

One Spirit

LEARNING ALLIANCE

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT #6: Religion or Spiritual Approach Not Covered in Class One Spirit Interfaith Seminary First Year Training

Please use the bold font for your answers.

Your Name: **Scott Godlew**

Your Dean's Name: **Rev. Elizabeth Friend-Ennis**

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS:

- We recommend you identify the Religion or Spiritual Approach you would like to research and choose a *Practice* from that tradition *and* read *The Ten Challenges* first so that you have sufficient time to work with your practice(s) and reflect on the Felder reading throughout the month.

Complete all sections of the assignment within this document before uploading to Wisdom Web.	Completed? (X)
Investigate a Religion or Spiritual Approach Not Covered in Curriculum (this should be a religion or approach that is NEW to you, not one you practice or have practiced) Present what you have learned in one of the following ways: - A 3-4 page written report - A five minute oral report* - A visual presentation (PPT, eposter, video)* Write or create a piece of music, art, or creative writing that encompasses the required components * * you must include the link to any alternate method of this assignment in Section I	X
Choose a spiritual practice from the Religion or Spiritual Approach you have chosen this month. - Select at least one practice to work with the entire month before writing your reflection and experience of the practice. - Answer the questions about your experience with your chosen spiritual practice	X
Personal Reflection: Answer the questions regarding your personal reflections for the month.	X
Read <i>The Ten Challenges</i>, by Leonard Felder - Chapter 6: "What Can You Do to Prevent the Crushing of a Person's Spirit" (pp. 129-143) Write a 1-2 page reflection.	X
Feedback: Complete the presenter feedback form on Wisdom Web	X
Complete the Participation Section	X
Complete the Community Service section	X

I. Paper on a Religion Not Covered in Class

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The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with an opportunity to research something we are not able to cover in our core first year curriculum that will help you to be more aware of and knowledgeable about the diverse ways people attempt to relate to the sacred.

Research and write in your own words a 3-4 page, double-spaced overview/summary of a religion or approach to spirituality we have not covered in class this year and one that is NEW to you. Your paper can be written either in paragraph form or outline form, whichever you prefer.

Alternative methods of presenting your work:

- A five minute oral report*
 - A visual presentation (PPT, eposter, video)*
 - **Write or create** a piece of music, art, or creative writing that encompasses the required components *
- * you must **include the link** to any alternate method of this assignment in **Section I**

Your assignment should include:

- a brief historical background or context
- basic tenets or beliefs
- major figures/leaders/teachers
- scriptures and sacred writings
- major holidays or observances
- central religious or spiritual practices

Some of the religions/spiritual approaches we have not covered that you may want to explore include:

- Bahai
- Christian Science
- Integral Spirituality (based on the work of Ken Wilber)
- Jainism
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (The Mormon Church)
- New Thought Movement (Religious Science, Unity)
- Quaker Tradition
- Shintoism
- Sikhism
- Taoism
- Wicca
- Zoroastrianism

WRITE YOUR PAPER HERE or **include a link** for your Dean to access your presentation if you chose an alternative method for presenting your work.

- **The topic of my paper is “Celtic Traditions Before Christianity.” It’s too bad I need to qualify “Celtic Traditions” at all, but alas, there has been syncretization, supersession, appropriation, and other forms of “spiritual crushing” that The Sixth Commandment might have protected or prevented... Oh-My-God: The Goddess Brigid might have been the nurse-maid of Jesus...? I wonder if Brigid even dreamed that she was that crucial to the beginning of Christianity. I guess that gives us insight to the writing of the gospels... I digress...**

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- I might have liked to be Celtic. They had a season for raiding! Hey! Since we planted our crops just recently in Beltene (May 1), while we're waiting for the crops to grow, let's go see how the neighbors are doing, and... Well, say, they are doing a lot better than us, so maybe they won't mind if we help ourselves to some of the bounty... Oh, crap, they don't look happy, so maybe we better just get away with what we can take in our pockets.
- OK, so now it's harvest time (Lugnasad, August 1) for us, so we better stop fooling around and just do our work. Those others we raided will be busy with their own harvest, so I don't think they'll bother us, but just in case, we'll give some "contributions" to the goddess of sovereignty... maybe Morrigan... and while we're at it, maybe we can have an arrangement with the god of plowing/sowing/reaping, Lug, to get a prime reaping of the fruits of our labor.
- Our heritage goes way back: even back to Greek and Roman and Egyptian times. They are some of our best historians, since they keep exploring up our way, and they know how to write and keep records that future people might read. Our most knowledgeable and trusted people are a bit insular about things... secret languages... nothing much written... at least not until those Christians started infiltrating. They do a lot of writing, but you got to wonder how much they got right, and how much they twisted to represent their own interests. Some of our people are gettin' friendly and learning their ways, so our people are startin' to write things, too, but there are issues of who has influence and who helps with the writin'... and it's been quite a while since the really old ways have been really well understood – you know that telephone game, when people keep passing along a message over the phone, and then the original person don't even recognize the message that comes 'round again. Heh!
- Oh, I was sayin'... We started harvesting earlier in Lugnasad, and some crops come in later, and some crops have a second reapin', so we need to keep busy right up to Samain (November 1) to beat the bad weather. We'll get in some hunting for deer and wild boar – that's nice for the feasts, and we might do a bit more raidin' while we're out and about; no more of that when the weather gets bad.

