

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:FS 2012

Department:Religious Studies

Degree:MA

Title:Religious Literacy in the Social Work Profession

This project emphasizes the need for social workers in the United States to practice their profession with religious literacy. The phrase 'religious literacy' encompasses knowing general facts about various religions, but it also encompasses understanding the role religion plays in people's lives. Religious diversity has become a fact of life in the US. Buddhists, Mormons, Muslims, and scores of other religious adherents can be found in any major city in this country. Social workers must be able to negotiate this religiously diverse reality to effectively and professionally serve their clients. Additionally, social workers must practice with cultural sensitivity as mandated by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW). This thesis demonstrates that the academic discipline of Religious Studies provides useful theories and methodologies that social workers can use to educate themselves about the role religion plays in people's lives. Religious Studies scholars such as Robert Orsi and Thomas Tweed provide useful concepts social workers can use in their work with clients.