I. COURSE DOMAIN AND BOUNDARIES

This course is designed to facilitate emerging social workers’ awareness of injustice and inequities in contemporary American society, with a special emphasis on understanding the root causes of social inequality and with an aim toward liberation for stigmatized, marginalized and oppressed peoples. While the course is grounded in the U.S. context, international social, economic and political forces will also inform the course content and class discussions. The course begins with readings and discussion about the economic underpinning of structural injustices and then applies multiple “lenses” to understanding the experiences of stigmatized, marginalized or oppressed people. These lenses draw attention to issues related to age, ability status, class status, race and ethnicity, sex, gender, sexual orientation, spirituality and religion. The course will emphasize critical self-awareness, intersectionality and promote understanding of both privilege and oppression.

II. MSW COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED IN THIS COURSE

| Demonstrate ethical and professional behavior | C1 | Reinforced |
| Engage in diversity and difference in practice | C2 | Emphasized |
| Advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice | C3 | Emphasized |
| Engage with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities | C6 | Reinforced |
III. BROWN SCHOOL ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Integrity: If a faculty member or student suspects that academic or professional integrity has been violated, they are required to submit an Academic Integrity or Professional Integrity Violation form found on Inside Brown for review by the Assistant Dean of the program. The Assistant Dean or designated representative will aid in the investigation of the violation, which includes but is not limited to gathering relevant evidence; conversations with the instructor, student(s) involved, witnesses, and others as necessary. Depending on the seriousness of the case, the Assistant Dean may choose to refer the matter directly to the University Student Conduct Board. This referral procedure will generally be followed if it is believed that the penalty is likely to involve suspension or expulsion from the University. The Assistant Dean for the program or designated representative will offer to meet privately with the student(s) against whom the complaint has been made. It is the student’s responsibility to familiarize themselves with the behaviors that constitute an academic integrity violation requiring referral.

Student Handbook 2019

Accommodations: If you have a learning, sensory, or physical disability or any other diagnosis that requires accommodations and/or assistance in lectures, reading, written assignments, and/or exam taking, please work with the Disability Resource Center, a University-wide resource that provides academic accommodations support and referrals. After requesting academic accommodations by providing appropriate documentation, students approved for accommodations will provide an Accommodation Letter to the instructor and are encouraged to work directly with the instructor to discuss specific course needs. The student’s Academic Advisor and/or the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs can support a student through this process.

Pronouns: The Brown School embraces and promotes gender expansiveness as reflective of the lived experiences of many students, staff, faculty and members of our expanded community. The correct use of an individual’s pronouns is a critical part of an individual's identity and of building an inclusive community. Students, faculty and staff are encouraged to use pronouns during introductions, are expected to use expressed pronouns of all Brown School community members, and are encouraged to apologize when mistakes are made. Educational resources are available at: https://campuslife.wustl.edu/lgbtqia/lgbt-resources/gender-pronouns/

English Language Proficiency: If your English language proficiency is such that you may need special assistance in lectures, reading, written assignments, and/or exam taking, please communicate these needs to your instructor who may refer you to the Brown Communications Lab. If you would like help seeking additional English language resources, please visit the Global Programs Suite in Brown 309. You may also find the Academic Assistance resources available through the Office for International Students and Scholars to be helpful.

Professional Use of Electronic Devices in the Classroom: Computers or other electronic devices, including “smart pens” (devices with an embedded computer and digital audio recorder that records the classroom lecture/discussion and links that recording to the notes taken by the
student), may be used by students at the discretion of the faculty member to support the learning activities in the classroom. These activities include taking notes and accessing course readings under discussion. If a student wishes to use a smart-pen or other electronic device to audio record lectures or class discussions, they must notify the instructor in advance of doing so. Permission to use recording devices is at the discretion of the instructor, unless this use is an accommodation approved by Disability Resources.

