

Hartford Seminary --- Spring 2022
CH-730 Resilience for Spiritual Leaders
Preliminary Syllabus (as of 9/23/21)

Instructor:

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Bio: Rev. Tracy Mehr-Muska, DMin, serves as the Minister for Mid and Later Life at Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford, CT, and is an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (USA). She is a Board Certified Chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) and was certified by the State of Massachusetts as a Behavioral Health Disaster Responder. Prior to assuming the role at Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Rev. Tracy served eight years as a university chaplain at Wesleyan University after having served as the Coordinator of Pastoral Care in hospice, where she served the hospice population as well as the pediatric palliative care patients. During her training, did her residency program at an acute care trauma hospital and completed internships as a chaplain in a prison, psychiatric hospital, trauma hospital, and non-profit advocacy agency. Before entering Princeton Theological Seminary to pursue her call to ministry, she served as a marine scientist in the private sector and as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Coast Guard, working closely with the several military chaplains. She received her Doctor of Ministry degree from Hartford Seminary and published *Weathering the Storm: Simple Strategies for Being Peaceful and Prepared* (Wifp and Stock, 2019) based on her research on resilience. Her passion for learning about and teaching resilience has been inspired by the strong and spirited people she has served and worked alongside while in the military and while doing the work of ministry in the parish and in specialized settings.

Course Meeting Times:

Class meets weekly from January 20 through April 28, 2022 (14 meetings).

No class on April 14, 2022. Advising week is March 7-11, 2022.

Class is scheduled to meet on Thursdays from 4:00pm – 6:50pm.

Course Description and Goals:

This course is designed for people of all spiritual/religious backgrounds who are providing spiritual and emotional support to others, leading faith communities, serving as chaplains, working on justice issues, or seeking additional self-care practices. This course about resilience teaches the participants about the characteristics of resilience, invites the participants to engage in reflective self-assessment, and provides the participants with tools and resources to enable them to develop strategies to help the people they serve in their contexts build resilience. The course includes lectures, individual reflection, independent reading, written reflection, resilience-building workshop exercises, and small-group discussion. It is only through learning to cultivate our own resilience that we can mindfully extend that invitation to others through our programs, teaching/preaching, conversations, and role modeling. *3 credits*.

Completion of this course will enable the student to:

- Articulate and understand the characteristics of resilience and evaluate some of the related scholarship.
- Articulate the relationship between resilience and spiritual/religious identity, and identify the ways in which resilience is relevant to their ministry contexts or community organizations.
- Identify barriers to resilience.

- Engage in the practice of “resilience building” by assessing their own resilience, identifying areas of strength and areas in need of growth, and employing practices that can help build their own resilience.
- Develop a research-based plan to engage their faith communities or organizations in the practice of resilience-building using these strategies.

Through this course, students should be able to achieve the following Learning Outcomes for Hartford Seminary’s programs:

- To demonstrate foundational and critical knowledge of one’s own religion [as it relates to resilience]
- To demonstrate the knowledge, capacities, and willingness to respectfully engage other religions and world views
- To demonstrate knowledge of the practices of one’s own religious tradition and the capacity to appreciate the practices of other religious traditions
- To demonstrate knowledge and skills for dialogical and constructive engagement with diversity.
- To demonstrate the ability to relate theory and practice in the social contexts in which a religion’s communities exist
- To develop the intellectual, interpersonal, and professional skills needed to provide chaplaincy care in complex, pluralistic environments
- To gain an understanding of the role of the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as they relate to resilience

This course fulfills the following curricular requirements:

- MAC – Chaplaincy elective
- MAIRS – Ministerial Studies: Arts of Ministry

The syllabus and course conversations aspire to honor the Hartford Values for Collaborative Teaching and Learning:

- Showing mutual appreciation and respect for others—modeling the privilege to learn from and partner with each other.
- Engaging in cross-disciplinary content and teaching
- Paying attention to the whole personhood of another – history, race, religion, knowledge, gender, and rank
- Demonstrating how to disagree respectfully and well
- Embodying mutuality – Learning to construct ideas and skills and experiences together

Assessment:

It is expected that all aspects of this course will be completed by May 5, 2022. Grades will be based on completion of pre-seminar assignments, attendance, meaningful participation in class discussion, and completion of written assignments as detailed below.

Hartford Seminary takes plagiarism very seriously. The policy says this, “Plagiarism, the failure to give proper credit for the words and ideas of another person, whether published or unpublished, is strictly prohibited. All written material submitted by students must be their own original work; where the words and ideas of others are used they must be acknowledged.”

