignments added together, in conjunction with number one above, and number three below, will substitute for any midterm and final paper requirements that could have been formulated for the course.

3.) Short readings (and/or videos) that are composed of primary source texts and/or supplementary material compiled by the instructor (that combine excerpts from such works with commentary and analysis, and/or features verbatim transcriptions, paraphrases, or summaries of live workshops, etc.). (These will be included periodically as part of the assignments after each class, as listed in number two above.)

[Additional notes: Students must finish all the assignments to complete the course. And see below on the penultimate page of this syllabus for required formal grading rubric.]

## COURSE TEXTS & READINGS (AND VIDEOS):

To Be Announced (see number three immediately *above*; these will be announced ahead of time as needed, following course themes and background texts that are part of this syllabus, etc. These will include some selections of key primary and secondary sources from the Jewish tradition, e.g., from *Hassidut* (one of the main developments and most accessible forms of "Jewish Mysticism"); no knowledge of Hebrew language is required, though there will be plenty of recommended primary source texts in these areas for those interested). (See also the "SELECT BOOK LIST" below.)

## COURSE OVERVIEW:

This course will feature some didactic, conceptual, theoretical learning, such as of the above mentioned "Blueprint Model," or the "Core Faculties of Consciousness." This will include the content of the model itself, and some discussion of the methodology through which it has been reconstructed from the traditional Jewish sources where it is found, as well as its use in explaining the inner workings of the meditations taught in the course, while also clarifying the mechanisms of efficacy underlying other systems of therapy and meditation, etc. That said, however, the majority of class time will be spent in ***experiential learning***, i.e., practicing the meditations together (e.g., a variety of different types, including, mindfulness, contemplative, and visualization meditations), and then debriefing and learning from them, as well as how to apply them therapeutically; that is, the course will serve as a kind of experiential learning laboratory. Along these lines, there will also be some live clinical demos and related experiential learning, in order to illustrate the application of the experiential content into therapeutic contexts and settings.

## SELECT BOOK LIST (for Background and Further Reading):

The meditative practices and the model of consciousness and psychology used in this course have been carefully reconstructed by contemporary experts in the subject from a body of literally thousands of traditional Jewish sources; these will be familiar to students of traditional Judaism. That said, however, a very small sampling of authentic primary and secondary sources available in English is listed below as a starting point and guide to students new to this tradition; a selection of therapeutic works are also provided subsequently.

### Small Sampling of Primary Source Texts Available in English:

The Testament of Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov (*Tzvaat Harivash*). Classic text of teachings from the founder of the Hassidic movement, as compiled by his students.

Tanya. By Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi. One of the most foundational texts of Jewish thought and meditation, authored by the first Rebbe of the Chabad/Lubavitch Hassidic dynasty. (In addition, a whole body of classic primary source texts from the authors successors are available in English as well.)

Likkutei Moharan. By Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. Another of the most foundational texts of Jewish thought and meditation, authored by the founder of the Breslov Hassidic tradition. (There are also a variety of other primary sources in English available from Rebbe Nachman and his main disciple, Rabbi Nossion of Breslov.)

Strive for Truth! (The First Volume of *Michtav Eliyahu*). By Rabbi Eliyahu E. Dessler. (The great 20th century teacher of Jewish thought and inner work.)

The Student's Obligation & The Three Discourses (*Hovot HaTalmidim* and the *Shloshah Maamarim*), Experiencing the Divine (*Bnai Machshavah Tovah*), Jewish Spiritual Growth (*Haksharat HaAvreihim*), and all works by Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman Shapira, the Piacetzna Rebbe (the *Aish Kodesh*). (These are the works of the great Hassidic Master, who tragically became the "Rebbe of the Warsaw Ghetto," teaching Torah during the holocaust. His books, written explicitly in the language of experience, and meant as a practical guide to meditation and inner work, are one of the clearest and most accessible sources of Jewish meditation and spiritual psychology.)

