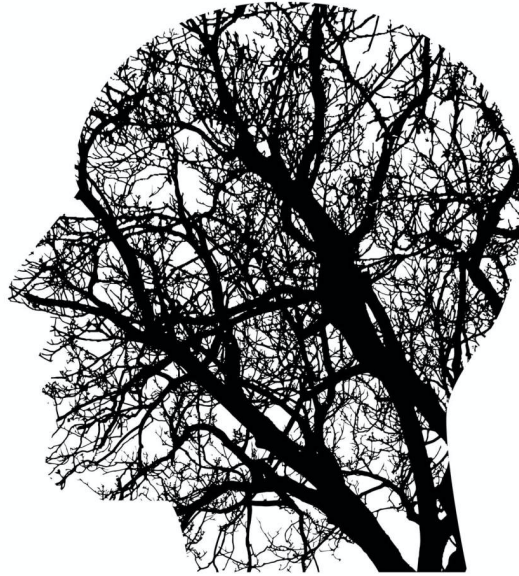


Psychology of Religion



RELG 361 – PSYC 320
Online Course
Spring 2021
W 2:20pm–3:35pm via Zoom

Professor Daniel M. Stuart
Office: Zoom
Office hours: Tuesdays 10am–12pm
Email: stuard@mailbox.sc.edu

This course introduces students to the study of religion in conversation with the field of psychology. It is neither a course specifically about psychology as a discipline nor a course about religious studies as a discipline. It is also not a course about “religion” itself. Rather, the course explores the ways in which human minds are implicated in practices and traditions that have often been understood as “religious.” We will explore foundational psychological theories that have had a lasting impact on how religion is understood, and we will look at recent developments in cognitive science and cross-cultural psychology to explore the ways in which scholars have attempted to understand how complex relationships of the mind, brain, experience, and sociality might condition the constitution of religious lives.

Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- explain the historical relationship between the discipline of psychology and the discipline of religious studies
- articulate concepts and contributions from developmental psychology, psychoanalytic traditions, evolutionary psychology, neuro-science, and cognitive science used to understand religious practices and beliefs
- analyze and evaluate specific cases of religious practice and experience in light of such concepts and contributions
- recapitulate findings from recent developments in cognitive science, neuro-science, and cross-cultural psychology about the ways in which intentional practices—enacted in religious and non-religious contexts—can powerfully impact human ontology

Required Readings

All readings are accessible as e-readings on Blackboard.

Films

Holy Smoke! (1999)

Them That Follow (2019)

Course Requirements

1. *Attendance and participation* (20% of the final grade)
You are expected to come to class well-prepared, i.e. having done the reading assignments thoughtfully and being prepared to engage in discussion about them. Participation—including class discussion, other in-class activities, and online forum participation—is an essential part of your learning in this class. **You are also required to demonstrate your presence at all Zoom sessions by leaving your video on for the entirety of the session. Otherwise, you will be marked absent.** If you feel shy about speaking up in class, or face any other issues, please come and talk to me about your concerns.
Note: Class absences will affect your participation grade (see Course Policies).
2. *Three short writing assignments* (350–500 words each) in the course of the semester (20%)—Due dates: 2/11, 2/25, and 4/1
3. *Take-home midterm exam* (30%)—Distributed on 3/5 and due on 3/12
4. *Final paper* (1500–2000 words) (30%)—Assignment distributed on 3/12 and due on 4/28
5. *Final paper presentation* (5%)—Weeks 13 and 14

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

Course Format

(in part courtesy of the Center for Teaching Excellence)

This is a fully online course. Online classes are not easier than face-to-face lecture classes. To succeed in an online class, you must be extremely motivated and well organized. Regular Internet access is essential for successful completion of the course.

The course will consist of learning modules, which include:

- Short Video/PowerPoint Lectures and multimedia materials
- Readings
- Online Discussions
- Exams
- Written Exercises

This is an entirely Web-based course. We have no face-to-face class meetings, and you will complete much of your work asynchronously - which simply means that you may be working on it at different times than your classmates. You can access class material and do your work at whatever time is convenient for you as long as you are meeting class deadlines.