- Please see this link for more information about the seminary’s plagiarism policy: <https://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/>.
- For additional information for writing resources, please use this link: <https://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-writing-resources/>.

- Also available are Hartford Seminary's General Guidelines for a Research Paper, which can be found here: <https://www.hartsem.edu/wp-content/uploads/Guidelines-for-Writing-A-Research-Paper2.pdf>.
- Another useful resource is Kate L. Turabian's, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, (6th Edition, University of Chicago Press, 1996).

The requirements are as follows:

Attendance & Class Discussion Participation [30%]

Presence and participation during the course meetings and participation online via the Canvas discussion board is an essential component of this course. Missing class may result in an automatic lowering of your final grade, unless an adequate manner of making up the time and covering the material is negotiated with the instructor.

Weekly reflections [15%]

Write a reflection (approx. 400 words) or engage in a project/activity based on a prompt provided by the instructor to be completed by **8am the day of the class** (10 total).

Project [15%]

Choose **one** of the following:

- Develop a program that you can implement in your context related to helping people build their resilience. Be sure to include the following:
 - Detail the audience.
 - Describe your rationale for this proposed project by citing at least four sources (books or journal articles).
 - Propose how you might introduce the program to stakeholders.
 - Consider and propose how you intend to assess the success of the program.
- Create an instructional resource about resilience that incorporates theology and Holy Writ from your spiritual/religious tradition. Describe your audience. Your research for this project should cite at least four sources (books or journal articles).
- Other: If you have another idea for a project (group or individual), see instructor for approval.

Paper [20%]

- Write an essay of approximately five pages (approx. 1800 words, double spaced) in which you reflect on the resilience of *a character you choose* from a fictional or non-fiction book from a list below (or one of your choosing, with instructor's approval). This reflection should use sources (books or journal articles) from this course and sources that you discover in your research/reflection. The paper should follow the following format:
 - **Introduction:** Provide a very brief summary of the book (not to exceed 200 words). What were the key themes of the book? What did the author want you to learn or understand about her/his experience?
 - **Background:** What aspects of this book's **physical context** is relevant to the characters' experience? What **cultural considerations** affected this character's story? What aspects of the **social context** were pertinent (related to the character's immediate relationships as well as the broader social contexts in which he/she exists)? What aspects of the **political** or **religious context** influenced this individual's story?

- **Conflict:** What sorts of conflicts was the protagonist facing? What required her/his resilience? Which of the conflicts were actual, and which were perceived?
- **Resilience characteristics:** How were each of the characteristics of resilience employed in this story? What internal and external resources were accessed? Which additional characteristics were evident?
- **Learnings:** What could the protagonist have done differently? What ultimately led to their success or failure? What did they learn about themselves? What did they learn about the world? What do they wish they had done differently?
- **Theological reflection:** Using your own personal theology, imagine and articulate your understanding of the role of the Holy in this protagonist's story. How do your own spiritual/religious beliefs and texts relate to this person's journey/struggle? How did your spiritual/religious tradition/theology inform this experience?
- **Conclusion:** Tie together the above in a cohesive conclusion. Answer any additional questions that are not listed above and are relevant to your character.

Personal Reflection [20%]

Choose **one** of the following (approx. seven pages or 2500 words).

- Follow the above Final Paper protocol using your *own autobiography*.
- Choose *two* of the characteristics of resilience covered in the course and do a self-evaluation.
 - Conduct a self-assessment using the questions that will be provided.
 - Establish a very specific list of short- and long-term goals that will help you build those specific characteristics of resilience. (Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.)

Per the guidelines provided by the Seminary: "It is expected that DMin and PhD students should have additional requirements than MARS or MATLS students. Normally, this would be: 2 additional texts with short written reviews, a longer final paper, or other writing assignment—normally applied to their ministry context, for DMin students. For PhD students, 10 additional texts to be integrated into other assigned, such as critical book reviews, short papers, or a final paper – ideally focused on their research topic."

Email Policy:

The instructor will use the official Hartford Seminary student email addresses for all course communications. Please check your *hartsem.edu* email account regularly.

Required Reading:

Mehr-Muska, Tracy. *Weathering the Storm: Simple Strategies for Being Peaceful and Prepared*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019. ISBN 1532652372. [Instructor has several copies of *Weathering the Storm* that can be borrowed.]

