

Course Syllabus
Psychology 4040-1
Psychology of Religion

Spring 2020

Wednesday 4:15-7:50

Semester Units: 4

Instructor: *G. Michael Leffel, PhD, Professor of Psychology*

Office: *Culbertson Hall 104*

Office Phone: (619) 849-2278

E-mail: michaelleffel@pointloma.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND DESIGN

This course is a survey of some of the “hot topics” and “great debates” in the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality (Division 36, American Psychological Association). Second, the course focuses on a sub-field within the psychology of religion known as the *psychology of spiritual transformation*.

The purpose of each class session is to highlight selected topics from the required readings and to supplement this material with related ideas. *Students are responsible for all assigned readings, whether or not discussed in class.* A “graduate style” discussion format will be used in the course. *Each student is expected to have read the assigned reading for class discussion (Reading Schedule below), and be prepared to think together about the reading in class.*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

A. Attendance and Assigned Reading Responses (20%)

Across the semester you will complete two (2) Reading Responses and serve as Class Discussants for that week (explained in class). **Please see Class Schedule for your week (according to last name).** These reading responses help you prepare for class discussion and for the Exams. Your Reading Response is graded 0-10 pts.

Class attendance each week is 3 pts. Please see Attendance Policy below.

B. Class Discussant and Mini-Presentations (20%)

Additionally, on the week of your Reading Response, you will also serve as a Class Discussant. As explained in class, you will provide for a brief summary/synopsis of a portion of the pages in the reading. Please prepare 4-5 minute presentation using power point slides (usually 4-6 slides) that can be used on the document camera. *Turn-in slides upon completion of your presentation.* These slides and synopsis will be also be graded 0-10 pts. **Note:** In preparation for you Mini-Presentation, **the week before you present** in class, meet with the other assigned class discussants and decide who will talk about which pages (divide the article evenly).

C. Mid-term (30%) and Final (30%)

There will be an in-class Mid-Term Exam and a take-home Final (explained in class).

2.

Attendance Policy and Contribution to Grade

Please come to class. When you are not present, the class dynamic changes. Inconsistent class attendance/tardiness impacts your final grade in the following way:

1. In a once-a-week course, following **ONE (1) unexcused** absence, *beginning with the second unexcused absence*, five (5) points will be deducted from your Final Total for each absence. In this class this deduction usually impacts your final grade.

2. In addition: "Whenever the number of accumulated absences in a class, **for any cause**, exceeds 10% percent of classes (equivalent to one and one-half weeks in a 15-week semester course), the faculty member sends a written report to the Associate Provost for Academic Administration which may result in de-enrollment" (Catalog, p. 37). In this course, *that would be after two (2) absences in this class*.

PLNU Attendance Policy and Reporting

What is an "Unexcused" Absence?

1. "There are no allowed or excused absences except when absences are necessitated by certain University-sponsored activities and are approved in writing by the Provost" (Catalog).

2. In addition, the Professor will excuse (legitimate) illness only with MD note. No exceptions please.

3. Medical (check-ups) and Dental appointments ARE NOT excused absences.

OFFICE HOURS

To schedule an appointment with me: Either (i) arrange a time with me after class, or (ii) write me a note with your available times and telephone number.

Making an appointment will insure that you have the uninterrupted amount of time you wish to speak with me. Please call me or ask me in class.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

"All students are expected to meet the standards for this course as set by the instructor. However, students with learning disabilities who may need accommodations should discuss options with the Academic Support Center (ASC) during the first two weeks of class. The ASC will contact professors with suggestions related to classroom needs and accommodations. Approved documentation must be on file in the ASC prior to the start of the semester."

Point Loma Nazarene University
Psychology Department
Academic Guides

DEPARTMENT FACULTY NORMAL CURVE GUIDES

Z Score

A	1.33	0.0918	9.2%	
A-	1	0.1587	6.7%	15.9%
B+	0.67	0.2514	9.3%	
B	0.33	0.3707	11.9%	
B-	0	0.5	12.9%	34.1%
C+	-0.33	0.6293	12.9%	
C	-1	0.8413	21.2%	
C-	-1.33	0.9082	6.7%	40.8%
D+	-1.67	0.9525	4.4%	
D	-2	0.9772	2.5%	
D-	-2.33	0.9901	1.3%	
F	<-2.33	1	1.0%	9.2%

Percentage Score

A =	93-100%	Total points
A -	90-92%	
B +	88-89%	
B	84-87%	
B -	80-83%	
C +	77-79%	
C	70-76%	
C -	65-69%	
D +	62-64%	
D	55-61%	
D -	50-54%	
F	49%	or below

A minimum of 50 % is needed to pass the course.

DEPARTMENT FACULTY STUDY AND ATTENDANCE GUIDES

STUDY TIME: A faculty member should design courses with the expectation that a student would spend an average daily study time of two (2) hours outside class for each hour of time spent in classroom.

