

Indoctrination, Diversity, and Teaching About Spirituality and Religion in the Workplace

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The author reflects on his experience and discusses problems in teaching a course about spirituality and religion in the workplace. Sometimes indoctrination happens when professors treat their own spiritual ideology as the truth, or they require students to engage in religious practices in class. Indoctrination is teaching people “to accept a system of thought uncritically.” The management education literature has little to say about indoctrination. Indoctrination can be avoided by (1) ensuring informed consent, (2) designing learning activities for students from all spiritual perspectives, (3) teaching *about* the topic (instead of taking the “how to” approach), (4) presenting diverse spiritual perspectives, (5) encouraging respect for others’ spirituality and religion in discussion, and (6) presenting one’s own set of beliefs as one among many. It is hoped that these guidelines can prevent indoctrination not only in courses in spirituality and religion in the workplace, but also in other management courses.

Key Words: Spirituality, Religion, Indoctrination, Diversity, Management, Education

I began teaching one of the first college courses on spirituality and religion in the workplace in 1991. The course has brought me a great deal of personal satisfaction but has also raised many pedagogical questions—the knottiest of which (and the one with the most ramifications for pedagogy in general) is teaching such a course without infringing on students’ own spiritual and religious beliefs. This article examines this problem and proposes several solutions, using examples from the literature and my experience.

The first time I (almost) encroached on my students’ religious sensitivities happened before I even taught a course about spirituality and religion in the workplace. I was teaching a small doctoral seminar that emphasized personal growth; two of the ten students were evangelical Christians and at the end of one class I mentioned that I planned to use guided imagery in class the next week. After class, one of the evangelical students told me that he had religious concerns about “New Age” training techniques like guided imagery. He felt that it blocked critical thinking and left its recipients far too vulnerable to suggestion. Later I asked his evangelical colleague if he shared this concern. He said yes, so I decided to do something else; I wasn’t particularly invested in guided imagery and felt that the learning culture of the class would be stronger if I didn’t ask the class to engage in an activity that deeply unsettled two of the students. Before my discussion with these two students, I had no idea that anyone might object to guided imagery on religious grounds; this incident made me realize that it’s hard to tell what will offend our students’ spiritual sensibilities.

That incident was a precursor of several problems I began to see, including religious practices in the classroom, a dominating spiritual ideology, and indoctrination. This article discusses these and

then explores ways to avoid these problems. It ends with a discussion of indoctrination in areas of business and management education other than spirituality and religion.

The Problem of Religious Practices in the Classroom

A few years after I started teaching a class on spirituality and religion in the workplace, the whole spirituality in the workplace movement took off, and I saw and heard of worrisome religious learning activities in similar courses. One colleague required students to engage in Zen meditation. Another had students engage in shamanic ritual. Yet another had students participate in a week-end, mountain retreat at a local Zen center. I appreciate the power of experiential learning such as this. By experiential learning, I mean learning in which the learner is in direct touch with the realities being studied. It is contrasted with learning in which the learner reads, hears, talks, or writes about those referents or realities, but never comes into contact with them as part of the learning process (Keeton, 1982, p. 619).

I am an advocate of experiential learning, and have even published articles on it (McCormick, 1993; McCormick, 1994), but of the three most common approaches to teaching religion—(1) intellectual, (2) convictional, and (3) experiential—the experiential approach “is the most invasive” (Strange & Rogers, 2003, p. 25). It occurred to me that requiring students to engage in spiritual practices might violate some students’ sense of spiritual integrity. I have had an ongoing internal struggle between my desire to create powerful, experiential learning experiences and to protect students’ spiritual integrity against intrusion. It was this conflict, incidents like the ones mentioned above, and my concern for their impact on students that stimulated my interest in indoctrination.

The Problem of a Dominating Spiritual Ideology

Religious practices in class constitute one problem, but over time I noticed another, larger one. It first came to my attention at a conference where I wound up talking about my exciting new course about spirituality and religion in the workplace with a colleague who taught in a BA program for adults. He said that he too taught about workplace spirituality. In a required course, he assigned *Chop Wood, Carry Water: A Guide to Finding Spiritual Fulfillment in Everyday Life* (Fields, Taylor, Weyler & Ingrassi, 1984)—a book by the editors of *The New Age Journal*. A Christian minister in his course objected to the text, saying he felt like there wasn’t room for his spirituality in the classroom. My colleague was surprised by and dismissive of this objection.

