

I. Course Description

This course will consider how anxiety is experienced by individuals and groups in this time of global uncertainty and how ministers, spiritual directors and counselors can assist those individuals and groups with resolving their experience of anxiety effectively. Currently, in the face of significant climate change, pandemic and political unrest, humanity is facing psychological and spiritual crises that challenge what is understood about anxiety theologically and psychologically. Historically, anxiety has been regarded as a debilitating experience, state of being and disorder that impairs healthy psychological functioning and diminishes healthy spirituality and meaning-making. To understand anxiety and assist persons and groups experiencing its effects, a review of its theological and psychological foundation is critical along with considering the spiritual and psychological resources and skills necessary for resolving its debilitating effects. Attention will be paid to the historical integration of the spiritual and psychological dynamics of anxiety and the contemporary tools and techniques used to address both the spiritual and psychological dimension of anxiety to effect healthy resolution.

II. Course Objectives

At the end of this course, learners should be able on a beginning or competent level to:

- describe the development of the conceptualization of anxiety as it is understood philosophically/theologically and clinically.
- describe how anxiety is experienced in the particular circumstances of significant climate change, pandemic and political unrest
- identify at least three different approaches to the treatment of anxiety and its application in the current situation of significant climate change, pandemic and political unrest
- describe at least five techniques pastoral theologians and clinicians can implement effectively to address the anxiety experienced by persons they serve

III. Contribution to MTSO's Educational Mission and Degree Outcomes

Given the breadth and depth of effects on the human population of the crisis brought about by the various challenges presented by significant climate change, pandemic and political unrest, students in all degree programs need an opportunity to develop a comprehensive understanding of anxiety and how to deal with it effectively. Virtually all students will be dealing with the effects of the anxiety generated by responses to these circumstances regardless of the setting in which they find themselves working professionally. This course can provide a foundation for developing the appropriate perspectives and skills necessary to provide support and care for those suffering from the anxiety associated with these circumstances, both now and into an indeterminate future.

Specific Degree Outcomes

MDIV: Exercise leadership through contextually grounded practices of worship, theological reflection, and missional and prophetic witness that promote personal wholeness, faithful and hospitable community, and sustainable justice.

Provide spiritual accompaniment and care that manifests relational empathy, healthy personal boundaries, and holistic pastoral presence.

MAPT: Demonstrate competence in a variety of practices that nurture the intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual flourishing of faith communities.

Develop ministry resources and plans responding to a contextual need or issue from the perspective of the student's specialization.

MTS: Engage in creative and critical reflection on the contemporary world from the perspective of this discipline.

MASJ: Demonstrate competence in a variety of practices that nurture the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of the self.

IV. Textbooks

Required Texts

Kierkegaard, Soren (2014). *The Concept of Anxiety*. NY: Liveright.

Keller, Catherine (2025). *No Matter What: Crisis and the Spirit of Planetary Possibility*. NY: Fordham University Press.

May, Rollo. (2015). *The Meaning of Anxiety*. NY: Norton.

Miller, William. (2024). *8 Ways to Hope: Charting a Path through Uncertain Times*. NY: Guilford.

Tillich, Paul. (2014). *The Courage to Be*. New Haven: Yale.

Optional

Bader, C. and J. Baker. (2020). *Fear Itself: The Causes and Consequences of Fear in America*. NY: NYU Press.

Bingaman, K. (2007). *Treating the New Anxiety: A Cognitive-Theological Approach*
NY: Aronson.

Clark, D. A. and A. Beck (2011). *Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: Science and Practice*. NY: Guilford

Cole, A.H. (2008). *Be Not Anxious: Pastoral Care of Disquieted Souls*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Dinerstein, J. (2017). *The Origins of Cool in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Freud, S. (1990). *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. NY: Norton.

Haidt, J. (2024). *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. NY: Penguin.

Keller, C. (2021). *Facing Apocalypse: Climate, Democracy, and Other Last Chances*
Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Lacan, J. (2014). *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*, Book X. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Lartey, E. and H. Moon (2020). *Postcolonial Images of Spiritual Care: Challenges of Care in a Neoliberal Age*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick.

Mack, B.L. (2022). *The Myth of Christian Supremacy: Restoring Our Democratic Ideals*. Minneapolis: Fortress.

Mack, B.L. (2011). *Christian Mentality: The Entanglements of Power, Violence and Fear (Religion in Culture)*. London: Routledge

Mack, B.L. (2019). *Critical Times for America: The Politics of Cultural Amnesia (Westar Studies)*. Eugene, OR: Cascade.

Mack, B.L. (2008). *Myth and the Christian Nation: A Social Theory of Religion (Religion in Culture)*. London: Routledge.

Moore, S. D. (2014). *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation: Sex and Gender, Empire and Ecology (Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study)*. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Neal-Barnett, A. (2003). *Soothe Your Nerves: The Black Woman's Guide to Understanding and Overcoming Anxiety, Panic, and Fears*. NY: Fireside.

Roosevelt III, K. (2024). *The Nation That Never Was: Reconstructing America's Story*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wachs, A.M. and J.D. Schaff (2021). *Age of Anxiety: Meaning, Identity, and Politics in 21st-Century Film and Literature*. London: Lexington.

Wray, B. (2022). *Generation Dread: Finding Purpose in an Age of Climate Anxiety*. NY: The Experiment.

