TEACHING THE HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS HEALING

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1) SUBJECT MATTER: Conceptual issues
2) SYLLABUS: Topics, assignments, & classroom experiences
3) FEEDBACK: Ideas for the future
1. SUBJECT MATTER: Conceptual Issues
More typically taught as:

- an *anthropological* subject
- a *history* class
- a *religious studies* topic
- a *CAM* modality

At Baylor, I teach this as a *medical humanities* seminar to pre-health students. I draw on all of the above contexts.
• A medical humanities elective.
• Upper-level undergraduate pre-health students.
• Material from across professions, academic disciplines & fields, and medical specialties:
  ➢ Incl. psychiatry, nursing, anthropology, sociology, psychology, history, religion, theology, pastoral care, biomedical sciences, integrative medicine, and more.
• Introduces students to the multifaceted & longstanding conversation between faith & the practice of healing that dates to antiquity.
From the syllabus:

“This course provides an introduction to the subject of religious healing, including recent research. Nonmedical healing and the work of its practitioners are referred to by various names—religious healing, spiritual healing, faith healing, mental healing, energy healing—each implying something distinctive. Moreover, there is considerable variation within each category, as healers do not describe themselves uniformly. To add to the complexity, religious healers are found throughout the world, across cultures and faith traditions, and have existed alongside conventional medical care for thousands of years.”
COURSE OBJECTIVES

After completing Religious Healing (MH 4V98), students will be able to:

(a) Describe the *history and scope* of the work of religious healers;

(b) Identify *theories* that religious healers and scholars use to explain healing;

(c) Share personal insights into the *experience* of healing;

(d) Summarize *contemporary perspectives* on healing across religions and cultures; and,

(e) Discuss important *research findings* from studies of religious healing.
• **Timeline:**
  - Starting point, roughly, is the healing ministry of Christ.

• **Religious traditions:**
  - Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, indigenous African religions, Brazilian Spiritism, New Thought, the paranormal, contemporary New Age religion

• **What got left out:**
  - Pre-Christian antiquity (e.g., Rome, Greece, ANE, China, Indian subcontinent, OT era, pre-history). Material I covered in *Religion and Medicine* (OUP, 2020).
2. SYLLABUS: Topics, Assignments, & Classroom Presentations
**MEDICAL HUMANITIES PROGRAM**

- **Baylor’s MHP:**
  - The first undergraduate major in the U.S (2004). Now about 70 programs.
  - Has ranged from 180-250 majors, with additional minors.
  - Religion/spirituality is a core focus (with philosophy, history, literature, arts, behavioral & social science; plus clinical experience & bioethics).
  - “Christian Spirituality & Healthcare” is a required course.

- **“Religious Healing”:**
  - Many special topics courses are taught (designated as MH 4V98), including “Religious Healing.”
  - Offered as a seminar to up to 8 mostly honors pre-med MH majors, by invitation & approval from the MHP.
  - Has also been offered, modified, an as Independent Study class.
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<th>Course Topics</th>
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<td>Folk &amp; Indigenous Healers</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Christian Healing I: Jesus, History, &amp; Pilgrimage Sites</td>
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<td>Christian Healing II: 19th &amp; 20th Century Movements</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Christian Healing III: Contemporary Pentecostal &amp; Charismatic Healing</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Energy Healing I: Types &amp; Theories</td>
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<td>Energy Healing II: Research Evidence</td>
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<td>Esoteric &amp; Spirit Healing</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Faith Healing I: Healers on Film</td>
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<td>Faith Healing II: Clinical Implications</td>
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<td>Prayer Studies I: Research Evidence</td>
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<td>Prayer Studies II: Interpretation</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Student Healing Reports</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Student Term Paper Reports (2 sessions)</td>
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REQUIRED BOOKS

Morton Kelsey

Healing & Christianity

Health, Healing, and Religion
A Cross-Cultural Perspective

David Kinsley
**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

- **Class sessions:**
  - Once/wk. for 3 hours, seminar style, seated around a table.
  - Discuss assigned chapters plus 4-5 articles. Everyone reads everything.
  - **Format:**
    1) We discuss book readings; I lead discussion, sometimes with YT clips or whiteboard material or show’n’tell. With Q&A.
    2) Student-led discussion of each respective article, journal-club style, @ about 25 min., 4 per class. With Q&A.
    3) Wrap-up discussion, then make next session’s assignments.