I was surprised by his dismissal. I had assumed that any professor teaching about spirituality in a secular university would naturally respect the different spiritual and religious orientations of his students. His comment made me question that assumption. The minister in his class had a point; adult students bring their own spiritual orientation to courses like this—an orientation they may have explored deeply. They may object to professors who make assumptions that exclude their path, or who pressure them onto the professor’s path. The conscious or unconscious domination by a professor’s spiritual worldview implies that students don’t have legitimate spiritual perspectives—the professor’s is the right one.

Another incident that alerted me to the problem of a dominating spiritual ideology happened at a training session my university held for adjunct faculty members, where I wound up talking to a professor from another university. He told me that his course on spirituality and work was very popular and had fabulous student evaluations, but some students were concerned about the course and their own religion. He said, “I just make sure that they realize that spirituality has nothing to do with religion!”

He didn’t seem able to imagine why someone would object or that some peoples’ spirituality has everything to do with their religion. He didn’t realize that he was uncritically presenting his ideological stance about the separation of religion and spirituality as truth, or that what he said was a religious belief.

I observed a more sophisticated example of this at a professional development workshop before a major academic meeting, where a colleague was presenting on ways to teach about spirituality in the workplace. In his course, he taught that different religions and spiritual paths evolved from different cultural and historical interpretations of a single core mystical experience that was universal.

I generally agree with this perspective, but it appeared that my colleague didn’t realize that there also existed many other legitimate, competing perspectives about the relationship between religions. He didn’t seem to be aware that he was teaching a perspective, not the truth. The field of religious studies calls this particular religious ideology perennialism, as one of its key assertions is that “all ‘true’ or ‘genuine’ mystics have always (perennially) arrived at the same set of metaphysical truths” (Kripal, 2003, p. 67). Famous advocates of this unity “underlying religion’s diverse historical forms” (Wulff, 1997, p. 632) include Huston Smith (1991), Ken Wilber (2000), John Hick (1985), and Aldous Huxley (1945). In the spirituality in the workplace movement, Mitroff and Denton (1999) are perennialism’s most prominent advocates, and it is a common—possibly *the* dominant—perspective in the *Academy of Management’s* Management, Spirituality and Religion Interest Group. Years ago, perennialism dominated religious studies, but now the perennialists have become an “embattled minority” (Horgan, 2003, p. 13). My colleague at the professional development workshop didn’t realize that his view was not undebatable truth, but was a highly debatable ideological stance. In this sense his ideology was hegemonic—so encompassing that it didn’t occur to him or the other people in the room that there could be other views.

Perennialism works out differences between religions in a manner that appeals to some, but that leaves others feeling misrepresented. The philosopher of religion Steven Katz feels that perennialism distorts important elements of Jewish mysticism in order to make it more “mutually compatible” (Horgan, 2003, p. 45) with other mystical traditions. The Catholic scholar of mysticism Bernard McGinn complains that perennialism “strips Christian mysticism of precisely those religious distinctions that he as a Catholic finds most meaningful” (Horgan, 2003, p. 40). Katz says perennialists, “think they are being ecumenical; they’re saying everybody has the same belief. But they are doing injustice to all the people who say, ‘I’m not believing like you do’” (quoted in Horgan, 2003, p. 47). I see colleagues who are blind to the problem and worry that the damage to students is invisible. I teach a lot of working class students who hold religious and spiritual beliefs that are unfashionable in the academy, and I worry about what can be done to them, especially when I hear the perennialists’ unquestioned assumptions.

Spiritual Indoctrination in the College Classroom

All this led me to wonder whether I was seeing a form of perennialist indoctrination. Indoctrination is teaching people “to accept a system of thought uncritically” (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 1979, p. 671). “Philosophers often draw a distinction between education, on one hand, and... training and indoctrination on the other... we educate [students] when we provide them with a measure of critical distance on their subjects, enabling them to think in informed and crucial ways about alternatives” (Nord & Haynes, 1998). A professor can indoctrinate students intentionally or unintentionally. Indoctrinated professors may in turn indoctrinate their students in a certain set of beliefs—not knowing about alternative views or evidence against these beliefs.

