**CURRICULUM MODULE OR INTEGRATING FAITH AND
SPIRITUALITY IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION**

Culturally Competent Practice with Muslim Clients

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Primary course: Social Work Practice with Diverse Populations

Secondary course(s): Social Work Practice with Families, Social Work
Assessment

CURRICULUM MODULE ON CULTURALLY COMPETENT PRACTICE WITH MUSLIM CLIENTS

I. Core Competency Addressed:

This module fulfills the Council on Social Work Education's (2008) fourth core competency, which directs social workers to "engage diversity and difference in practice" (p. 3). After completion of this module, students will: (a) be able to identify the core tenets of the Muslim faith, (b) be able to discuss the contemporary issues faced by Muslims living in the United States, (c) aim to incorporate spirituality and religion into assessments with Muslim clients as demonstrated through a role-play exercise, and (d) strive to provide culturally competent treatment plans for Muslim clients as demonstrated through a role-play exercise.
Materials Needed and/or Assigned Readings

II. Materials Needed and/or Assigned Readings:

The following readings should be assigned for students to read prior to class:

> Carolan, M. T., Bagherinia, G., Juhari, R., Himelright, J., & Mouton-Sanders, M. (2000). Contemporary Muslim families: Research and practice. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 22*(1), 67-79.
> Haque, A. (2004). Religion and mental health: The case of American Muslims. *Journal of Religion and Health, 43*(1), 45-58.
> Hodge, D. R. (2005). Social work and the house of Islam: Orienting practitioners to the beliefs and values of Muslims in the United States. *Social Work, 50*(2), 162-173.

Additionally, the following reading includes a case-study which will be utilized in the module:

> Hamdan, A. (2007). A case study of a Muslim client: Incorporating religious beliefs and practices. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 35*(2), 92-100.

III. Description of the Module:

In addition to reading the three articles to prepare for class, students will write a two page reflection paper. In this paper, students will provide an analysis and critical examination of the readings. They will also synthesize the material and include at least two questions for discussion at the end of the reflection paper. Rather than clarifying material, the questions for discussion will focus on the application of the material in social work practice.

Requiring students to reflect on the readings before class will ensure that they are prepared for the application and discussion of the material. At the beginning of the class, the instructor should divide the students into groups and give them time (10-20 minutes depending on class size) to discuss the questions they identified in their papers. The instructor should monitor the group dialogue and end this discussion by summarizing the small discussions for the entire class. Additionally, the instructor should collect, read, grade, and provide comments on each of the student papers. Grades will depend on how well students demonstrate understanding of the material, critically examine the material, incorporate all three articles into their papers, and provide questions that apply the material to social work practice.

After the reflective discussion, the instructor will review and hand out information detailing: (a) demographics about Muslims in the United States, (b) core tenets of the Muslim faith, and (c) a brief history of the Muslim faith (see Appendix). Afterwards, the entire class will discuss contemporary issues faced by Muslims living in the United States. The instructor can utilize the following questions to generate discussion:

1. How will you know if an individual identifies as a Muslim?
2. How might one's Muslim identity intersect with other aspects of identity such as race, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability, and so forth?
3. What are some stereotypes about Muslims?
4. How has the perception of Muslims in the United States changed since 9/11?
5. What are some examples of discrimination faced by Muslims living in the United States today?
6. What should social workers consider when working with Muslim clients?

The instructor should ensure that all of the students participate in the class discussion, and also provide time for students to identify and discuss any concerns they have about working with Muslim clients.

Finally, the students will role-play a case with a Muslim client. Students will be in pairs for this activity and will begin by reading and making notes about the provided case study from the Hamdan article. During the first part of the role-play, the identified social worker will complete the spiritual and/or religious component of a social work assessment. The second part of the role-play will focus on completing a treatment plan with the client, including creating goals and measurable objectives. This role-play will allow for all of the students to participate in the social worker's decision-making process through the use of "time out." Either student can call a "time out" to discuss what to do in a given situation. Moreover, the client can stop the role-play to ask the social worker questions about certain choices or to point out his or her observations of the situation. After each group is finished, the instructor should lead the class in a discussion and debriefing of this role-play. The discussion should focus on: (a) students' ease in completing the role-play, (b) what worked and did not work in the role play, (c) what they learned from the role-play, (d) how their experiences fit in with the class readings or handouts, and (e) what they would do differently in future practice with Muslim clients.

V. Additional class activities and assignments:

One alternative to this module is for the students to discuss their reflective papers as an entire class. Small groups may be preferable to give each student sufficient time to talk with their classmates. However, an entire group discussion allows exposure of more diverse views.

A second alternative is to allow students to discuss their concerns about working with Muslim clients in their small groups. Some students may be hesitant discuss their own apprehensions in the large class setting. Additionally, giving students time to think about and write out specific worries before discussion them may promote a more reflective discussion. The instructor can also take a moment to address or ease concerns when necessary.