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- The gals and the kids are coming back from the high pastures with the herds: they went up there in Beltene so the rascals would stay out of the crops we're growin' here, and there are nice pastures of stuff that's mostly good for them animals. But they need to get back here before the winter weather, and there'll be some feasting for Samain... We might even invite some of them other Celts that we raided – see if we can make amends.
- This is one of those “thin” times of the year... we get closer to them Otherworlders, and they like to keep tabs on us. We get sort of vulnerable during the bad weather, and we need the best tabs kept on us as possible. We leave food by the door for the Fairie folk to stay on their good side. Some deities known for this time of year include Tlachtga (well versed in Magic), Mongfind, with her magic and influence over kings and sovereignty. Morrigan is also a witch and part of the trio just named to guide the Samain season.
- Samain is actually the beginning of the year – the dark part. Even our days “start” when it gets dark. Things start in the dark, and that's when some of the magic happens that gets us to the light again. Sure enough...
- Imbolc! (February 1) The ewes are starting their milk, and other signs of the coming good weather are starting to show. One of our favorite goddesses is comin' 'round – Brigid! She brings in the light and healing and weather divinations... We want to know if we have to wait all the way until Beltene to plant, or if there are signs that we could start sooner – It's tricky business. Beltene is another “thin” time of the year, and them Otherworlders help us get on top of the work that needs doin'. Dagda has some influence here, as he is associated with fertility and the powers of life and death, as well as abundance. He could see “the weather and the harvest.”
- So, the cycle goes. Some of the more influential mortal humans include Druids, Seers, Bards, Poets, and Priestesses. They oversee rituals, handle theology and philosophy, perform as priests and judges, and pass along the spiritual knowledge to young candidates for these roles. They teach about mythology, theology, genealogy, the Otherworlders, and knowledge of nature,

Commented [EF1]: This is just excellent life advice.

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healing, magic, and the secret languages that carries this knowledge. There is evidence of female druids: dryadas and druidesses.

- Shamanism is distinctly identified among the likes of those just named. I am told that shamans all over the world have some things in common: perception of a three-fold cosmology; using costumes and secret languages; knowledge of the natural world; spiritual marriages with Otherworlders; shape shifting; the use of song/chant/rhythm to enter altered states. Our Druids did all that rot, and when they were subdued by the Christians, the Poets and others known as Filids took over most of it with more subtlety to evade suspicion.

Commented [EF2]: Ah! I did not know about Filids!

- Over the course of time, my people in all of our loose affiliations occupied a vast expanse of northern Europe and into Asia... what you know as Ireland and Britain, including Scotland... Gaul (France)... Spain, northern Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and into Turkey – Hey! That's a lot of territory. What does Putin know, eh? Oh, wait... Who's Putin? Whatever.
- There was a lot of variability to the ways my ancestors did things in all of these places, but a lot of what we had in common was:

- Worship of both male and female deities
- Respect for ancestors and elders
- Appreciation of the natural world
- Interconnections with Otherworlders
- Cyclical nature of time
- Immortality of The Soul
- Cosmology with a sacred center
- The cauldron, the sword, the well, the head, and the number three

Commented [EF3]: I wonder whether this impacted gender roles / values in daily life? I am assuming not so much, but I honestly don't know for sure.