Avoiding indoctrination is a central issue in the philosophy of education (Kazepides, 1987). Fostering students’ abilities for independent thought (what Piaget [1973] called intellectual autonomy) should be the goal of all higher education, and indoctrination crushes independent, critical thinking (Kamil, 1984). The literature mentions religious and political indoctrination most often, although some authors have written about indoctrination in the professions, like teaching (Boote, 2001). Spiritual or religious indoctrination is particularly volatile.

I looked for discussion of indoctrination in the management education literature, but found little, even though the management education literature includes many articles on teaching spirituality in the workplace (for example, Dehler & Welsh, 1997; Manz, Marx, Neal & Manz, 2005; Pielstick, 2005; Daniels, Franz & Wong, 2000). The first two volumes of *Organization Management Journal* contain nothing on indoctrination. From 1998 to 2004 *Management Learning* articles only mention indoctrination twice (Case & Selvester, 2002; Reynolds, 2000), and neither article deals with spiritual or religious indoctrination. As of November 2005, the word “indoctrination” has yet to appear in any issue of *Academy of Management Learning and Education*. The past nine years of the *Journal of Management Education* has only one article (Neal, 1997) on teaching spirituality or religion that even briefly mentioned this issue. (It is discussed below.)

But the education literature addresses religious indoctrination more fully, most notably in the journal *Religion and Education* (for example, Mayes & Ferrin, 2001) and the literature about teachers in public schools (for example, *Finding Common Ground: A Guide to Religious Liberty in Public Schools* by Haynes & Thomas, 2002). There is also some literature on higher education (for example, Strange & Rogers, 2003). The education literature on indoctrination, religious and otherwise, has helped clarify my thinking about indoctrination and ways to avoid it.

Ways to Avoid Indoctrination

What can be done to avoid indoctrination? My answers to this question have changed over time. Years ago, I thought I had the answer, and that led to the trickiest part of my journey. Influenced by the experiences described above, I concluded that any religious practices in a course were unethical or coercive; they are likely to infringe on some students’ religious sensitivities even if students don’t speak up. Also, I never heard of colleagues in religious studies leading a class in meditation or engaging in religious activities as part of class.

I wrote up my thoughts and submitted them to a management education journal's special issue on teaching about spirituality in the workplace, confident my article would be accepted. But I was wrong. Not only did it get soundly rejected, one of the reviewers wrote, "what concerns me about this manuscript is the tone. In a special issue of articles on spirituality, it seems important that the tone of all the articles reflect respect and compassion toward colleagues as well as toward students." That hurt. Did I lack compassion toward my colleagues? I certainly criticized some colleagues and said that my approach was better. You don't see a lot of criticism of colleagues in management education journals; I had clearly broken a norm. Was I being a judgmental jerk on his high horse? To use a Biblical analogy, was I condemning my colleagues and the splinters in their eyes, while I have a log stuck in mine? This, among other things, led me to question my inflexible position, and to try to see things from the point of view of my colleagues who had students engage in religious practices in their courses.

Another thing that led me to change my mind was the literature. I read about classes taught by colleagues I respected who had students engage in religious practices, without seeming to cause any problems. So I asked myself, if religious practice isn't wrong in all courses, under what conditions can it be right? The rest of the paper discusses six conditions under which it can be done (see Table 1). They include:

1. When students are offered the opportunity for informed consent
2. When learning activities are designed for students from all spiritual perspectives
3. When the course is *about* spirituality and religion
4. When the readings and learning activities present diverse perspectives
5. When the instructor encourages respect towards others' points of view
6. When instructors present their perspective as one among many

Informed Consent

One course in particular helped change my thinking. In Andre Delbecq's (2000) course about spirituality for business leadership, he held a prayer and meditation session in each class, including a Lakota Sioux "prayer and meditation focused on the gifts we receive from our spiritual elders as guides for the journey" (p. 119), and Zen walking meditation. I corresponded with him and it became clear that my blanket condemnation of religious practices in the class was wrong. One thing that made it possible to engage in such intense, experiential, spiritual practices in class was informed consent. He interviewed all the potential students beforehand and discussed what the class involved. Delbecq says about his current practices:

Presently, I send the course description, syllabus, description of modules, and reading list to every student who electronically enrolls in the course (in our system at least a month prior to classes commence). This allows them to peruse the content, readings, type of experiential content (prayer/meditation/reflection), and determine if this is truly a seminar experience that they feel called to. The course is of course an elective (personal communication, October 6, 2004).

