

What is a Jewish CPE Program?

CPE learning at HSL is informed by integrated study of relevant Jewish texts and ongoing reflection on the role of Jewish cultural and religious influences on the spiritual care relationship. This happens in an organic as well as programmatic way in our context where the patient population is predominantly Jewish, the health care system is Jewish, and typically, the majority of students in the CPE cohort is Jewish.

HSL's CPE program has a unique focus on care of Jewish older adults and Jewish ethical and spiritual dimensions of aging. Special attention is given to palliative care, hospice, and Jewish understandings of end of life care.

Students teach and learn from traditional and modern Jewish sources and are supported in developing their own relationship to prayer and ritual in the spiritual care encounter. Jewish spirituality is also explored in relation to the self-sustenance of the caregiver.

Additional Jewish themes relevant to this population often addressed in a given unit are:

- Jewish aging in America
- Understanding dementia and dementia care in a Jewish context
- The Holocaust experience in health care
- Jewish spiritual assessment
- Jewish trauma and cumulative grief
- Jewish theological meaning in the human experience
- Jewish pastoral authority
- Jewish liturgical and spontaneous prayer
- Jewish medical ethics
- Jewish palliative care

Specifically Jewish content is taught by Jewish presenters.

Students write reports ("verbatim") of clinical encounters to learn more about clinical skills and to gain insight and improve their use of self as spiritual caregivers. In these verbatims students are challenged to further their understanding of Jewish spiritual care, explore their identity and authority as a spiritual caregivers, and integrate Jewish tradition appropriately and skillfully into spiritual care.

Students are also required to write reflection papers that articulate their experience of various religious/spiritual/existential themes. These include such topics as: God, illness and aging, death and bereavement, hope and redemption, gender and sexuality, vocation/commandedness, and newcomer disorientation.

An essential aspect of CPE education is group work. Students explore interpersonal and group relational dynamics as contexts for honing more effective spiritual care skills. In a predominantly Jewish group, this provides an opportunity to explore Jewish cultural patterns of relating in groups as well as diversity in Jewish identity and practice.