This class also has a synchronous component. That is, we will meet once a week via Zoom during the scheduled course time. These Zoom sessions will usually involve a short lecture and a chance to break up into small groups and discuss key questions and issues in the course. As noted on the first page of the syllabus, Zoom meetings will take place every week on Wednesdays from 2:20pm–3:35pm.

It is important to understand that this is not a self-paced class or an independent study. You will have assigned deadlines, and work must be submitted on time. You may not save up your assignments to complete in the last weeks or days of the semester. One critical part of this class is regular interaction with other students and with me, your instructor. Each assignment sequence must be completed on schedule – you can't work ahead or get behind and be successful.

Course Communication

I will be communicating with you regularly regarding grades and assignments. If you need to get in touch with me, the best method is via email. Generally, I will reply to emails within 24 hours and will provide feedback on assignments within 72 hours if not otherwise noted. These questions will be answered within 24 hours.

If you are having trouble with this course or its material, you should contact me via email to discuss the issues.

Announcements will be posted to this course on Blackboard whenever necessary. If there is any other information I think is important, I will send it to your email address you have in Blackboard. It is your responsibility to ensure that your email account works properly in order to receive email.

Below is how you check your email address in Blackboard:

- Access blackboard.sc.edu
- Click your name on the main Blackboard navigation panel on the left
- Review your email address. By default, Blackboard uses your university-issued email address

Your email address in Blackboard coincides with your preferred university email. If you are unsure of your preferred email, check your account (myaccount.sc.edu). For more information on setting your preferred university email, please see the [How To Change Your Primary University Email Address](https://scprod.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0011464) (https://scprod.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0011464).

Weekly Schedule

In order to complete all of the module assignments, you will spend about 9 hours per week on the course material for a total of approximately 145 hours of course-related activities using Blackboard, discussion boards, participating in Zoom sessions, and reading and reflecting on the texts. A list of weekly responsibilities/deadlines can be found below (pages 7–10).

- Sunday/Monday: Read assigned text(s) for the first part of the week. Watch lecture or engage with media source online.
- Tuesday/Wednesday: Read assigned text(s) for the second part of the week and participate in synchronous Zoom session.

Technology Requirements

Online lectures and media material will be uploaded to Blackboard and can be downloaded at your convenience. Therefore, you must have access to the Internet to view/hear lectures. No special software is required.

You will need a [Zoom account](https://zoom.us/signin) (<https://zoom.us/signin>) to participate in the weekly Zoom sessions. The basic free plan will suffice. You do not need to purchase a plan. I will send out invitations for the Zoom sessions weekly.

The PowerPoint lecture presentations, links to articles, assignments, and additional media material are located on the Blackboard site for the course. To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed, plus speakers or headphones to hear lecture presentations;
- Reliable Internet access and a USC email account;
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Blackboard (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard);
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program; and
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage.

If your computer does not have Microsoft Word, Office 365 ProPlus package is available to you free of charge and allows you to install Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, and Access on up to 5 PCs or Macs and Office apps on other mobile devices including tablets. Office 365 also includes unlimited cloud storage on OneDrive. To download Office 365 ProPlus, log into your student (University) email through a web browser, choose Settings (top right corner), and select software. If you have further questions or need help with the software, please contact the [Service Desk](#) (https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/division_of_information_technology/end_user_services/available_technology_resources/service_desk/index.php).

Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Minimal technical skills are needed in this course. All work in this course must be completed and submitted online through Blackboard or by email when requested. Therefore, you must have consistent and reliable access to a computer and the Internet. The minimal technical skills you must have include the ability to:

- Organize and save electronic files;
- Use USC email and attached files;
- Check email and Blackboard daily;
- Download and upload documents;
- Locate information with a browser; and
- Use Blackboard.

Technical Support

If you have problems with your computer, technology, IT-related questions, support, including Blackboard, please contact the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) Service Desk at (803) 777-1800 or submit an online request through the [Self-Service Portal \(https://scprod.service-now.com/sp\)](https://scprod.service-now.com/sp) or visit the [Carolina Tech Zone \(https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/ctz.php\)](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/ctz.php). The Service Desk is open Monday – Friday from 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM (Eastern Daylight Time). If you are located in the Columbia, SC area, the Thomas Cooper Library at USC has computers for you to use in case you encounter computer issues/problems. If you are not located in the Columbia, SC area, most regional campuses and public libraries have computers for public use.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

The University of South Carolina has clearly articulated its policies governing academic integrity and students are encouraged to carefully review the policy on the Honor Code in the Carolina Community. Any deviation from these expectations will result in academic penalties as well as disciplinary action. The area of greatest potential risk for inadvertent academic dishonesty is plagiarism. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, paraphrasing or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement.