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- An importance for knowledge and skill
- Respect for truth, honor, and courage.
- So, that's just sort of the tip of the iceberg, and I'll be late sending this overview to my future pal, Whispers-with-Forests, so I need to just tie a ribbon on it and get it on its way. He's supposed to send it to some Priestess to check it out, so we'll see if it gets us all into a happy place. Thanks for watchin'! ☺

Commented [EF4]: HA! ☺

II. Developing & Deepening Your Spiritual Practice: Your chosen Religion or Spiritual Approach

1. Which of the spiritual practice(s) from your chosen Religion/Spiritual approach did you choose to work with this month? (1-3 lines)
 - The goddess, Brigid, "Most High Exalted One," patroness of healing, poetry, and smithcraft, Sun Goddess... She is the focus of the Imbolc traditional festival, which occurs on the cross-quarter of Winter and Spring, commonly on Feb 1, although the actual cross-quarter comes a bit later. She was prominent in our wedding (Theresa and me, Feb. 8, 2020), and she sits on the mantel in our living room. A fire is kept burning for her in Kildare, so I would light a candle on our mantel and meditate.
2. Describe what the experience was like for you, and whether this month's spiritual practice prompted you to think about or experience a connection to Source, Religion, Spirituality or Belief in a new way. (10-12 lines)
 - As she was syncretized or superseded by Christianity to become St. Brigid, there is much of her original pagan tradition that remained, such as burning the fire at Kildare and the Imbolc festival now celebrated on Feb. 1 as Candlemas – preserving her association with the Sun and light. It is comforting to know of her importance that has been honored, even if appropriated, to provide a bridge between the old ways and the domination of culture that was arriving from Europe and

Commented [EF5]: I cannot imagine what Christianity could possibly look like without all of the symbols and traditions it co-opted from Pagan observances.

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the Roman Empire. As Saint Brigid, one of the MANY things she is patroness for is beer, and we worked a beer poem into our wedding, and the beer goblets that we used still sit on the mantel, and Theresa and I use them for Mimosas on Sunday mornings. It gives me great joy to know of all of these things as we preserve the traditions for the yearly cycle time of our wedding.

III. Personal Reflection

Upon completion of your reading of religion of your choice and working with those practices this month:

1. Are you aware of any teachings or beliefs in this month's choice of religion that stretched or challenged your current belief system? If so, how might you address this potential judgement or bias as an invitation to explore how this may prevent you from being of service to others?

- Polytheism is a stretch for me. I'm not sure how it matters, other than making things more complicated. It goes against my nature to think that there might be elements of divinity (deities) that are not unified – so I guess the strongest one wins... or the one whose attention you garner helps you... and as long as you don't upset another one, then they leave you alone... So, in the end, it seems that if one deity feels unsatisfied, it will make its displeasure known... so, maybe the one who makes life the worst for you is the one that gets your attention, and then you give a bit of attention to a deity that can help without hurting.....? I guess there are some rankings of deities, so maybe that helps. So, from the outside, if you look at divinity as a collective entity, then maybe it looks like a single phenomenon, with the lower ranking deities being able to make trouble but not out-right defy the top deity...? I guess it could explain why things go wrong.

Maybe it explains more about the divided intentions of people more than the deities...

2. What are the gifts you received from this tradition that have expanded your current belief system?

- The Celtic traditions are strongly connected to the Land and the cycles of the seasons. This seems as it should be, and relates well to my favor of Animism, although I take the monotheism on-ramp. I see all of the things that look like different deities as facets of the same "Divine All" that have a unified source of purpose, and people see things differently as a result of their Egos not really being surrendered to the big picture, and therefore, obstructing or deforming their connection to divinity.

Commented [EF6]: I definitely think you are on to something there. Just like today we say, "there's an app for that!" I imagine the Celts found a deity for every need that arose, and certainly not everyone's needs and desires were in harmony all the time.

Commented [EF7]: yes.

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- My name, Scott, in Irish Gaelic and written in Ogam, using the Knowledge of Trees:

Commented [EF8]: THAT is SO COOL.

Scott - Ogham First Name



IV. *The Ten Challenges*, by Leonard Felder - Chapter 6: "What You Can Do to Prevent the Crushing of a Person's Spirit?" (pp. 129-143)

Write a ONE to TWO PAGE, DOUBLE-SPACED reflection.

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The purpose of this paper is to be a personal reflection on the issue being raised in each chapter. It is not meant to be an academic discourse, or a critique of Felder's writing style. The issues raised are often part of the spiritual journey and the reflection paper is an invitation to delve more deeply into your own inner experience as it relates to this chapter.

