



BRES 3213: Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the 12 Steps

Tuesday, September 22, 2026

1:00 p.m., 2:00 p.m., 3:00 p.m.

Cone Chapel

Rachel Cox Wisdom, M.A.T., M.A. Counseling Licensure

Dr. Monte Cox, Teacher of Record

Syllabus

1. Course Description:

Richard Rohr's book *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the 12 Steps* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2011) makes the case that the 12-Step Program, founded by and for alcoholics in 1935, is rooted in biblical teaching. It has since spawned many other 12-Step programs for those recovering from addictive behaviors of various kinds. In this seminar, we will make the case that 12-Step programs belong in church.

2. Learning Outcomes: By the end of this seminar, you should be able to:

- ☐ Recite the 12 steps from memory and name a biblical principle supported by specific passages that affirms *each* of those steps.
- ☐ Explain to someone who has not read Rohr's book or the *AA Big Book 4th edition* (New York City: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001) why 12-Step programs belong in church and respond to critics who say they do not.
- ☐ Explain the phenomenon of co-dependency.
- ☐ Explain in a Reflection Essay ways in which you personally connect with the 12-Step program, either as someone with addictive tendencies or as a co-dependent.

- Critique the “Twelve Traditions” as explained in the *AA Big Book 4th edition* Appendix I, p. 561-566) from a Christian perspective
- 3. Reading Assignments: Richard Rohr, *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the 12 Steps* (Cincinnati, OH: Franciscan Media, 2011) and *AA Big Book 4th edition* (New York City: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001). (Read every chapter and testimony *except* for Chapters 2, 7, 10 and Testimonies on pages 181-199, 231-267, 276-295, 327-359, 368-375, 381-387, 398-407, 420-437, 451-458, 469-501, 531-559. You must also read Appendices I and II (p. 561-569), but not III, IV, V, VI, or VII [569-575].)
- 4. All assignments will be submitted on Canvas. Canvas course opens September 21. Last day to submit assignments is Friday October 16.

Grading

- Submit lecture notes (20%)
- 750-word book review of *Breathing Under Water: Spirituality and the 12-Steps* which demonstrates fluent familiarity with each of the Learning Outcomes listed above. (30%)
- 750-word book review of *AA Big Book 4th edition* (New York City: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, 2001) which highlights specific chapters or testimonies that were especially meaningful to you and demonstrates ways in which at least *some* of the Learning Outcomes listed above were accomplished through reading this book. (30%)
- 500-word reflection essay on your main takeaways from the course including any resolutions you are making personally having read this book and taken this seminar . (20%)

Academic Integrity Policy: Cheating in all its forms is inconsistent with Christian faith and practice and will result in sanctions up to and including dismissal from the class with a failing grade. The use of generative AI tools is not permitted for any assigned work in this class and constitutes a violation of Harding’s Academic Integrity Policy.

Assessment: Harding University, since its charter in 1924, has been strongly committed to providing the best resources and environment for the teaching-learning process. The board, administration, faculty, and staff are wholeheartedly committed to full compliance with all Criteria of Accreditation of the Higher Learning Commission as well as standards of many discipline-specific specialty accrediting agencies. The university values continuous, rigorous assessment at every level for its potential to improve student learning and achievement and for its centrality in fulfilling the stated mission of Harding. Thus, a comprehensive assessment program has been developed that includes both the academic units and the administrative and educational support units. Course-specific student learning outcomes contribute to student achievement of program-specific learning outcomes that support student achievement of

holistic university learning outcomes. All academic units design annual assessment plans centered on measuring student achievement of program learning outcomes used to sequentially improve teaching and learning processes. Additionally, a holistic assessment of student achievement of university learning outcomes is coordinated by the university Director of Assessment and Testing used to spur continuous improvement of teaching and learning.

Students with Disabilities: It is the policy for Harding University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Therefore, any student with a *documented disability* condition (e.g. physical, learning, or psychological) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the instructor and the Office of Disability Services and Educational Access at the *beginning* of each semester. If the diagnosis of the disability occurs during the academic year, the student must self-identify with the Office of Disability Services and Educational Access *as soon as possible* in order to get academic accommodations in place for the remainder of the semester. The Office of Disability Services and Educational Access is located in Room 239 in the Student Center, telephone, (501) 279-4019.