

PSY 385 Psychology of Religion  
Fall 2016  
TR 11:30-12:45 B1110 MAK

**Instructor:** Luke Galen, Ph.D.

**Office:** 2220 ASH

**Office Hours:** Tues/ Thurs: 10 – 11, some Mon/ Wed times by appointment.

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**Course Description:** A systematic study of psychological theories and empirical data on religious phenomena. Consideration will be given to various definitions of religious belief; the psychological explanations of religious behavior; the dynamics of religious thought and action, the relationships between religion, mental health, and psychopathology; and some of the social functions served by religion. This course is one of the General Education Religion Theme courses. Please read the Gen Ed and Religion Theme information at the end of the syllabus.

**Course Objectives:** Students will gain: 1) knowledge of how psychological science and methods approach the study of religious phenomena; 2) knowledge of different interpretations of religious origins, ideation and behavior; and 3) awareness that shared psychological traits can affect similarities in religious experiences in all humans; 4) To work toward the goals of a liberal arts education.

**Text:** Hood, B., Hill, P.C., & Spilka, B. (2009). The psychology of religion: An empirical approach (4th ed.). New York: The Guilford Press

**Course Reserve chapters from following books:**

Barrett, J.L. (2012). Born Believers: The Science of Children's Religious Belief.

Boyer, P. (2001) Religion explained: The evolutionary origins of religious thought. New York: Basic Books. (pgs. 310-330)

Festinger, L. Riecken, H. W. ; & Schachter, S. (1956). When prophesy fails: A social and psychological study of a modern group that predicted the destruction of the world. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.

Shermer, M. (2000). How we believe: The search for God in an age of science. New York: W.H. Freeman and Co. (pgs. 63-88).

Wulff, D.M. (1997) Psychology of religion: Classic and contemporary. (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.). John Wiley and Sons. (pgs. 434-440; 444-456).

**Class Format:** Lecture/Discussion.

**Prerequisites:** PSY 101

**Grading:** Grades will be based on 2 in-class exams and the paper. The 2 exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions drawn from lecture and the book. The final exam is non-cumulative.

	Points	Percentage
Midterm	60	30%
In class assignments and quizzes		
5 pts each x 10 (drop the lowest 2)	40	20%
Final	60	30%
Paper	40	20%
Total	200 points	100%

**Attendance:** Attendance will not be monitored. However, there will be unannounced quizzes and assignments. Also, all exams will contain a significant amount of content that will be covered only in lecture (i.e., not in the text). This means that poor attendance will likely result in poor performance on the tests. Students should read the assigned chapters before they are scheduled to be covered in class.

**Class Courtesy:** A respectful and friendly atmosphere in the classroom is important for all of us. Without it, it would be difficult for each of us to feel free to express our ideas and learn. Please limit your private comments and conversations to either before or after class. Talking should be limited to comments shared with the entire class rather than with only a subgroup. Respect classmates by listening to them as you would have them listen to you. Please be on time and turn off cell phones.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Any evidence of cheating (e.g., using notes during exam, looking at another student's answers), or plagiarism (copying portions of the paper from other sources) will result in a failing grade in the course and any other actions as allowed by GVSU policy.

**Disabilities:** If you have a disability, it is up to you to determine if you wish to disclose that information and request classroom accommodations. If you wish to request educational accommodations due to a disability, you should register with the Office of Academic Support (240 Student Services; 331-2490), if you haven't already done so. If you wish to request accommodations, please meet with me privately (e.g., during office hours) to discuss how to best meet your educational needs. This should occur early in the semester rather than later (e.g., after failing a test).

**Make up exams:** Any absence on the exam dates will result in total loss of points. Missed assignments due to emergency situations (illnesses, death in the family) will require appropriate documentation. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor.

**Assignments and Quizzes:** There will be 10 class assignments or quizzes throughout the semester. They will not be announced ahead of time, and as such, cannot be made up. The student may drop the lowest 2. They will cover the reading material and lecture and are specifically designed so that the student keeps up in the reading and attends lecture. Each assignment or quiz is worth 5 points. They are also important because some of the material will be used on the exams. Quizzes are usually done in the first 5 minutes of class. To prevent students from walking in late and getting the answers to the quizzes, which would give an unfair advantage to that student, **no quizzes will be given to late-comers**, and the blank quizzes will be discarded after the class. Since the student can drop the lowest 2, no questions asked, missed quizzes cannot be made up. In the case of an in-class assignment where the student was absent during class, that will count as a drop.