Nonacademic use of laptops and other devices and use of laptops or other devices for other coursework is distracting and seriously disrupts the learning process for other people in the classroom. Neither computers nor other electronic devices are to be used in the classroom during class for nonacademic reasons or for work on other coursework. Nonacademic use includes emailing, texting, social networking, playing games, instant messaging, and use of the Internet. Work on other coursework may include, but is not limited to, use of the Internet, writing papers, using statistical software, analyzing data, and working on quizzes or exams. The nonacademic use of cell phones during class time is prohibited, and they should be set on silent before class begins. In the case of an emergency, please step out of the room to take the call. The instructor has the right to hold students accountable for meeting these expectations, and failure to do so may result in a loss of participation or attendance points, a loss of the privilege of device use in the classroom, or being asked to leave the classroom.

Religious Holidays: The Brown School recognizes the individual student’s choice in observing religious holidays that occur during periods when classes are scheduled. Students are encouraged to arrange with their instructors to make up work missed as a result of religious observance, and instructors are asked to make every reasonable effort to accommodate such requests.

IV.  WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC SUPPORT POLICIES

Accommodations based upon relationship or sexual violence, including sexual harassment and stalking: The University is committed to offering reasonable accommodations to students who are victims of relationship or sexual violence. Students are eligible for accommodations regardless of whether they seek criminal or disciplinary action. Depending on the specific nature of the allegation, such accommodations may include but are not limited to implementation of a no-contact order, emergency housing, course/classroom assignment changes, assignment extensions and other academic support services. If you need to request such accommodations, please direct your requests to rsvpcenter@wustl.edu or call directly to 314-935-3445. There are four licensed RSVP counselors who serve as confidential resources. However, to implement requests for accommodations, limited information will be shared with the appropriate university administrator and/or faculty. The University will maintain as confidential any accommodations or protective measures provided to an individual student so long as it does not impair the ability to provide such measures.

If a student comes to me to discuss or disclose an instance of sexual assault, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence or stalking, or if I otherwise observe or become aware of such an allegation, I will keep the information as private as I can, but as a faculty member of Washington University, I am required to immediately report it to my Department Chair or Dean or directly to Ms. Jessica Kennedy, the University’s Title IX
Director. If you would like to speak with directly Ms. Kennedy directly, she can be reached at (314) 935-3118, jw kennedy@wustl.edu, or by visiting the Title IX office in Umrath Hall. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards or by contacting WUPD at (314) 935-5555 or your local law enforcement agency. See: Title IX

You can also speak confidentially and learn more about available resources at the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Center by calling (314) 935-3445 for an appointment or visiting the 4th floor of Seigle Hall. See: RSVP Center

**Bias Reporting:** The University has a process through which students, faculty, staff and community members who have experienced or witnessed incidents of bias, prejudice or discrimination against a student can report their experiences to the University’s Bias Report and Support System (BRSS) team. See: brss.wustl.edu.

**Mental Health:** Mental Health Services’ professional staff members work with students to resolve personal and interpersonal difficulties, many of which can affect the academic experience. These include conflicts with or worry about friends or family, concerns about eating or drinking patterns, and feelings of anxiety and depression. See Mental Health Resources.

**Center for Diversity and Inclusion (CDI):** The Center of Diversity and Inclusion (CDI) supports and advocates for undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students from underrepresented and/or marginalized populations, creates collaborative partnerships with campus and community partners, and promotes dialogue and social change. One of the CDI’s strategic priorities is to cultivate and foster a supportive campus climate for students of all backgrounds, cultures and identities. See: diversityinclusion.wustl.edu/

**Additional Issues or Concerns:** If you feel that you need additional supports in order to be successful in your time at Brown, beyond the mentioned accommodations, please contact your Academic Advisor or Danielle Bristow, Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs. They can assist you in navigating a myriad of concerns.