Southwick, Steven, and Dennis Charney. *Resilience: The Science of Mastering Life's Greatest Challenges* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. ISBN 1108441661. [First edition is also fine.]

NOTE: In addition to the above, each student's required reading includes a book or three journal articles that relate to resilience from the perspective of the student's content, area of interest, or personal spiritual or religious tradition.

Recommended Reading/Viewing:

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Prisoner for God: Letters and Papers from Prison*. New York: Macmillan, 1961.

Bridges, William. *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2004.

Brown, Brené, host. "Dr. Vivek Murthy and Brené on Loneliness and Connection." Unlocking Us (podcast). April 21, 2020.

Brown, Brené. *Rising Strong*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015. ISBN 0812999339.

Brown, Brené. *The Gifts of Imperfection: Let Go of Who You Think You're Supposed to Be and Embrace Who You Are*. Center City, MN: Hazelden, 2010.

Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler. *The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living*. New York: Riverhead, 1998).

Duckworth, Angela. "Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance." Filmed April 2013. TED video, 6:02.

Duckworth, Angela. *Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*. New York: Scribner, 2016. ISBN 1501111116.

Frankl, Victor. *Man's Search for Meaning*. Boston: Beacon, 2006. ISBN 0807014273.

Grenville-Cleave, Bridget. *Positive Psychology: A Practical Guide*. New York: MJF, 2012.

Hagerty, Barbara Bradley. *Life Reimagined: The Science, Art, and Opportunity of Midlife*. New York: Riverhead, 2016.

Hone, Lucy. "3 Secrets of Resilient People." Filmed August 2019. TEDxChristchurch video, 15:57.

Kushner, Harold. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. New York: Schocken, 1981.

Nelson, Shasta. "Frientimacy: The Three Requirements of All Healthy Friendships." Filmed November 2017. TEDxLaSierraUniversity video, 16:24.

Nhat Hahn, Thich. *Fear: Essential Wisdom for Getting through the Storm*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 2012.

Nhat Hahn, Thich. *Touching Peace*. Berkley, CA: Parallax, 2009.

Nouwen, Henry. *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. New York: Image, 1979.

Sandberg, Sheryl, and Adam Grant. *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy*. New York: Knopf, 2017.

Seligman, Martin. "Can Happiness Be Taught?" *Daedalus* 133, no. 2 (Spring 2004) 80-87.

Seligman, Martin. *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*. New York: Vintage, 2006. ISBN 1400078393.

Stone Zander, Rosamund, and Benjamin Zander. *The Art of Possibility: Transforming Professional and Personal Life*. New York: Penguin, 2002.

Swain, Storm. *Trauma and Transformation at Ground Zero: A Pastoral Theology*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011.

Talks at Google. "Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance with Angela Duckworth." May 6, 2016. Video, 51:59.

Book Ideas for Final Assessment:

Abulhawa, Susan – Mornings in Jenin: A Novel

Angelou, Maya - I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

Bakr, Salwa – The Man From Bashmour

Brooks, Geraldine – Caleb's Crossing

Brooks, Geraldine – March

Brooks, Geraldine – People of the Book

Doerr, Anthony – All the Light We Cannot See

Eugenides, Jeffrey – Middlesex: A Novel

Falcones, Ildefonso – The Hand of Fátima

Frank, Anne – Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

Hall Kelly, Martha – Lilac Girls: A Novel

Hannah, Kristin – The Nightingale

Hosseini, Khaled – The Kite Runner

Kurban, Said – Ali and Nino: A Love Story
L'Engle, Madeleine – A Wrinkle in Time
Lalami, Leila – The Moor's Account
Lee Shetterly, Margot – Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women
Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race
Maalouf, Amin – Leo Africanus
Maalouf, Amin – Ports of Call
McCain, John – Faith of My Fathers: A Family Memoir
Monette, Paul – Becoming a Man: Half a Life Story
Morrison, Toni – Beloved
Obama, Michelle – Becoming
Stedman, M.L. – The Light Between Oceans
Strayed, Cheryl – Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail
Tartt, Donna – The Goldfinch
Toibin, Colm – Brooklyn
Tolan, Sandy – The Lemon Tree
Hillenbrand, Laura – Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption
Wiesel, Elie – Night
Yehoshua, A. B. – A Journey to the End of the Millennium: A Novel of the Middle Ages
Yousafzai, Malala – I am Malala
Zusak, Markus – The Book Thief