**Extra credit:** Although there may be some extra credit options offered, this will not amount to a large number of points (e.g., equivalent to a quiz). Any extra credit can only be offered to the entire class. The only exception to this would be a bonus point to reward students who catch any errors in information content or demonstrating initiative (e.g., challenging with evidence).

**Short Paper:** The student will be asked to choose from several topics that will be described in detail in a handout. This assignment will be worth 40 points, or 20% of total grade. No electronic submission of the paper. The paper must be actually made out of paper or paper-like substance.

**Missed Assignments:** Any late assignments will result in 1 letter grade reduction from the original grade for each class past the due date.

## **Tentative Class Schedule:**

<b><u>Week</u></b>	<b><u>Topic</u></b>	<b><u>Reading</u></b>
Aug 30 Sep 1	Intro. to psychology of religion. Demographics Why do people believe?	Hood Ch 1: 1-12 Hood: 141-143; 150-152 Shermer 72 – 88
<b>I. <u>Social - Psychological research on religion:</u></b>		
<b>No class Mon Sept 6</b>		
Sep 8	Defining types of religiosity and research scales Religion and morality	Hood: 36-38 Hood 381-397
Sep 13 15	Religion and helping; Intro to prejudice	Hood 403-411
Sept 20	Religion and prejudice	Hood 411-427; 165-168
Sept 22	Video : Morality: learned or intuitional? Kohlberg (Hood 85-87), intuitional: articles by Pinker & Miller	No Class
<b>II. <u>Development and cognition: Acquisition and rejection of religion</u></b>		
Sep 27 29	Parenting, social learning Cognition	89-93; 109-119 119-128
Oct 4 6	Doubt and apostasy. Atheism and agnosticism cognitive dissonance	129-135; 145-147 280-286 Festinger 156-163; Hood 221-226
Oct 11 13	Conversion Attachment theory	Hood 209-217; 230-232 Hood 101-103
<b>Midterm exam: Tues Oct 18</b>		
<b>III. <u>Social Cognition, Mental Health and Religious experience</u></b>		
Oct 20	Social cognition, JWB, attribution: 9/11 video	Hood 14, 44-52, 473-475 Article by Epley (egocentric beliefs)
Oct 25 27	Exceptional experiences glossolalia 311-312; 447-448. Possession video. Spanos article.	288-291, attribution Sunden's role theory 298-303
<b>Last day to withdraw (grade of 'W'): October 28, 5:00</b>		
Nov 1 3	Mental health/illness, coping, uncertainty, control	440-452; 458-465 Article by Kay (compensatory control)
Nov 8 10	Death and Terror Mgmt.	Hood 184—187; 191-194; 198-200; 474-475 TMT Article by Vail

#### **IV. Cognitive Sci. of Relig., anthro. & evolutionary psych**

Nov 15 17 Biology, genetics, brain      Hood 62- 65; Shermer 63-72; Hood 54-61  
Evolutionary psych      Darwin's God (NYT article on BB)

Nov 22      Evolutionary: adaptation or byproduct?      Barrett Born Believers Ch. 2

#### **Papers due on Nov 22**

**No class Thurs Nov 24 Thanksgiving**

Nov 29 Dec 1 Evolutionary psychology and development      Barrett Born Believers chaps. 4, 5.  
Religion as cognitive by-product      Boyer 310-330. Hood 292-3

Dec 6 8 Mythology, Jung, Campbell      Wulff chap. on Jung 434-456  
Gnosticism and a psychological Christianity  
Religious symbols as psychological metaphors

**Final Exam: Wed. Dec 14 12:00-1:50**

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Year in School, Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for taking this course (psych elective, interested). What have you heard about it, if anything?

Previous coursework in psychology (e.g., social psych) or related coursework (e.g., religion) or experience (e.g., internship or volunteer work):

Any particular topics you want to see covered other than those on the syllabus?

What questions do you have regarding religion from a psych perspective?