**V. READINGS**


Helms, J. E. (2019). *A race is a nice thing to have: A guide to being a White person or understanding the White persons in your life.* (3rd Ed.). Cognella Series on Advances in Culture, Race, and Ethnicity.
* The authors have requested that we not refer to this book as “Adams et al.” so that the collaborative nature of this project is not undermined. So, for shorthand in our syllabus, we will refer to this as our “social justice reader.”

All of these books are available through various online means, and will be on reserve at the library. All other course readings will be provided through our Canvas site. Please let us know if you are having any trouble locating readings.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF COURSE

This class will meet once a week for 3 hours and consist of lecture, large and small group discussion, and experiential exercises. Guest speakers and audiovisual material will also be used to enhance students’ learning opportunities. Twice during the semester class hours will be used to work on assignments, given their sequential and multifaceted nature.

VII. ROLE OF FACULTY AND STUDENT

Class Participation: Attendance at class meetings is crucial to your learning. Grades for participation will be based on the following considerations: 1) attendance (e.g., on-time arrival, returning promptly from breaks, attending the entire class); 2) thoughtful contribution to discussions (e.g., quality of contributions rather than quantity, listening and responding constructively to others’ comments, making positive contributions to the learning environment of the class); and 3) demonstrated attention to and reflection on the course readings. If you are unable to attend class due to an extenuating circumstance, please let me know ahead of time.

Course Assignments: Late assignments are discouraged for numerous reasons, including the sequential nature of assignments; the importance of managing time effectively to complete written tasks in both academic and practice settings; and the importance of completing the semester in a timely manner to allow you to practice self-care during your break. In the event of a HIGHLY extenuating circumstance, please contact me at least 2 days prior to the due date to discuss an extension. In order to receive full credit for assignments, the assignments need to be turned in on time. For each day that an assignment is late, I will deduct 2 points off the possible points for that assignment.

Writing: Your written work is not solely a reflection of your thinking; the condition it is in reflects you as a professional. Please turn in work that you feel is the best reflection of you as a professional and as a social work student at Washington University. Please feel free to schedule time to meet with me or Braveheart if you would like assistance with conceptualizing and preparing your assignments. We expect that papers will follow the American Psychological Association Manual’s 6th edition (APA, 2009) format for cited references and style and that they will have accurate spelling and grammar. I highly recommend purchasing this book for your reference during graduate school. Please also proofread written assignments thoroughly.

A word about grades: Grades are not a reflection of your value as a person. Grades reflect the reality of balancing school with other responsibilities, as well as your level of effort. Grades also
reflect the extent to which the content of a course fits with your existing knowledge and skills, which will vary from course to course. What is most important is that you grow and learn.

**Student evaluations of the course:** Ideally, this course will be a collaborative process that fulfills the course objectives, is relevant to your emerging practice, and meets your learning goals. This aim requires your ongoing evaluation and feedback throughout the course. Additionally, formal evaluations will be completed at mid-semester and at the completion of the course.

**Email:** Please check your email (via Canvas) regularly. This is the primary way that we will communicate with you outside of class.

**Teaching Assistant:** We are very fortunate to have Braveheart Gillani as our teaching assistant for this course. Braveheart’s role is to participate in and at times facilitate class meetings, consult and meet with students outside of class about the material and assignments, and provide feedback and suggested grades to the instructor for all assignments.

VIII. ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
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<td>#1: Letter to Self</td>
<td>September 3 (in class)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>#2: Social Identities and Self-Awareness Paper</td>
<td>October 13 (email to Braveheart by 5pm)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3: Privilege Dialogue Paper</td>
<td>November 17 (email to Braveheart by 5pm)</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4: Current Event Small Group Facilitation</td>
<td>Weeks 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>#5: Working Toward Liberation Group Case Presentation</td>
<td>Weeks 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>15</td>
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</table>

**Assignment #1: Letter to Self**

**Due:** September 3  
**Length:** Up to you

This assignment focuses on your development and growth as a professional social worker in the areas of: a) professional identity, b) critical use of self and self-awareness, c) engaging diversity and difference in practice, and d) your understanding of issues related to social justice.