Attendance

Prompt and regular attendance at our Zoom meetings 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, provide a doctor's note). The University attendance policy specifies that students may miss up to 2 class meetings without penalty. Beyond that, class absences will affect your class participation grade.

Classroom Conduct (Zoom)

Please come to class on time and be respectful of everyone else in the class. Refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments of any kind. Disrespectful or disruptive behavior, such as talking out of turn, may result in dismissal from class and/or an academic penalty. Please ensure that you do not behave in any way that might distract from the learning of others during the Zoom session.

Late Assignment Submission

Assignments lose 20% of their point value per day late and will be counted as if the whole assignment was submitted at the time of the latest timestamp present.

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: 803-777-6142, TDD 803-777-6744, email sasds@mailbox.sc.edu, or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Office of Student Disability Services.

Diversity, Ethics, and Inclusion [credit to Dr. David Moscowitz]

The university is committed to a campus environment that is inclusive, safe, and respectful for all persons, and one that fully embraces the Carolinian Creed. To that end, all course activities will be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly participation and interaction among colleagues, recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, background, and point of view each student brings.

This course works to foster a climate free of harassment and discrimination, and it values the contributions of all forms of **diversity**. The decision to enter university and pursue advanced study is a choice that entails commitment to personal **ethics** expressed in the [Carolinian Creed \(www.sa.sc.edu/creed\)](http://www.sa.sc.edu/creed): "I will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions."

Title IX and Gendered Pronouns [credit to Dr. David Moscowitz]

In this course, we affirm equality and respect for all gendered identities. Feel free to correct me regarding your preferred gender pronoun and/or name if different from what is indicated on the official class roster. Likewise, I am committed to nurturing an environment free from discrimination and harassment. Consistent with Title IX policy, please be aware that I as a responsible employee am obligated to report information that you provide to me about a situation involving sexual harassment or assault.

Expectations of the Instructor

I am here to facilitate and support your learning, answer questions and concerns you have about the material studied, be fair and reasonable in grading your work, and provide timely and supportive feedback on assignments. You can expect me to treat all of you with dignity and to remain as open and communicative as I can during the learning process.

Copyright/Fair Use Statement

We cover a wide variety of material in this course. I will cite/reference materials that I use in the course to the best of my ability, and you as students are expected to not distribute any of these materials, resources, exams, assignments, etc. without the permission of the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Approaching Religion Through Psychology—Approaching Psychology Through Religion

- 1/11 (M) “Psychology” and “Religion”—Circumscribing subjects
- 1/13 (W) What kind of “psychology of religion”?
- Roderick Main, “Psychology of Religion: An Overview of its History and Current Status”
 - Anczyk and Grzymala-Moszczyńska, “Psychology of religion(s) and religious studies: into the future”

Week 2: Starting Points

- 1/18 (M) No Assignment: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- 1/20 (W) Methodological and Theoretical Origins: William James
- Daniel L. Pals, “The Verdict of Religious Experience: William James”

Week 3: Mysticism

- 1/25 (M) In or beyond evolution?
- Gopi Krishna, *Living with Kundalini* (selections)
- 1/27 (W) Brains and experience
- Jill Bolte Taylor, “My Stroke of Insight” (TED Talk)
 - Jill Bolte Taylor, “My Stroke of Insight” (reading selections)

Week 4: Mysticism cont.

- 2/1 (M) The Illusion of Religion
- Daniel L. Pals, “Religion and Personality: Sigmund Freud”
- 2/3 (W) The Oceanic Feeling
- William B. Parsons, “The Oceanic Feeling Revisited”

SHORT ASSIGNMENT #1 DISTRIBUTED (due on 2/11)

Week 5: Madness

- 2/8 (M) Schizophrenia
- T. M. Luhrmann, "Introduction" in *Our Most Troubling Madness*
- 2/10 (W) Diagnosis
- Anubha Sood, "Madness Experienced as Faith: Temple Healing in North India"
 - Jack R. Friedman, "Faith Interpreted as Madness: Religion, Poverty, and Psychiatry in the Life of a Romanian Woman"

Week 6: Madness cont.