- This all seems like second nature to me, but let me see if I can tease out some of the foundations in my own psycho-spiritualism that support this... I might limit my reference to [The Ever Evolving Story of Scott Godlew: Whispers-with-Forests](#) to this one place in this homework...
- I think my whole transformation over the past 5 to 10 years is based on this – but not just to “[prevent](#) the crushing of a person's spirit,” but to help others to find their wholeness... their soulful purpose... and their stewardship to their loving community and beyond.
- Every soulful/spirited being on Earth needs this desperately: people, animals, whole ecosystems, the Earth, and beyond as needed. My dream of a Great Re-Wholing of All Beings is all about this. We need to hear that “still, quiet voice” that is The Same voice for all of us coming from The One Whole that wants us all to do our parts to make The Whole as whole as it needs to be to support us all.
- We have been murdering/killing/crushing the spirit of this world for ages. Our dominionism comes with a responsibility, and that responsibility is to recognize how equally important EVERYTHING and EVERYONE is within The Whole. It is all connected – interbeing – inter-reliant – non-other-than – part of The One... It's laughable that we believe anything else, but we need to resolve all the micro-wounds, macro-wounds, and outright maliciousness just to be able to see it.
- We need companions and communities that see us as partners, and we need to find our place in the whole, and in our communities, and in the world to live like we mean it. We need elders who understand the process of *Soul-itude*² so young lives can be guided to be less ego-centric and become intimately aware of the ecological needs of our world.

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- So, let's "scale-up" The Sixth Commandment to work for the world and everyone and everything on it, in it, and around it... Maybe this is the Golden Rule of the Old Testament...?

V. Feedback

We value your feedback. If you have not done so, please fill out the **Presenter Feedback form** on Wisdom Web to share your thoughts about last month's presenter.

Optional: Are there any specific observations, reflections or concerns regarding last month's class?

- Feedback provided – written notes for the Sufi group.

VI. Participation

1. **Classes**: Please put an X in the box that indicates how you participated in last month's class.

	Saturday	Sunday
Live On Zoom	X	X
Video/Audiobook*		

* If you received an approved absence from your Dean, please indicate by what date will you watch or listen to the class sections you missed. N/A

2. **Study Group is required**: Did you meet with your study group? (**HIGHLIGHT** your answer) YES NO

Optional: Is there any feedback you'd like to share regarding your interaction with your study group?

3. **Community Visit/Connection is required**: Did you visit a spiritual/religious community this month either in person or online or speak with someone from this spiritual/religious tradition? (**HIGHLIGHT** your answer) YES NO

Optional: Is there anything you would like to share about this experience?

- Just as a point of information, I have been to a variety of yearly seasonal cycle celebrations at the UU church that are hosted by various practitioners of Paganism: Imbolc, Yule, Samaine (mostly "wintery" parts of the seasonal cycle.) There are celebrations of the 4 directions, the harvest or transition/emergence of life that is happening, and gratitude for the deities associated with the festivals of the time of year. Even Thanksgiving can be seen as this sort of celebration, although it has a number of negative elements related to European dominionism over The Americas and people who were here.

4. **If you have a Mentor**: Please indicate if you interacted with your mentor. (**HIGHLIGHT** your answer) YES NO N/A

Optional: Is there any feedback you'd like to share regarding your interaction with your mentor?

VII. Community Service

1. There is a 15-hour community service requirement to be completed by the May class. Did you offer any community service this month? (**HIGHLIGHT** your answer) YES NO

Commented [EF9]: Your UU Church sounds wonderful! Agreed about Thanksgiving. I don't know whether it was just me, or whether it was a real phenomenon, but I seemed to notice, this past year, more progressive, educational content in media around Thanksgiving this past year.

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2. If yes, please describe the type of service, the number of hours and any impressions you would like to share about your experience. (up to 10 lines)

- I am continuing with both Soul Matters group at the UU church: 6 hours

3. Please note your total number of hours of service so far this year. 23

Thank you for this, dearest Scott!

What a fun, not to mention informative, way to approach the assignment. I share much of your thinking around Polytheism, but I also really relish the idea of living in a world that is animated with mischievous, magical entities. (Hence the success of Harry Potter, I guess. I am clearly not the only one.) And thank you for educating me about Ogham! I didn't know about it, so I read just a little bit on line. I just LOVE that it is connected with trees.

Thank you also for your Felder reflection – but I am going to give you a challenge here. The Felder bit is meant to be a little more personal. A little more “what does this actually mean for my real life.” So I will ask that for the future homework, in the Felder bit, you stay away from “We need” commentary to first-person reflection. And finally, thank you for all that you shared with me in our monthly “check-in.” I am so moved by your journey – the healing of the past and the adventures of the future, and all that it holds for you and Theresa. with much love,

Elizabeth