A third alternative is to have two students complete the role-play in front of the class. This would allow the instructor to better monitor and provide feedback during the role-play exercise. Additionally, the instructor can stop the role-play when necessary to allow the other students to provide feedback and ideas. Instructors who utilize this alternative should consider possible anxiety or stress experienced by those who act out the role-play in front of the class.

Certainly, this module can be modified for other courses or settings. For example, in an assessment course, the role-play can focus solely on the assessment. Rather than just role-playing the spiritual and/or religious part of the assessment, the students can go through the entire assessment. If this module is utilized in a family course, the focus can be on family interactions and culture. For example, the students can incorporate family theory and techniques into a role-play with a Muslim family. Finally, at a Christian university, the module can include additional information regarding differences between Christianity and Islam as well as issues of privilege.

References

Appleby, R. S. (2002). History in the fundamentalist imagination. *The Journal of American History, 89*(2), 498-511.

Carolan, M. T., Bagherinia, G., Juhari, R., Himelright, J., & Mouton-Sanders, M. (2000). Contemporary Muslim families: Research and practice. *Contemporary Family Therapy, 22*(1), 67-79.

Council on Social Work Education. (2008). *Educational policy and accreditation standards.* Retrieved July 23, 2009, from http://www.cswe.org/NR/rdonlyres/2A81732E-1776-4175-AC42-65974E96BE66/0/2008EducationalPolicyandAccreditationStandards.pdf.

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Nadir, A., & Dziegielewski, S. F. (2001). Islam. In M. Van Hook, B. Hugen, & M. Aguilar (Eds.), *Spirituality within religious traditions in social work practice* (pp. 146-166). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks Cole.

The Pew Research Center. (2007, May 22). *Muslim Americans: Middle class and mostly mainstream.* Retrieved September 21, 2009, from http://people-press.org/report/329/muslim-americans-middle-class-and-mostly-mainstream.

Appendix
A Summary of the Muslim Faith

Demographics for Muslims in the United States
Some scholars estimate that there are four to six million Muslims in the United States (Carolan, Bagherinia, Juhari, Himelright, & Mouton-Sanders, 2000) while others put the number at just over two million (The Pew Research Center, 2007). According to the Pew Research Center, 65 percent of Muslims currently living in the United States were born in another country, with the majority being from the Arab region. Of the 35 percent of Muslims who were born in the United States, 60 percent converted to Islam rather than being born into the faith and about half are African American (The Pew Research Center). Finally, Muslims worldwide tend to be divided into two groups, Sunni and Shiite. Sunnis make up about 90 percent of Muslims in the world and 80 percent of Muslims in the United States (Hodge, 2005).

Core Tenets of the Muslim Faith
Islam, a word which means submission to Allah, is "more than a religion; it actually provides a framework for human living and development" (Nadir & Dziegielewski, 2001, p. 149). There are two main sources that guide the Muslim faith: (a) the Qur'an, God's revelation to Muhammad, and (b) the Hadith, a compilation of the teachings and traditions of Muhammad (Nadir & Dziegielewski). Based on these texts, Muslims believe that they should submit to Allah, live a righteous moral life, turn away from evil, and seek eternal life in Paradise. Additionally, the Five Pillars of Islam are duties or obligations for all practicing Muslims (Hodge, 2005; Nadir & Dziegielewski). These are: the Declaration of Faith (shahadah), praying five times each day (salat), charity (zakat), fasting during Ramadan (sawm), and pilgrimage to Makkah (hajj). Finally, it is important to note that Muslims traditionally do not eat pork, do not drink alcohol or use drugs, and believe in modesty. To this end, Muslim women will traditionally cover everything but their face, hands, and feet when in the presence of any male that they are eligible to marry, and men will cover themselves from the navel to the knees (Nadir & Dziegielewski).

A Brief History of the Muslim Faith
The Prophet Muhammad is the founder of Islam, and his teachings have influenced millions over the past 14 centuries (Nadir & Dziegielewski, 2001). A descendent of Abraham, Muhammad was born in Makkah in 570 C.E. (Nadir & Dziegielewski). At the age of 40, Muhammad reported being visited by the angel Gabriel who instructed him to bring God's message to all people.
Today Muslims typically identify as Sunni or Shiite. Sunni Muslims, who currently make up 90 percent of Muslims worldwide, recognize all of the first four caliphs or leaders who succeeded Muhammad (Appleby, 2002). This Sunni structure of authority began to crumble when the Ottoman Empire was defeated in World War I (Appleby, 2002). Currently residing mainly in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, Shiite Muslims believe that leadership should have passed directly to Muhammad's relatives when he died, and were devastated when their leader, the Twelfth Imam, disappeared in 931 (Abbpeby). Shiites have had no leadership structure in place from 931 C.E. until 1978 when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini became the Shiite authority (Appleby). Today the split between Sunni and Shiite Muslims continues.