Write an *informal* letter to yourself and reflect on your goals for this first semester of graduate school in social work. You may reflect on your orientation activities and experiences, past personal and professional experiences, and hopes and fears you have as you begin to develop your identity as a master’s level social work professional. Address at least one aspect of each of the following: 1) strengths that you will bring to your social work practice; 2) weaknesses, vulnerabilities, or potential blind spots; 3) biases and assumptions that you bring to your practice; and 4) articulate one specific area for growth that you want to take on in this class to
challenge and stimulate your own positive development as a social work professional. Feel free to add encouragement, humor, and inspiration for your future self! Bring these letters to class in a sealed envelope. I will return them to each of you at the end of the semester.

**Assignment #2: Social Identities and Self-Awareness Paper**

**Due:** October 13 by 5pm (e-mail to Braveheart)

**Length:** 8 pages

Social workers operate under a code of anti-oppression ethics. However, embodying this code of ethics in our daily practice requires a lifetime of growth and a commitment to critical reflectivity (Kondrat, 1999) where we move beyond simple awareness of our many social identities and statuses. This assignment challenges you to begin thinking critically, or pushes you to continue to think more deeply, about your own identities as they are relevant in your social work practice—in policy, community work, advocacy, social administration, and direct practice with families or individuals.

We all have multiple identities. Some of these identities are privileged, honored, nurtured, and normalized in society; others are oppressed, stigmatized, marginalized and disregarded. Some of these identities we chose, some of these identities we do not chose. This paper asks you to think critically and holistically about who you are and where you are from.

Think about your many identities and choose two to focus on in this paper. There are two requirements: a) they must be in two different identity domains (e.g., a race identity, a class identity); and b) one must be an identity that has a privileged status and one must be a less privileged or even stigmatized or oppressed identity.

Please use the following questions to guide your paper. You need to address the main issues in parts (a) through (e), but you do not need to answer every single question I pose. Choose the ideas and queries that seem most relevant to you, your identities, and where you are at this stage in your social work training. You may structure your paper however you like, as long as you address these keys areas and provide a clear introduction and conclusion and use sub-headings.

a) Describe these identities. What do these identities mean to you or not mean to you and why? Are you proud of them both? How is one privileged in society and the other not? Give examples. Is it always this way, or does it change in different settings (like in your family, at school, in social service settings)? Does this affect how you feel toward either of these statuses or how you relate to people who also share these identities?

b) What biases, preferences, beliefs, insights, strengths, and vulnerabilities come from these identities and experiences? Are they aligned or are there conflicts between the two identities?

c) How do you think these identities and experiences will help or hinder your social work practice? Will people share either of these identities in your field settings and how might this affect your practice? Think broadly here about colleagues and classmates, not just clients.
d) If you have concerns about any biases as impediments to your practice, what must you work to change in order to enhance your ability to be an ethical social worker? Use the NASW code of ethics here to guide and inform what you will need to target for ethical social work practice.

e) Reference and use the Kondrat (1999) article and our class discussion on critical reflectivity to guide your critical discussion in this paper. You may note different forms of self-awareness that you feel you have achieved, or are still striving for, as you reflect on these two identities as embedded within broader socio-political and cultural contexts.

Assignment #3: Dialogue about Privilege

Due: November 17 by 5pm (e-mail to Braveheart)

Length: 6 pages

This assignment builds upon some of your thinking in Assignment #2.

Through the process of writing your first paper, you will have thought about one form of privilege that you experience in the social world. In thinking about this form of privilege, create a list of four or five questions you would like to pose in a conversation with other people who share this form of privilege with you.

I would then like you to engage in a dialogue (minimum 1 hour) with a group of people outside of class (a group of friends, family members, co-workers, fellow students, etc.) who share the privileged identity you chose to explore (e.g. non-disabled, White, male, cisgender, heterosexual, middle/upper class, citizen/American born, Christian, etc.). The dialogue is to center around sharing what you have been learning/thinking/feeling about the topic and learning about others’ experiences/thoughts/feelings related to that particular form of privilege.