Table 1
Avoiding Indoctrination

Principle	Do's and Don'ts	Practical Suggestions for Implementing
Ensure Informed consent	Make sure all students are informed about what's involved in the class, including spiritual or religious practices, and that they can freely chose to take or not take the course.	Options include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewing students beforehand; • Giving students syllabus, readings, description of learning activities in advance; • Reviewing potentially objectionable activities on first day of class (if not too late for students to drop).
Use universal educational design	Design the course so that a positive learning environment is created for all students, no matter what their spiritual or religious orientation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine that you are a student in your class and that you are a member of as many spiritual or religious groups you can—including unpopular ones; • Ask yourself if any learning activities or readings create a problem for any group.
Teach <i>about</i> the topic	Remember that you teach from a standpoint of academic authority, not spiritual authority. You are a professor, not a minister. Teach about religion and spirituality. Don't teach one perspective as the unquestioned truth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask yourself, "Am I presenting my perspective on spirituality and religion as the one right one? Do I support students who present other views? Am I open to my views being challenged?"
Present diverse perspectives	Don't present only your perspective on religion and spirituality. Present different points of view.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include readings from different spiritual and religious traditions; • If you are a perennialist, make sure students learn that this is a contested stance and expose them to critiques and alternatives.
Encourage respect	Establish a set of norms that make it safe to discuss different spiritual and religious perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go over the norms explicitly the first day of class; • Use a process like barn raising, inter-religious dialogue, or appreciative inquiry.
Present your perspective as one of many	Do not privilege your own religious beliefs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students to say their spiritual orientation in an opening exercise. Disclose your own as well; • Act as a participant in as many learning activities as you can; • Tell students to stop you if they see you impose your views on them.

I also talked to a colleague in religious studies who explained that some religious studies professors use spiritual practices as part of their courses, and some don't. I realized that although deep, experiential activities might intrude on students' spiritual integrity in a required course or a course where they don't know that spiritual activities will be practiced in class, a course where the professor ensures informed consent would not be invasive. Andre Delbecq's course was not invasive because the students were informed about the meditation and prayer in advance and freely chose to take the class.

Universal Educational Design

The design principle of creating buildings, products, and services that all people can use—regardless of age or disability—is called universal design. I've tried something similar—designing my course so that it creates a positive learning environment for all people—no matter their spiritual or religious orientation. I imagined that I was a student in the class and that I was a Wiccan, an atheist, an evangelical Christian, an Orthodox Jew, a Jain, a Mormon, etc. I imagined as many spiritual or religious groups as I could—including new religious movements that some dismiss as cults (like the Movement of Spiritual Inner Awareness). I was sure to include groups that were not particularly popular in my intellectual circles or university. When I worked in a liberal arts college, I imagined that the class included students from working class evangelical groups. (If you teach in the “Bible belt,” imagine how a Wiccan, a practitioner of Santeria, or an atheist may experience your course.) I would have done this even if I never had a Mormon or Wiccan in my class. The point of this thought experiment was to create learning activities that respected each student's spirituality.

I've always made it a point to keep in mind how an atheist might experience my course about spirituality and religion in the workplace. This led me to make sure that the definition of spirituality presented in my course included the *secular* as well as the *sacred*. This made it easier to make sure that the assignment on how one integrated one's spiritual life with one's work life could be completed by an atheist just as easily as a believer—even though no atheists enrolled in the class for five years.

Teaching *About* the Topic

Another influence on my thinking was the education literature. It suggests teaching *about* spirituality and religion instead of taking the “how to” approach. Support for the “teaching about” approach also comes from a statement—“Religion and the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers” (1994)—endorsed by 17 national education and religious organizations representing a wide variety of religious and political views—from conservative to liberal. The statement “draws a sharp distinction between... indoctrination... on one hand, and, on the other, ...*teaching about* religion” [emphasis theirs] (Nord & Haynes, 1998).

