

Course Syllabus
Psychology 4040
Psychology of Religion

Spring 2021

Tu or Thrs 4:00

Semester Units: 4

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

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND DESIGN

This course is, first, 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. Weekly Attendance (45 points)

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

B. Weekly Reading Reflections (240 points)

For most weeks you will read two (2) articles that we will discuss in class. You will complete Reading Reflections for each reading. Each Reflection is graded 0-10 on completeness and thoughtfulness of your response. *This is a substantial portion of your grade.* Each week, **before you attend class at 4:00**, submit Reading Reflections to CANVAS.

C. Essay Mid-term Exam (100 points)

Submit to CANVAS no later than 4:00 (before your scheduled class) on Week 10.

D. Essay Final Exam (60 points)

Submit to CANVAS no later than 4:00 (before your scheduled class) on Finals Week.

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 assure 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.

4.

PSY 4040

Course-at-a-Glance

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

Part 1

Spirituality for “Goodness” Sake

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 spirituality; moral “intuitions” and moral emotions as a natural foundation for religion/spirituality.

Part 2

The “Downward” Ascent

Discovering a Forgotten Way of Spiritual Transformation

Themes to Develop: How spiritual theology can help the psychology of 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 in the “moral likeness” model.

Part 3

The “Silver Key”

The Dilemma of Selfishness and Psychology of Vice

Major Themes: Why the psychology of spiritual transformation needs a psychology of vice; how vices relate to the *summum bonum* of love; love and the “classic” seven principal vices; pride (implicit narcissism) as the central human condition; Horney’s psychological model of pride.

Part 4

Crafted 4 Care

“Ancient” Spirituality Meets 21st Century Virtue Science

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

Week 1
A Parable for Our Time

Introduction and Overview of the Course
The New Conversation on Religion, Spirituality, and Morality
Read in Class (in CANVAS): *Brief Report #1*

Part 1
Spirituality for “Goodness” Sake
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
What “Good” is Religion?

Reading Note: Please read EACH reading in preparation for class discussion. Submit your two (2) Reading Responses to CANVAS *on the day we discuss it in class* (for full credit).

Introduction: A New Direction for the Psychology of Spiritual Transformation
Read before Class: (in CANVAS) Finish reading *Brief Report #1* from Week 1

2.1 Religion and the “Flourishing” Life
Surprising Findings and Unresolved Questions
Reader: Myers, *Religion and Human Flourishing*

2.2 The Difference Between Religiosity and Spirituality
Why the Distinction May Matter
Reader: Vaillant, *The Difference Between Religion and Spirituality*

Week 3
Can You Hear the “Music”?

Introduction: The New Great Debate about “Ultimate Concerns”
Read before Class: (in CANVAS) *Brief Report #2*

3.1 Multiple Meanings of “Spirituality”
A Guide for the Perplexed
(Class Notes)

3.2 The Swimming Pool and Quest
Two “Ways” to View the Place of Religion
Reader: Frattoroli, *Swimming Pool and Quest*

6.

Week 4

Quest and “The Hero’s Adventure”

Introduction: Mythology as Guide to Spiritual Transformation
(Class Notes)

4.1 “The Hero’s Adventure”

Ancient, New Story of Spiritual Transformation

Reader: Moyers, *The Hero’s Adventure*

4.2 When the “Story” is Lost

In the Middle of the Road We Call Life

Reader: Shutt, *Monsters, Gods, and Heroes*, Dante and the Divine Comedy

Week 5

The Relation of Morality to Spirituality

Introduction: But, Does Religion Make Us “Good”?
(Class Notes)

5.1 The Heart of “Mature” Spirituality

The “Triangle of Ultimate Concerns” and Morality

Reader: Symington, *Emotion and Spirit*

5.2 The Moral Core of “Mature” Religion

The “Natural” Moral Foundation of Religious Spirituality

Reader: Armstrong, *Wish for a Better World*

Week 6

“Deep Architecture” of Spirituality

Introduction: Is Spirituality “Natural” to Human Beings?
(Class Notes)

6.1 “Beyond Belief”

The (Possible) Natural Origins of Religious Moral Codes

Reader: Graham & Haidt, *Beyond Beliefs*

6.2 “Spiritual Evolution”

Moral Emotions that Connect Us to God and Others

Reader: Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution*, Ch. 1, Positive Emotions

7.