I recommend that you audio record your conversations (though this is not required). If you choose to record the conversations, make sure to ask for everyone’s consent beforehand. As you prepare to write your reflection paper, having the dialogue available to reference and quote in your paper will make the writing process easier and you will also have a wealth of data readily available to use in your paper.

In this reflection paper I would like you to present and discuss: a) the questions you chose to ask the group; b) the nature of people’s responses to your questions (did they have a lot to say about some things and not others? Did any questions surprise people, or seem to make anyone comfortable or uncomfortable?); c) the interpersonal dynamics that occurred during the experience and/or the dynamics that you discovered later by reflecting on the process (e.g. did sub-groups form during the discussion, how did people interact with you and each other directly? Any notable non-verbal cues?); d) your own process of self-discovery during the preparation, discussion, and analysis of the dialogue; and e) how this dialogue relates to the topics we have covered in the course so far, and how this experience will impact your practice as a social worker.
Assignment #4: Current Event Small Group Facilitation

Due: Weeks 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14

During the weeks when we examine a diversity lens, part of class time will be devoted to small group discussion on current events and their connection to our readings. Each student will be expected to facilitate this small group one time during the semester. I will email students in the first week of the semester with the days that you will lead groups. On your assigned day, bring a discussion guide that includes: 1) information about a current event or news story relevant to that week’s lens (make sure to bring copies of the news article, blog, video, or other media to share with the group); and 2) three thoughtful questions linking the current event to our readings for the week. You will use these questions to guide a small group discussion for about 30 minutes. Make sure to bring me an extra copy of your materials. You will receive points for the relevance of your current event/news story to the week’s topic, the quality of your discussion questions and completing the group facilitation.

Assignment #5: Working Toward Liberation: Group Case Presentation

Due: Weeks 6, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15

In Week 2 of the course, I will assign you to a working group to develop a case presentation related to one of the lens topics in this course. I will provide 2 opportunities for you to meet with your group in class (30 minutes each) but I also expect you to communicate outside of class when preparing your presentation.

First, read pages 604-634 in our social justice reader on your own.

This assignment then asks you to work with your group to develop a 45-minute presentation and class discussion about a case that demonstrates working toward liberation with respect to the particular lens we are examining that week.

Choosing a case: You may choose a social movement, an individual, a group, a project, an agency, a campaign, a law, an organization, etc., that promotes social justice and supports human diversity in an area directly related to the topic assigned to your group. You may consult with me or Braveheart during your class work time as you do your research about a potential case to present.

Your case presentation should provide: a) historical background (what are the social, economic and cultural contexts for this case?); b) describe the nature of this case (is this an organization, a grassroots movement, an individual’s life work, a legal movement, etc.?), what is its mission and main actions? Describe its origins, how has it evolved, challenges to its existence, funding support, political challenges, etc.; and c) your motivation for presenting this case with your colleagues, what inspired your group to choose this case, how it applies to our course readings, and what your colleagues can learn from this case for their own development as social workers.

This can be a multimedia presentation with a range of methods and materials that you think will
be engaging to your audience (which may or may not be technological). For example, you can use a combination of lecture, experiential exercises, brief videos or audios, and group activities. Braveheart and I are happy to consult with you on all aspects of the assignment. Creativity is encouraged!

**Basic grading criteria for all assignments:**

Grading criteria for written papers will include the extent to which:
1) each aspect of the assignment is addressed;
2) thoughtful analysis is presented;
3) ideas are well-organized and communicated clearly;
4) relevant literature is used and documented to support the analysis and ideas; and
5) appropriate grammar, spelling, and APA formatting of citations and references are used in all written materials.