If I taught students to accept a system of spiritual or religious thought, I would be acting primarily as a spiritual teacher—an inappropriate and narrow role for a management professor. Students in search of spiritual guidance are better served by consulting their minister or Zen master than by taking a management class. Ministers, Rabbis and other spiritual teachers help others learn how to

live within their tradition. If I set myself up as spiritual teacher in a university class, it would be deceptive (and therefore unethical) as it would obscure the fact that I speak with a great deal more authority on managerial than spiritual matters. Studying religion in secular colleges sharply differs from study at your local Zen center, coven, or temple. The professoriate offers something different than the spiritual teacher.

My course about spirituality and religion in the workplace uses this “teach about” approach and introduces students to the ways that people bring spirituality and religion to their work in different spiritual traditions and times—giving students a broader perspective. A *roshi* or *imam* doesn’t usually offer that breadth of knowledge, but a university does.

Mind you, I have nothing against students gaining some practical “how to” knowledge from a course as they read the texts and listen to their classmates. In my course, I encourage students to explore and think through their own spiritual values (and try not to impose my own). The course encourages students to reflect on how well their work lives align with their spiritual values. Sometimes students find spiritual techniques they can use or attitudes toward spirituality and work that hold meaning for them, but I don’t advocate any particular religious practices; I simply encourage them to look at how others do it, to reflect on their own spirituality, and to try to integrate their spirituality with their work. They also write a paper about how they integrate their spirituality with their work.

Diverse Perspectives

I present diverse perspectives when teaching about spirituality and religion in the workplace. The organizational context in which many courses operate—the secular university—for the most part values treating all spiritualities and religions equally. I do too, and it helps me avoid spiritual and religious indoctrination in my course. It also encourages students to develop their abilities at perspective taking (McCormick, 1999; Selman, 1980). The ability to take the perspective of others is teachable (Reimer, Paolitto, & Hersh, 1990), is the basis of ethical thought, and is an essential skill for managers.

My course presents spiritual and religious diversity in the readings, including Christianity (Chappell, 1993; Williams & Houck, 1978; National Council of Catholic Bishops, 1986), Judaism (Tauber, 1990), Hinduism (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1972), Buddhism (Lori, n.d.), Taoism (Chuang Tzu, 1965), twelve step programs, and spiritually independent writers (McCormick, 1994). I include readings from ancient, primary spiritual sources such as the *Bhagavad Gita* (Prabhavananda & Isherwood, 1972) to relatively recent and more popular sources such as the *New York Times* (Shorto, 2004), *Harvard Business Review* (Learned, Dooley, & Katz, 1959) and *Fortune* (Gunther, 2001). In their book on religion in the curriculum, Nord and Haynes (1998) emphasize the importance of including a historical approach, pointing out that the “study of history also provides us with critical distance from the present” (p. 77). They also argue for including primary as well as secondary sources when teaching about religion, quoting John Stuart Mill (1859/1965) who wrote that students should hear about religious points of view,

from persons who actually believe them...in their most plausible and persuasive form... Ninety-nine in a hundred of what are called educated men...have never

thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them...and consequently they do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profane (p. 287).

Students from a variety of different spiritual backgrounds have found the readings meaningful and have even given copies of them to their friends.

Andre Delbecq's (n.d.) course for MBAs and CEOs on "Spirituality for Business Leadership" also provides a good example of spiritually diverse readings. He includes Eastern Orthodox, Hindu, Catholic, Quaker, Jewish, Taoist, Muslim, and Buddhist readings.

Respect for Others' Spirituality and Religion

I originally taught this course about spirituality and religion in the workplace at a university where the students generally embraced spiritual approaches from outside the mainstream. So feminist Goddess worshippers did not get much criticism, but I regularly had to expend some effort to make sure the few conservative or mainstream Christians could express their views. In one class, a student—Martha—was the lone evangelical Christian. A Wiccan student was discussing how offended she was by the somewhat coercive proselytizing of a Christian coworker. When Martha began to explain how the situation may have looked from the viewpoint of the proselytizer, several students verbally attacked her. I had to interrupt and help legitimize what Martha was trying to do—giving the class the opportunity to view a conflict from both sides.

I make it very acceptable to hold unpopular spiritual views. In my class I used the "barn raising" approach developed by Michael Kahn (Kahn, 1995; McCormick & Kahn, 1994) to foster a classroom culture of respect for diversity. Barn raising encourages students to try out and build upon different views, even if the views are unpopular. Just like an old fashioned farming community might get everyone together to build a barn for one farmer, everyone in the discussion tries to build an idea together. This approach helps students to learn how to take the perspective of others.