STUDY SCHEDULE: It is not the faculty member's responsibility to schedule the two hours of outside study. A student should learn to use this time without explicit direction nor coercion. It takes most students this much time to do regular assignments.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is required for all classes. If a faculty member establishes the student as responsible for his/her attendance, it does not mean that absences are excused. The catalog lists the only excused absences.

PSY 4040

Course-at-a-Glance

Hot Topics and Great Debates in the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

Part 1

The Skyhook and the Crane

What ‘On Earth’ is Religion For?

Themes to Develop: How (and why) religion may be good for you; the difference between religion and spirituality; multiple meanings of spirituality; the relationship between moral goodness and mature spirituality; moral intuitions and moral emotions as a “natural” basis for religion/spirituality.

Part 2

The “Missing Link”

Spiritual Transformation, Personality, and Moral Motivation

Themes to Develop: Contrasting models of Christian spirituality; the riddle of religious prosociality; the judgment-action gap and “rationalist fallacy”; do spiritual practices change personality; the issue of moral motivation; three-level model of motivation for spiritual transformation.

Part 3

The Downward Ascent

Rediscovering a Forgotten “Way” of Spiritual Transformation

Themes to Develop: The contribution of theology to spiritual transformation; rethinking the problem, purpose, and process of spiritual transformation; the concept of *developmental spirituality*; the “dark night” of the soul; three processes of spiritual transformation.

Part 4

Embodied Goodness

Spiritual Transformation in the New Science of Virtue

Themes to Develop: The capacity to care as central *telos* of spiritual maturity; why the psychology of spiritual transformation needs a virtue approach; what is a virtue; a new model of virtuous caring for spiritual transformation.

5.

PSY 4040
Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

Note: Each week please read both readings in preparation for class discussion. In addition, several times in the semester you will prepare a Reading Response and serve as Class Discussant for one of the articles (please check Syllabus for your day, according to Last Name).

Introduction: Week 1 (Jan 15)

Intro to the Course

Hot Topics and Great Debates in the Psychology of Religion

*Organizing Theme of the Course

Dante's Quest: A New Direction for the Psychology of Spiritual Transformation

Read after Class: (Class Handout, *Brief Report #1*) Dante's Quest

Optional Reading: (Distributed in class) Dante and *The Divine Commedia*

Part 1

The Skyhook and the Crane

What 'On Earth' is Religion For?

Themes to Develop: How (and why) religion may be good for you; the difference between religion and spirituality; multiple meanings of spirituality; the relationship between spirituality and moral goodness; moral intuitions and moral emotions as a "natural" basis for religion/spirituality.

Week 2 (Jan 22)

What "Good" is Religion?

Introduction

Dante's Vision: Re-Viewing a "Lost" Psychology of Spiritual Transformation

Read: Finish reading *Brief Report #1* from Week 1

Religion and the Flourishing Life

Surprising Findings and Unresolved Questions

Reader: Myers, *Religion and Human Flourishing*

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) A-Bai

The Difference Between Religiousness and Spirituality

Why the Distinction May Matter

Reader: Vaillant, *The Difference Between Religion and Spirituality*

Reading Responses/Discussants: (Last Name) Bar-Br

Week 3 (Jan 29)

Does Religion Make Us "Good"?

Introduction

The New, Great Debate about the "Ultimate Concerns" of Religion

Read after Class: (Class Handout distributed in class today, *Brief Report #2*)

(next page)

6.

Why Religion is Not (Merely) About God

The Moral Heart of "Mature" Religion

Reader: Armstrong, *Wish for a Better World*

Reading Responses/Discussants: (Last Name) Bri-Cov

The Critical Test of "True" Spirituality

The Relationship between the Moral and the Spiritual

Reader: Symington, *Emotion and Spirit*

Reading Responses/Discussants: (Last Name) Cu

Week 4 (Feb 5)

Is Spirituality "Natural" to Human Beings?

Introduction

The Skyhook and the Crane: The Transcendentalist–Naturalist Debate

"Beyond Belief"

The (Possible) Natural Origins of Religious and Moral Codes

Reader: Graham & Haidt, *Beyond Beliefs*

Reading Responses/Discussants: (Last Name) E-Ha

"Spiritual Evolution"

Moral Emotions that Connect Us to God and Each Other

Reader: Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution*, Positive Emotions

Reading Responses/Discussants: (Last Name) Hu-J

***Note: Pick-up additional Reading for Next Week in class today**

Part 2

The "Missing Link"

Spiritual Transformation, Personality, and Moral Motivation

Themes to Develop: The psychology of spiritual transformation; contrasting models of Christian spirituality; the riddle of religious prosociality; the judgment-action gap and "rationalist fallacy"; what changes in spiritual transformation; how moral goodness is motivated; three-level model of personality for spiritual transformation.