**Grades:** Given the total possible value of class participation and each of the assignments described previously, final grades will follow the scale below:

- 94 and above  A
- 90-93       A-
- 87-89       B+
- 84-86       B
- 80-83       B-
- 77-79       C+
- 74-76       C
- 70-73       C-
- 69 and below F

**IX. COMPETENCY ALIGNMENT TO ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE ACTIVITIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADED ASSIGNMENTS</th>
<th>Competencies</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social Identities and Self-Awareness Paper</td>
<td>C1, C2</td>
<td>Knowledge, Skills, Cognitive and Affective Processes, Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privilege Dialogue Paper</td>
<td>C1, C2, C6</td>
<td>Knowledge, Cognitive and Affective Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Event Small Group Facilitation</td>
<td>C2, C3, C6</td>
<td>Knowledge, Skills, Cognitive and Affective Processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Toward Liberation: Group Case Presentation</td>
<td>C1, C2, C3, C6</td>
<td>Knowledge, Skills, Cognitive and Affective Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>C1, C2, C6</td>
<td>Skills, Cognitive and Affective Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COURSE ACTIVITIES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Documentary films and critical discussion: e.g. intersectionality, LGBTQ issues, disability rights, U.S. economic history</td>
<td>C2, C3</td>
<td>Knowledge, Cognitive and Affective Processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class lectures and discussion: e.g. privilege, oppression, social identities</td>
<td>C1, C2, C3</td>
<td>Knowledge, Cognitive and Affective Processes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

X. COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1: August 27

Introductions and Course Overview

Week 2: September 3

Foundational Perspectives & Themes

Readings:


-Introduction, Chapters 1, 2 & 3

Week 3: September 10

Foundational Perspectives & Themes

Readings:


-Chapters 4, 5, & 6

Week 4: September 17

Foundational Perspectives & Themes

Moving Toward Liberation Group Work Time: 30 minutes
Readings:


- Chapters 7 & 8

**Week 5: September 24**

**Lens: Age**

**Moving Toward Liberation Group Work Time: 30 minutes**

Readings:

Social justice reader: p. 545-559; 567-572


**Week 6: October 1**

**Moving Toward Liberation Group Presentation: Age**

**Lens: Ability Status**

Readings:

Social justice reader: p. 467-480; 523-531


**Week 7: NO CLASS MEETING**
Use class hours this week to prepare your Social Identities and Self-Awareness Paper. We are available for consultation as you work on this assignment.

- Please also consider attending the first annual *Racial Equity Summit in St. Louis* on October 10-11, sponsored by The Clark-Fox Policy Institute, FOCUS St. Louis, Forward Through Ferguson, the St. Louis Promise Zone, and the United Way of Greater St. Louis. More information about this event will be shared in the beginning of the semester.

**Week 8: NO CLASS (Fall Break)**

**Week 9: October 22**

**Moving Toward Liberation Group Presentation: Ability Status**

**Lens: Class status**

Readings:

Social justice reader: p. 163-169; 185-191


**Week 10: October 29**

**Moving Toward Liberation Group Presentation: Class status**

**Lens: Race and Ethnicity**

Readings:


Week 11: November 5

Lens: Race and Ethnicity

Guest lecture: Scholars from the Buder Center for American Indian Studies

Readings:

Social justice reader: 102-121; 126-128


-Read pages 39-49


Week 12: NO CLASS MEETING

Please use class hours this week to prepare your Privilege Dialogue Paper. We will be available to consult as you work on this assignment.

Week 13: November 19

Moving Toward Liberation Group Presentation: Race and Ethnicity

Lens: Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation

Readings:

Social justice reader: 341-354; 362-367; 497-502


Week 14: November 26

Moving Toward Liberation Group Presentation: Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation

Lens: Spirituality and Religion
Readings:
Social justice reader: 247-265; 278-291

**Week 15: December 3**

Working Toward Liberation Group Presentation: Spirituality and Religion

Putting It All Together

Readings:


- Chapter 9 & Epilogue

**Week 16: December 10**

[To be determined]