- **Additional writing & presentation assignments:**
  - Written book report (selected from a list of about 30 books).
  - Compare-&-contrast report on 2 healer or healing service visits (w/oral presentation).
  - Film review (done in teams of 2): “Elmer Gantry,” “Resurrection,” “Marjoe,” “Kumaré.” Formerly, various faith healer documentaries.
  - Term paper: bio of a 20th C. healer (w/oral presentation incl. PPT).
GRADING

1) Oral presentations of assigned readings (15%).
2) Contribution to group discussions (15%).
3) Written book review (15%).
4) Written & oral report on experiences with healers (15%).
5) Term paper & oral report on a historically notable healer (40%).
## ASSIGNED ARTICLES, BY JOURNAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical Journals</th>
<th>Other Journals</th>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Therapies in Health &amp; Medicine</td>
<td>American Journal of Sociology</td>
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<tr>
<td>American Heart Journal</td>
<td>Churchman</td>
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<td>American Journal of Psychiatry</td>
<td>Ethos</td>
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<td>Annals of Internal Medicine</td>
<td>Flying Saucer Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>British Medical Journal</td>
<td>Health and Place</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complementary Therapies in Medicine</td>
<td>J. of Religion and Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence-Based Complementary &amp; Alternative Medicine</td>
<td>J. for the Scientific Study of Religion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explore: The Journal of Science &amp; Healing</td>
<td>Medical Anthropology Quarterly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Investigación Clínica</td>
<td>Mental Health, Religion &amp; Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. of Alternative &amp; Complementary Medicine</td>
<td>Religious Education</td>
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<td>J. of the American Board of Family Medicine</td>
<td>Southern Medical Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. of the History of Medicine &amp; Allied Sciences</td>
<td>Stress Medicine</td>
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<td>J. of Medicine and Philosophy</td>
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HEALING EXPERIENCES

- Upper Room revival
  + Reiki Fellowship of Dallas

- Unity Church of New Braunfels (meditation & pranic healing)
  + a curandero

- Gateway Church prayer service (evangelical-charismatic)
  + Yesha House prayer ministry

- A Houston D.O./acupuncturist (trained under Andy Weil)
  + a Baptist-costal church healing service

- Acts Church (charismatic Baptist) healing session
  + Waco Acupuncture Clinic

- A charismatic Baptist healing service
  + a Reiki healer

- A Dallas acupuncturist
  + Power of the Rainbow, Arlington, TX (crystal healing class)

Compare-&-contrast reports; written & oral presentations.
BOOK LIST FOR BOOK REPORTS

Healers
Mystic With The Healing Hands
Larry Dossey, M.D.
Be Careful What You Pray For...
Healing Words
Spirit & Matter
Ritual Healing In Suburban America
Mary Oliver
Debi Gliori
Robert Cooper
Francis Macmullin

Beyond the Visible
Jesus Christ Heals
Five Great Healers Speak
How People Heal
The Art Of Spiritual Healing
Born To Heal
Theories of Illness
Agnis Sanford
The Healing Light
Tom Harpur
The Uncommon Touch
Mind Cure
The Therapeutic Touch
Realms of Healing
From Christian Science to Jewish Science
Power Healing
The Gift of Healing

Healers
by George W. Beck
Jesus Christ Heals
by Farley Mowat
Five Great Healers Speak
by Joel S. Goldsmith
How People Heal
by Ruth Montgomery
The Art Of Spiritual Healing
by Jon R. Chestnutt
Born To Heal
by George Vessick
Theories of Illness
by William Styron
Agnis Sanford
by Bill Streef
The Healing Light
by George W. Beck
Tom Harpur
by Farley Mowat
The Uncommon Touch
by Jon R. Chestnutt
Mind Cure
by Walter Murphy
The Therapeutic Touch
by Dolores Krieger
Realms of Healing
by Jon R. Chestnutt
From Christian Science to Jewish Science
by John Wimber
Power Healing
by John Wimber & Kevin Springer
The Gift of Healing
by Andre Worrall & Doug Jenkins
3. FEEDBACK: Ideas for the Future
STUDENT FEEDBACK

- Very positive student evaluations: mostly 5’s, with some 4’s on particular aspects.
- Comments include that this has been a favorite class or that I’m a favorite professor.
- Students regularly ask me for medical or graduate school recommendation letters.
- Students have asked me to be their Honors thesis advisor.
- Post-graduation anecdotes from alumni currently in medical school that this was their favorite class at Baylor.
IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

- **New topics:**
  e.g., more medieval, pre-Christian, & Eastern content

- **New assignments:**
  e.g., “Pilgrimages of Europe” video series

- **Guest speakers/practitioners:**
  incl. healing demonstrations; may be an issue for Baylor

- **Publication:**
  e.g., in a medical education journal, to encourage this content being taught elsewhere

- **A second course:**
  e.g., on energy/spiritual healing modalities (incl. energy-based bodywork)

* A limiting factor is the number of available class sessions.
ANY SUGGESTIONS?