

Bio

Erin Prophet is Lecturer in the Department of Religion at the University of Florida. She specializes in religion and medicine. She has a PhD in religion, with a focus on Western esoteric traditions, from Rice University, Houston, Texas. She has a master's degree in public health with an epidemiology concentration from Boston University. Among her publications are "Charisma and Authority in New Religious Movements" in the *Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements* vol 2 (2016), and "Potential Influence on Clinical Trials of Long-Term Survivors of Stage IV Non-Small-Cell Lung Cancer," *Journal of the National Cancer Institute (JNCI) Cancer Spectrum* (co-lead author, June 2019).

Title

Incorporating Spirituality and Mind-Body Medicine into an Undergraduate Medical Humanities Curriculum

Abstract

Undergraduate programs in the health humanities (or medical humanities) have quintupled in the United States since 2001 (from 15 to 85). In 2016, the medical humanities was granted a CIP (Classification of Instructional Programs) code, indicating that the field is growing in importance and becoming distinct from bioethics. While the code allows for programs that explore the "religious dimensions of medicine or health," along with "religion and spiritual thought," most health humanities programs do not incorporate instruction on critical approaches to religion or spirituality. Since 2018, the author has been teaching a course called Spirituality and Health Care at the University of Florida, which is a popular elective for pre-health majors. The course asks tough questions about the role of religious or spiritual practices in health care, and exposes students to research in the field of religion and medicine, as well as the new and amorphous category of "spirituality." Students also explore the history of mind-body and integrative medicine, including the models for interaction of Eastern and indigenous medical practices with Western biomedicine. This paper presents the components of this successful course, reviews the literature demonstrating the benefits to humanistic approaches to medical education at an undergraduate level, and argues that incorporating critical approaches to spirituality and the history of medicine, including alternative medicine, can be a useful component of professional identity formation at the undergraduate level.