- 2/15 (M) No Assignment: President's day Holiday
- 2/17 (W) Evolving Definitions
- *DSM 5* (excerpts related to "cultural formulation")

SHORT ASSIGNMENT #2 DISTRIBUTED (due on 2/25)

Week 7: Explanation

- 2/22 (M) Evolutionary Mechanisms
- Pascal Boyer, "What is the Origin"
- 2/24 (W) Conceptual Constrictions
- Pascal Boyer, "What Supernatural Concepts are Like"

Week 8: Explanation cont.

- 3/1 (M) Other Minds
- Pascal Boyer, "The Kind of Mind it Takes"
- 3/3 (W) Explanation?
- Film: *Holy Smoke!*

****Midterm Exam Distributed on Friday, March 3****

Week 9: Consciousness

- 3/8 (M) Perennial Philosophies of Mind?
- Evan Thompson, "Introduction" and "Seeing: What is Conscious?"
- 3/10 (W) A Return to Experience
- Evan Thompson, "Being: What is Pure Awareness?"

****Midterm Exam Due on Friday, March 12****

Week 10: Prayer

- 3/15 (M) Spheres of Existence
- Candy Gunther Brown, "The Magisteria of Science and Religion"
- 3/17 (W) Measurement
- Candy Gunther Brown, "Can Health Outcomes of Prayer Be Measured"

Week 11: Prayer cont.

- 3/22 (M) Mixing Methods
- Candy Gunther Brown, "What Science Can Show about Prayer"
- 3/24 (W) Cognitive Burdens
- Film: *Them That Follow* (2019)

SHORT ASSIGNMENT #3 DISTRIBUTED (due on 4/1)

Week 12: Tulpas and Me

- 3/29 (M) Varieties of Tulpa Experience
- Samuel Veissère, "Varieties of tulpa experiences: The hypnotic nature of human sociality, personhood, and interphenomenality"
 - Samuel Veissère, "Daring to Hear Voices"
- 3/31 (W) Exploring Tulpamancy
- *Exploratory project*: Find online resources for how to create a Tulpa and be ready to discuss them in class

Week 13: Placebos and Paper Presentations

- 4/5 (M) Placebos Today
- Amir Raz and Cory S. Harris, “Foreword” and “Introduction” in *Placebo Talks*
 - Laurence J. Kirmayer, “Unpacking the placebo response: insights from ethnographic studies of healing” (in lieu of a video lecture you will be asked to participate in a discussion forum on Blackboard in response to these readings)
- 4/7 (W) Student Paper Presentations

Week 14: Placebos and Paper Presentations cont.

- 4/12 (M) Placebos, Deception, and Trust
- Bennett Foddy, “Justifying deceptive placebos”
 - Marie Prévost, Anna Zuckerman, and Ian Gold, “Trust and the placebo effect” (in lieu of a video lecture you will be asked to participate in a discussion forum on Blackboard in response to these readings)
- 4/14 (W) Student Paper Presentations

Week 15: Paper

- 4/19 (M) Open paper review session (via Zoom from 2:20 pm–3:35 pm)
- 4/21 (W) No Class: Wellness Holiday

FINAL PAPER: Due on April 28 at 6:00 pm

Bibliography

- American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition, DSM-5*. Washington, DC and London, England: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2013.
- Anczyk, Adam and Halina Grzymala-Moszczyńska. "Psychology of religion(s) and religious studies: into the future." *Religion* Vol. 50, No. 1 (2020): 24–31.
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- Brown, Candy Gunther. *Testing Prayer: Science and Healing*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: Harvard University Press, 2012.
- Krishna, Gopi. *Living with Kundalini: The Autobiography of Gopi Krishna*. Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2017.
- Luhrmann, T. M. and Jocelyn Marrow (eds.). *Our Most Troubling Madness: Case Studies of Schizophrenia Across Cultures*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016.
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- Taylor, Jill Bolte. *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*. New York: Viking Books, 2008.
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