The Sea of Wisdom. Teachings compiled and put out in English by the students of the great contemporary Hassidic Master and Kabbalist, Rabbi Yitzchak Meir Morgenstern.

#### Small Sampling of Quality Secondary Works Available in English:

Mystical Concepts in Chassidism. By Rabbi Dr. Jacob Immanuel Schochet. This is perhaps the best summary work of the most basic concepts in Jewish mysticism, authored by an authentic expert in the tradition who was also a philosophy professor; it was originally included as a supplement to his translation of Part IV of *Tanya*.

Jewish Meditation, Meditation and Kabbalah, Meditation and the Bible, Inner Space, and all works on the topics of Jewish Meditation and Jewish Mysticism, authored by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan. (Rabbi Kaplan was an outstanding scholar and authority in these sources, as well as someone with extensive academic training and background, who was committed to making these sources and traditions accessible to students of all backgrounds. See also all works by contemporary teacher, Rabbi Avraham Sutton, a student and one of the original compilers of the teachings of Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan.)

Living in Divine Space: Kabbalah and Meditation. By Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh. (Great contemporary scholar and teacher of Jewish mysticism and Jewish thought, with an academic background, a portion of whose work involves integration of these areas.)

Small Sampling of Complimentary Therapeutic Works:

Connection: Emotional and Spiritual Growth Through Experiencing G-d's Presence. Rabbi Dr. Efim Svirsky. (This work, and all the teachings and workshops of the author, who has trained hundreds of therapists in his approach of "Psycho-Spiritual Therapy," are an essential bridge between Judaism and Psychology and Psychotherapy, and are accessible to students of all backgrounds.)

Transforming Therapy. Gil Boyne.

The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy. Dr. Viktor E. Frankl.

On the Theory and Therapy of Mental Disorders: An Introduction to Logotherapy and Existential Analysis. Dr. Viktor E. Frankl.

The Carl Rogers Reader. Dr. Carl Rogers.

Client Centered Therapy. Dr. Carl Rogers.

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. Dr. Jay Earley.

Body-Centered Psychotherapy: The Hakomi Method. Dr. Ron Kurtz

The Hakomi Way: Consciousness & Healing. Dr. Ron Kurtz.

Synchronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle. Dr. C. G. Jung.

The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. Dr. C. G. Jung.

The Transpersonal Vision: The Healing Potential of Nonordinary States of Consciousness. Dr. Stanislav Grof.

The Way of the Psychonaut, Encyclopedia for Inner Journeys, Volumes One and Two. Stanislav Grof, MD, PhD.

Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis, Stanislav Grof M.D., and Christina Grof.

Holotropic Breathwork. Dr. Stanislav Grof and Christina Grof.

Toward a Psychology of Being. Dr. Abraham Maslow.

The Farther Reaches of Human Nature. Dr. Abraham Maslow.

Higher Creativity: Liberating the Unconscious for Breakthrough Insights. Willis Harman, Ph.D. and Howard Rheingold.

The Wiley Blackwell Handbook of Transpersonal Psychology. Edited by Harris L. Friedman and Glenn Hartelius.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) Therapy. Third Edition. Basic Principles, Protocols, and Procedures. Francine Shapiro.

**REQUIRED FORMAL GRADING RUBRIC:**

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Grade percentage</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Assignment 1 Unit 1	5%	2 <sup>nd</sup> session
Assignment 2 Unit 1	5%	3 <sup>rd</sup> session
Assignment 3 Unit 1	5%	4 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 4 Unit 1	5%	5 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 5 Unit 2	5%	6 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 6 Unit 2	5%	7 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 7 Unit 2	5%	8 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 8 Unit 2	5%	9 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 9 Unit 3	5%	10 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 10 Unit 3	5%	11 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 11 Unit 3	5%	12 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 12 Unit 3	5%	13 <sup>th</sup> session
Assignment 13 Unit 3	5%	14 <sup>th</sup> session
Course participation rubric	35%	

**JEWISH MEDITATION & PSYCHOTHERAPY**

**GRADING RUBRIC**

## 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.