In Andre Delbecq's (2000) course mentioned earlier, he sets ground rules for encouraging respect for others' spirituality and religion in his class by using "Appreciative Inquiry, used by Episcopal Archbishop Swing in his leadership of interreligious dialog, and dialogic protocols. This established a set of norms for class discussion and sense of safety" (p. 118). "Appreciative Inquiry focuses us on the positive aspects of our lives and leverages them to correct the negative. It's the opposite of 'problem-solving'" (White, 1996, p. 472).

Spiritual and religious diversity in the workplace. Just as I set up my course to promote respect for spiritual and religious diversity in the classroom, I teach students to respect spiritual and religious diversity in the *workplace*. In my part of the U. S. (southern California), it's an unusual workplace that employs people who share identical spiritual or religious views. A course about spirituality and religion in the workplace can offer a model for the kind of respect and tolerance that can be fostered in the workplace. One of the best researched and most widely cited studies of spirituality in the workplace highlights the importance of providing a model. Mitroff and Denton (1999) found that most people wished ardently that they could express their spirituality in the

workplace. At the same time, most were extremely hesitant to do so because they had strong fears and doubts that they could do so without offending their peers. As a result, they felt a deep, persistent ambivalence toward spirituality. Their fears were probably due to the fact that they were unaware of any systematic ways in which they could discuss spirituality and didn't know of positive role models to use as guides for fostering spirituality in the workplace (p. 87).

As a reviewer of this article wrote, there is a "fine line between moral relativism and acceptance based on diverse approaches to religion and spirituality." Although I encourage respect for diverse *spiritual* perspectives, I am not a *moral* relativist. I advocate specific solutions to ethical problems that sometimes come up when people try to bring their spirituality to their work, such as managers infringing on subordinates' spiritual or religious freedom. I argue that if students work for secular organizations, engaging in spiritual or religious discrimination violates basic ethical standards. We explore the issue of discrimination by looking at a case drawn from the newspaper about a fundamentalist Christian police chief who favored members of his church when it came to promotions (Weinstein & Serrano, 1992). The discussion helps students realize the moral and legal problems that arise when a manager discriminates against people from other religions. I also have students read "Guidelines for Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace" (Clinton, 1997) by the Clinton White House. This remarkably well thought out set of guidelines maintains the balance between peoples' right to religious expression in the federal workplace and others' right to be free from religious harassment. The Clinton administration designed this policy for the government workplace but it applies equally well to any secular or religiously pluralistic organization.

One Amongst Many Perspectives

It's difficult to talk about spirituality and religion in a management classroom (Manz, Marx, Neal & Manz, 2005) because of pressure on teachers to present themselves as people who have had their spirituality extracted during classroom hours (Mooney, 1994). This is not a neutral attitude towards spirituality and religion, "it is anything but neutral to ignore religion. Neutrality cannot mean... silence" (Nord & Haynes, 1998). Brent Coffin (1995) put it well:

I think teachers . . . are often uncomfortable knowing how to talk about faith in the classroom in a way that is respectful of the growing diversity that our [students] bring into the classroom. And I think we, as citizens, very often fundamentally confuse the rightful separation of church and state with the notion that religion and moral convictions do not belong in our public life. They very much do belong outside of the home and outside of the place of worship ... I think it is a confusion to think that we should leave our convictions at home. They should come forth and they should be articulated as reasons why we believe the things we do, why we advocate the policies we do.

Despite the pressure to present oneself as without spiritual convictions, modeling the respectful expression of one's spirituality allows students to see that people can comfortably express their spirituality in a secular work setting without imposing it on others. If I were to suppress my spirituality or religion in the classroom—in my workplace—I would be teaching students that they should do the same in their workplaces. I try to practice what I preach by talking about my own

beliefs openly, and making it clear that I see them as only one system among many valid belief systems. I try to disclose, examine, and reflect on my spiritual beliefs, and so the model disclosure, examination, and reflection I ask of my students.

We all describe our spiritual orientations in an introductions exercise that opens the class. I explicitly present my beliefs as one amongst many. This helps create a safe atmosphere where students see that it is acceptable to say he or she is Muslim, atheist, fiercely independent, twelve-step, born-again Christian, Wiccan, or Episcopalian.