Week 5 (Feb 12)

Contrasting Models of Christian Spirituality

Introduction: "Relationship with God": What Do You Really Mean?

Destination Makes All The Difference

Contrasting Visions of the "Ends" and "Means" of Spirituality

Reader: Crabb, *Inside Out*, pp. 43-53

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) K-M

7.

What Are We “Practicing” and Why?

The Ends-Means “Mismatch” in Christian Practices

Distributed last class: Bennett, *Practices of Love*, Preface

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) O-Ped

***Note: Pick-up *Brief Report #3* for next week**

Week 6 (Feb 19)

Are Spiritual Practices Making Us Good-er?

Introduction

Spiritual Transformation and the “Riddle” of Religious Prosociality

Are Spiritual Practices Changing Personality?

Reviewing and Appraising the Evidence (So Far)

Reading Distributed last class: *Brief Report #3*

Reading Responses/Discussants: (Last Name) Pet-R

Spiritual Transformation and the “Big Five” Traits

The Dilemma of Agreeableness and Neuroticism

(Class Notes)

Distribution of In-Class Mid-Term Study Questions (Exam: Mar 4)

***Note: Pick-up *Brief Report #4* for next week**

Week 7 (Feb 26)

What Really Motivates Us to “Be Good”?

Introduction

The Issue of Moral Motivation: Why “Go and Do Likewise” is Necessary, But Not Sufficient

A Multi-System Model of Moral Motivation for Spiritual Transformation

Narrative, Valuation, Intuition

Distributed last class: *Brief Report #4*

Reading Responses/Discussants: (Last Name) Ri-Y

What “Motivates” and “Enables” Goodness?

How the Intuition System May Work

Distributed last class: *Brief Report #4*

Week 8 (Mar 4)

In-Class Mid-Term

Week 9 (Mar 11)

Happy Spring Break

8.

Part 3

The Downward Ascent

Rediscovering a Forgotten “Way” of Spiritual Transformation

Themes to Develop: The contribution of theology to spiritual transformation; rethinking the problem, purpose, and process of spiritual transformation; the concept of *developmental spirituality*; the “dark night” of the soul; three processes of spiritual transformation.

Week 10 (Mar 18)

“Dark Night of the Soul” (Part 1)

Introduction: Spiritual Theology and the “Dark Night of the Soul”

Overview of the Dark Night

“The Purpose” of Night

Reader: Coe, *Musings on the Dark Night of the Soul*, pp. 293-296 (to Purgation)

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) A-Bai

The Liberation of Love

Quest towards “Likeness in Love”

Reader: May, *Dark Night of the Soul*, pp. 58-74

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) Bar-Bra

Week 11 (Mar 25)

“Dark Night” (Part 2)

Introduction: Love and the Dilemma of Vice

When Darkness is Light

The “Problem” of the Dark Night

Reader: Coe, *Musings on the Dark Night of the Soul*, pp. 296-302

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) Bi-Co

Introduction to the “Glittering Vices”

Pride and the “Tree of Vice”

Reader: DeYoung, *Glittering Vices*, Intro and Ch. 1

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) Cu-G

Week 12 (Apr 1)

“Dark Night” (Part 3)

Introduction: Vice and the “Subtractive Action” of Healing

Why Less is More

The “Process” of the Dark Night

Reader: Coe, *Musings on the Dark Night of the Soul*, pp. 302-307

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) H-Ja

Walking in the Dark

Practical Tips for the “Road”

(Class Notes)

9.

Week 13 (Apr 8)

Easter Recess

Part 4

Embodied Goodness

Spiritual Transformation in the New Science of Virtue

Major Themes: The capacity to care as central goal of spiritual maturity; why spiritual transformation needs a virtue approach; how virtues motivate us to be good (care); which virtues and why.

Week 14 (Apr 15)

The Nature and Meaning of "Love"

Introduction: A Second Problem with "The Golden Rule"

"Homo Caritatis"

So, What Do You Mean By "Love"

Reading: TBD

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) Jo-M

Who Cares?

A New Model of Virtuous Caring

Reading: TBD

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) O-P

Week 15 (Apr 22)

What "Good" is a Virtue?

Introduction: Why Virtues Are More Important Than We Have Believed

How Virtue is a Brain Thing

The New "Neurodynamic" Model of Virtue

Reading: TBD

Reading Responses and Class Discussants: (Last Name) R-Y

Week 16 (Apr 29)

No Class Dr. Leffel at WPA

Finals Week (Wed, May 6)

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. As explained in the university catalog, academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. Violations of university academic honesty include cheating, plagiarism, falsification, aiding the academic dishonesty of others, or malicious misuse of university resources. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for a) that particular assignment or examination, and/or b) the course following the procedure in the university catalog. Students may appeal also using the procedure in the university catalog. See Academic Policies for further information.

COPYRIGHT POLICY

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

FINAL EXAMINATION POLICY

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the Class Schedules site. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.