Part 2
The “Downward” Ascent
Discovering a Forgotten Way of Spiritual Transformation

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

Week 7

Christian Spirituality: What Do You Really Mean?

Introduction: Spiritual Theology and Contrasting Models of Divine-human Interaction
(Class Notes)

7.1 “The End is in the Beginning” (Again)

Contrasting Visions of the “Ends” and “Means” of Spirituality

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

7.2 What Are We Practicing, and Why?

The Ends-Means “Mismatch” in Christian Practices

Reader: Bennett, *Practices of Love*, Preface

Week 8

“Dark Night of the Soul” (Part 1)

Introduction: Overview of a “Lost” Psychology of Spirituality

Read before Class (in CANVAS): *Brief Report #3*

8.1 Overview of the Dark Night

The “Purpose” of the Night

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

8.2 The Liberation of Love

The Quest of “Likeness in Love”

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

8.

Week 9

“Dark Night” (Part 2)

Introduction: Love and the Dilemma of Vice
(Class Notes)

9.1 When Darkness is Light

The “Problem” of the Dark Night

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

9.2 Introduction to the “Glittering Vices”

Why Virtues and Vices Are Still Important

Reader: DeYoung, *Glittering Vices*, Introduction

Week 10

“Dark Night” (Part 3)

Mid-Term Exam Due: Submit to CANVAS before 4:00 the day of your scheduled class
(Tues or Thurs) See you in class.

Introduction: Vice and the “Subtractive Action” of Transformative Healing
(Class Notes)

10. 1 Why “Less is More”

The “Process” of the Dark Night

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

10.2 Walking in the Dark

Practical Tips for Everyday Life

(Class Notes)

9.

Part 3

The "Silver Key"

The Problem of Selfishness and Psychology of Vice

Major Themes: Why the psychology of spiritual transformation needs a psychology of vice; how vices relate to the *summum bonum* of love; love and the "classic" seven principal vices; pride (implicit narcissism) as the central human condition; three process of spiritual transformation in the moral likeness model.

Week 11

Selfishness and the Problem of "Pride"

Introduction: "Ascent" on Dante's Mount Purgatory
(Class Notes)

11.1 "Glittering Vices"

Pride and the "Tree of Vice"
(Class Notes)

11.2 Pride or Self-Contempt?

Framing the Great Debate

Reader: Cooper, Introduction AND Ch. 6, pp. 112-126 (only)

Week 12

How is Pride the "Root" of the Vices?

Introduction: Rediscovering the Psychology of Vice
(Class Notes)

12.1 Vainglory: "Image is Everything"

The Confusion of Pride and "Arrogance"

Reader: DeYoung, *Glittering Vices*, Ch. 3 (Vainglory)

12.2 Karen Horney on the "Pride System" of Personality

The "Idealized Self" and Self-Hate

Reader: Cooper, Ch. 6, pp. 126 – 134

10.

Week 13

“Train Your Mind to Sculpt the Brain to Change Your Heart”

Introduction: Contemplative Mind Science and the Process of “Purgation”
(Class Notes)

13.1 The Tragic “Search for Glory”

Horney’s Conception of the Idealized Self and Pride

Reader: Cooper, Ch. 6, pp. 134-remainder of chapter

13.2 Science Looks at Spirituality

How Mindful Practices Can Subtract Vices and Add Virtues

Reader: Kristeller & Johnson, *Science Looks at Spirituality*

Part 4

Crafted 4 Care

“Ancient” Spirituality Meets 21st Century Virtue Science

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

The New Science of Virtues

Introduction: “Ancient” Spirituality Meets 21st Century Virtue Science
(Class Notes)

14.1 The Science of Human Goodness

A Look at Forgiveness and Gratitude

Reader: *The Compassionate Instinct: The Science of Human Goodness*

14.2 What “Good” is a Virtue?

Why Virtues Are More Important Than We Have Believed

Read before Class: (in Canvas) Leffel, *Who Cares?*

Week 15

A Model of Virtuous Caring for Spiritual Transformation

Introduction: Who Cares? A Model of Virtuous Caring
(Class Notes)

15.1 Which Virtues, and Why? (Part 1)

Virtues of “Reflective Awareness”

Reader: Siegel, *The Mindful Brain*, Ch. 1

15. 2 Which Virtues, and Why? (Part 2)

Virtues of “Motivated Capacity”

Read before Class: (in CANVAS) Leffel, *Who Cares?*