During the first class, I explain to the students that I don't want to impose my spiritual views on them and that if anyone feels I am, to immediately let me know. This stance is very similar to one of Judi Neal's (1997) guidelines for teaching management education from a spiritual perspective—"Respect and Honor the Beliefs of Others." She writes, "it is extremely important to me that students do not feel that I am imposing my belief system (spiritual or otherwise) on them" (p. 136). I try to be open, explaining that I am teaching this topic of spirituality and religion not as an expert in religious studies but as an expert in organization studies who has a deep interest in spirituality, that I am one inquirer among the many in the classroom, and that I hope that we can explore spirituality and religion in the workplace together.

Conclusion

I've seen a born-again Christian hotel manager make the uncomfortable realization that it would be unethical to discriminate against a Wiccan employee; gained a greater appreciation of Japanese spirituality and how it can be expressed in one's physical environment from a student who worked for Toyota; and seen students realize that they can talk about spirituality and religion at work without offending others. Many students learn of spiritual practices that interest them and come to appreciate approaches to spirituality in the workplace that they had not thought of before. Others learn that, far from being new, discussion of spirituality in the workplace business goes back thousands of years. They learn how to integrate their spirituality with their work—not how I think they should do it, but how *they* think they can do it. And this kind of learning makes teaching about spirituality and religion in the workplace worthwhile.

Indoctrination in Other Areas of Business Education

So far I have discussed the problem of spiritual or religious indoctrination in management education. But what of other topics? Indoctrination can happen in many subjects in management education; my experience is that the most likely subjects in which indoctrination can happen are those of a political, economic, and managerial nature.

Business ethics and business and society courses often have a lot of political content. The textbook I was assigned when I taught business ethics taught a pretty standard liberal political ideology. I applied many of the principles discussed here when I taught the course, as I did not want my students to leave simplistically thinking liberalism is good and conservatism is bad. I agree with one of my left-wing activist colleagues who said he'd much rather graduate a conservative student who could think for herself and who had reflected on her views, than to graduate a liberal who shared his politics but simply mouthed platitudes.

The teaching of economics can at times fall into indoctrination. The *National Content Standards in Economics* (National Council on Economics Education, 1997) gives us a surprisingly candid recommendation for economic indoctrination; recommending that economics teachers present only the dominant neoclassical model and ignore other perspectives because they could lead to “confusing and frustrating teachers and students who are then left with the responsibility of sorting the qualifications and alternatives without a sufficient foundation to do so” (p. viii). The recommendations never mention environmental or ethical dimensions of economic decisions. Government is criticized and the free market is praised. These recommendations give new meaning to the term “free market fundamentalism.”

Management too is highly ideological. Throughout graduate school, I began to feel uneasy with the management literature I was studying. As a naïve youth, I assumed that I was studying the facts about organizations—facts that came from objective research. Eventually it dawned on me that what I wasn’t learning “the facts” about management at all, I was learning ideology. The literature all seemed to have a kind of liberal-antiauthoritarian-humanistic-psychology mushy feel to it. Now I’m as antiauthoritarian as the next guy but I began to wonder. This ideology wasn’t being taught in a way that encouraged critique. It was hegemonic.

Others have commented on management’s ideological nature. A reviewer of this article suggested that, “certain brands of management theory have a highly functional orientation and indoctrinate students into an uncritical acceptance of instrumental views of management and organizations.” In Cameron, Ireland, Lussier, New and Robbins’ (2003) article, “Management Textbooks as Propaganda,” the best selling textbook author Stephen Robbins makes a nice connection between religious and managerial ideology when he wrote,

I see my books as supporting an ideology. But, of course, all textbooks sell an ideology. OB books... for the most part, support a managerial perspective. This reflects the market—business schools. We need to genuflect to the Gods of productivity, efficiency, goals, etc.” (p. 714).

Robbins is right. All textbooks do sell ideology, and to admit teaching ideology is not bad. One can’t escape it. It’s either one ideology or another. The question is, how can we teach an ideologically infused subject so it encourages students to reflect upon and critically analyze those ideologies, that is, so that it promotes education and not indoctrination? My hope is that the principles presented here may help with that question—in a course about spirituality and religion in the workplace, or anywhere else in the management curriculum.

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