PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

Exploring Human Potentials through the Intersection of Psychology, Science, & Spirituality

Heart Mind Brain Spirit
Passion Thought Neuroscience Transformation

PSYC 320 / RELG 361
Spring 2015
class location TBA
Tuesday and Thursday 4:25-5:40 PM

Professor Elon Goldstein
Office: #331 (3rd floor), Department of Religious Studies, Rutledge College (on the Horseshoe)
Email: elongoldstein@sc.edu

Prerequisites: None. This course is appropriate for those new to the study of psychology and to the study of religion and spirituality.

I. COURSE CONTENT

Proceeding from a perspective generated by new understandings in the fields of psychology and spirituality, without being tied to any single religious tradition or framework, this course

• focuses on the practical questions of how heart, mind, body, brain, and spirit can be understood and how their interconnection forms the basis for higher human growth.

• presents recent scientific breakthroughs about the ways in which particular types of wholesome thoughts, emotions, and meditative states of consciousness have been shown to change and affect the brain positively and to create long-lasting increases in personal happiness.

  = mindfulness, brain plasticity, positive psychology, and heightened emotional well-being

• explains cutting-edge neuroscientific research (always presented in terms that are easily understandable for a general audience) about the ways in which our brains and bodies affect our patterns of feeling emotions, of thinking, and of our experience of well-being.

  = practical applications for everyday life by utilizing new insights from neurobiology
• explores spiritual approaches discussed in contemporary psychology and religion aimed at maximizing the potential for flourishing within love-relationships between intimate partners:
  = how loving partnerships -- including sex, communication, compromise, etc. -- can become powerful pathways for healthy psychological and spiritual development

• outlines stages of higher human psychological development beyond the ordinary and approaching the extraordinary by introducing practices that transform consciousness such as lucid dreaming (an ability to know that one is dreaming and to play within dreams while asleep)

II. READINGS, VIDEO CLIPS, AND OTHER COURSE MATERIALS

Course readings mainly consist of selections that are available to students on Blackboard along with artwork, charts, videos, and other learning materials.

As an example, reading selections on Blackboard will be taken from some of the following books which represent leading approaches in these fields:

Topic: psychological development through training body and mind to reach higher stages

• Paths Beyond Ego: The Transpersonal Vision edited by Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan
• The Future of the Body: Explorations into the Further Evolution of Human Nature by M. Murphy
• Sleeping, Dreaming, and Dying: An Exploration of Consciousness with the Dalai Lama edited by Francisco Varela
• The Attention Revolution: Unlocking the Power of the Focused Mind by B. Alan Wallace
• Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming by Stephen LaBerge
• What Really Matters: Searching for Wisdom in America by Tony Schwartz
• Integral Life Practice: A 21st-Century Blueprint for Physical Health, Emotional Balance, Mental Clarity, and Spiritual Awakening by Wilber, Patten, Leonard, and Morelli

Topic: intimate-partner relationships as a path toward psychological and spiritual growth

• Embracing the Beloved: Relationship as a Path of Awakening by Stephen and Ondrea Levine
• How to Be an Adult in Relationships: The Five Keys to Mindful Loving by David Richo
• Grace and Grit: Spirituality and Healing in the Life and Death of Treya Killam Wilber by K. Wilber
• Eros: The Bittersweet by Anne Carson
• Journey of the Heart: The Path of Conscious Loving by John Welwood

Topic: happiness through understanding how mind and brain function & influence each other

• Being Happy by Tal Ben-Shahar
• Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves by Sharon Begley
• The Light of Discovery by Toni Packer
• Irreducible Mind: Toward a Psychology for the 21st Century by Kelly et. al.
• You Are Not Your Brain: The 4-Step Solution for Changing Bad Habits, Ending Unhealthy Thinking, and Taking Control of Your Life by Jeffrey Schwartz and Rebecca Gladding
• Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life’s Most Important Skill by Matthieu Ricard
Topic: navigating psychological and spiritual challenges while on a path toward higher growth

- *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* by Carl Jung
- *Broken Open: How Difficult Times Can Help Us Grow* by Elizabeth Lesser
- *Shadow Dance: Liberating the Power and Creativity of Your Dark Side* by David Richo
- *The Inward Arc: Healing in Psychotherapy and Spirituality* by Frances Vaughan
- *Integral Psychology: Consciousness, Spirit, Psychology, Therapy* by Ken Wilber

### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

• 30% — short written responses to readings, plus class participation.
  The responses are based on writing prompts. A weekly response is meant to be between two-thirds of a page and one full page in length. Format: double-spaced, one inch margins, 12 point font.
* The writing prompts are posted ahead of time on Blackboard (the course website). Responses are to be submitted by the student onto the course website in Blackboard as an attachment to the assignment by the specified due date.

These short reflections provide a valuable opportunity to think about the assigned readings prior to our class discussions. They keep our understanding of the material on track, and they prepare us for the quizzes and the final exam. The short responses are graded on a credit/no credit basis.

Class participation in discussions and activities: Participation in class forms an important part of the course. A portion of many class meetings will be taken up with whole-class discussions and/or learning activities in groups. Meaningful contributions to class discussions and other in-class activities enhance the learning experiences of everyone. Respectful, engaged listening and speaking are both important skills.

• 30% — 3 quizzes. The quizzes consist of short answers, written definitions, explanations based on key reading passages supplied for you, and the like. Specific information about what to expect on the quizzes will be offered beforehand.

• 10% — exploration and short write-up about a topic of your choosing. You will be given the chance to explore in more depth a particular topic that has interested you, to do a small amount of reading and/or see films related to your topic, and then to sum up your findings in a few pages.

• 30% — comprehensive final exam.

*Grading Scale*

100-90 A ; 89-87 B+ ; 86-80 B ; 79-77 C+ ; 76-70 C ; 69-67 D+ ; 66-60 D ; 59 and below F
V. COURSE POLICIES

Attendance
Prompt and regular attendance is crucial for success in the course. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class. We will follow the university's policy regarding attendance and the effect of unexcused absences on a student's course grade. If you are absent for an excusable reason, be sure to present the needed documentation to the instructor immediately upon your return (e.g., if you are absent for a legitimate medical reason, bring a doctor's note as soon as you come back to class).

Expectations for Classroom Behavior
We are all here to learn. Please come to class prepared and on-time. Always be respectful of everyone in class. Please do not bring any distractions to class including distractions stemming from phones and laptops. Phones are to be off, and laptop computers are to be used only for classwork such as note-taking and following along with PDFs of readings. Any disrespectful or disruptive behavior may result in dismissal from class and/or an academic penalty.

Academic Integrity
Assignments and examination work are expected to be the sole effort of the student submitting the work. Students are expected to follow the University of South Carolina Honor Code and should expect that every instance of a suspected violation will be reported. Students found responsible for violations of the Code will be subject to academic penalties under the Code in addition to whatever disciplinary sanctions are applied. Cheating on a test or copying someone else's work will result in a 0 for the work, possibly a grade of F in the course, and, in accordance with University policy, will be referred to the University Committee for Academic Responsibility and may result in expulsion from the University.

Accommodating Disabilities
Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Office of Student Disability Services: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services. Please be proactive: see the professor in private to set up accommodations.