Yalom, I. (1980). *Existential Psychotherapy*. NY: Basic.

V. Course Requirements and Assessment of Student Learning

Reading and Conversation

Supplemental Book Responses

Select *two books* from the Optional Book List and read them for specific application to the material considered during the course. Upon completion of the reading, write a response to each. *These are NOT book reports. I already know what the books say, I am interested in YOUR interpretation of them based on the following guidelines:*

- A critical analysis of how the book relates to the overall material of the course or a particular aspect of the course. Bring your best thinking and creativity.

- A description of how your knowledge base and repertoire of therapy skills is expanding and refining as a result of a critical read of the book. Focus on your awareness of your developing professional identity and skill set.

- Present a summary of how you engaged the book personally and the challenges it presents as you reflect on your overall participation in the course. *Due April 1st and 22nd.*

Participation

Weekly, post a *minimum of two responses* to discussions included in the Discussion section of Populi. The instructor or any participant in the course may generate the discussion topics. This participation allows for ongoing contact and conversation among class participants that is limited due to reduced class time and lack of presence on campus. **This participation will continue to April 29th.**

Course Response – Present a critical description and analysis of how you have been addressing the anxiety expressed and demonstrated by the persons you have been serving over the course of the semester, identifying the specific challenges this has presented to you, how you have addressed these challenges, which have you resolved to some degree of satisfaction and which continue to frustrate. Then present a proposal for how you intend to address the anxiety that you anticipate being expressed and demonstrated by the persons you will be serving (perhaps the same group). Conclude with a description of your own responses to our current social/cultural/political/spiritual circumstances, how they have influenced your work and how you anticipate they might do so in the future. **This is due May 6th.**

There will be a Mid-Term exam and a Final exam.

VI. Course Schedule

January	28	
February	4	Kierkegaard Chs 1-3 Keller, <i>No Matter What</i> , Ch 12
	11	Kierkegaard Chs 4-5
	18	May Chs 5-7
	25	May Chs 8 and 11-12
March	4	Tillich
	11	Mid Term Exam Keller, <i>No Matter What</i>
	18	No Class
	25	Keller, <i>No Matter What</i>
April	1	First Book Response

	8	
	15	No Class
	22	Second Book Response
	29	Miller, <i>8 Ways to Hope</i>
May	6	
	13	Final Exam

VII. MTSO Standard Syllabus Statements

Carefully review these policies and refer to the MTSO Academic Catalog / Student Handbook for additional details. All students in every degree program are expected to become familiar with MTSO policies as listed in the most current MTSO Academic Catalog and Student Handbook, connected here. The policies listed below are in the handbook and are highlighted here because of their importance to our academic lives together.

https://www.mtso.edu/site/assets/files/2103/academic_catalog_-_student_handbook_20-21.pdf.

Class Attendance

Regular attendance is expected in all classes. In campus extend (online and hyflex), you are **REQUIRED to show your face the entire class time**, otherwise you will be considered "absent". You are expected to attend class as you would in a face-to-face classroom (not driving, cooking, folding clothes etc.). During asynchronous class time, faculty will monitor time used in the posting and responding to colleagues to track your participation. During unavoidable absences, students are responsible for missed work. An excessive number of absences may result in grade reduction or course failure, despite successful completion of all assigned work. In most cases, a student will fail a course if they are absent for 25% of the class sessions (including online meetings).

Electronic Devices

As an institution dedicated to the advancement of learning, MTSO is firmly committed to a philosophy of mutual respect. When your use of electronic devices violates that respect instructors have the right to impose appropriate grading penalties. Because of MTSO Campus Extend, a hyflex model, electronic devices are integral to learning. However, the use of such devices should be restricted to course-related purposes. General browsing of the Internet or engaging in email or social networks during class time is inappropriate. Unless there is an emergency requiring immediate attention, phone calls should be returned during classroom breaks (even if you're at your home) in an area that is not disruptive to others.

Title IX/504 ADA Statement

MTSO is committed to providing a workplace and educational environment that are free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. To ensure compliance with federal and state civil rights laws and regulations, and to affirm its commitment to promoting the goals of fairness

PC619 Anxiety in an Age of Uncertainty

Spring 2025, Tuesdays, 2:00-3:30 PM

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and equity, MTSO has developed internal policies and procedures that provide a prompt, fair, and impartial process for those involved in an allegation of discrimination or harassment on the basis of protected class status, and for allegations of retaliation. More information about the University's policy and grievance processes can be found at <https://www.mtso.edu/about-mtso/notice-nondiscrimination/>. Reports of misconduct can be made to the Title IX/504/ADA Coordinator, Kathy Dickson, kdickson@mtso.edu.

ADA / Disability Services

MTSO supports all students by encouraging self-advocacy and empowering students to help themselves, while providing a safe environment in which to do so. We commit to an inclusive learning environment and will support reasonable, documented requests for accommodations and learning adaptations. To request a reasonable accommodation, contact the director of student services, Dr. Jeremy Garber at jgarber@mtso.edu.

Documenting written work at MTSO

All written work submitted for courses at MTSO must conform to the Note-Bibliography style in the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition). For a helpful discussion of how to avoid academic misconduct, see the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) website at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/02>. Students who commit academic misconduct will be subject to penalties up to and including expulsion from the Institution.

VIII. Supporting Materials (optional)

- Bibliography (must conform to the Note-Bibliography style in the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition))
- Additional Guidelines