

Course Syllabus
Psychology 4040-1
Psychology of Religion

Spring 2023
Wed 4:15, Liberty Station 207
Semester Units: 4
Instructor: *G. Michael Leffel, PhD, Professor of Psychology*
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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 is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

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. Weekly Attendance (approx. 50 points)

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

B. Weekly Reading Reflections (approx. 100 points)

For most weeks you will read two (2) articles that we will be discussing in class, and complete a Reading Reflection for each article. Each Reflection is graded 0-7 on completeness and thoughtfulness of your response. *This is a substantial portion of your grade.* Bring your Reading Reflection to class; please DO NOT email.

C. Essay Mid-term Exam (100 points)

Discussed in class.

D. Essay Final Exam (60 points)

Discussed 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 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.”

COURSE CREDIT HOUR INFORMATION

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 4 unit class delivered over 16 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 150 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes. The time estimations are provided in the Canvas modules.

STATE AUTHORIZATION

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical

location. Refer to the map on State Authorization to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU 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.

PLNU ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. 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. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY ☼

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student’s eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan (“AP”) to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

In order to be successful in the online or hybrid environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [*Technology and System Requirements*](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers, microphone, or webcams compatible with their computer available to use. Please note that any course with online proctored exams requires a computer with a camera (tablets are not compatible) to complete exams online.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

PSY 4040

Course-at-a-Glance

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

Part 1

What ‘On Earth’ is Religion For?

Examining the Meanings and Benefits of Religion and Spirituality

Major 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

Major Themes: 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”

Exploring the Problem of Selfishness and Pride

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

5.

PSY 4040 Psychology of Religion and Spirituality *Discussion and Reading Schedule*

Week 1 (Jan 12)

Introduction: A Parable for Our Time
Overview of the Course

Part 1

What ‘On Earth’ is Religion For?

Examining the Meanings and Benefits of Religion and Spirituality

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.

Jan 19

No Class (Dr. Leffel speaking at a conference)

Week 2 (Jan 26)

What “Good” is Religion?

Reading Note: Please read EACH article in preparation for class discussion. Bring your Reading Reflections to class ***on the day we discuss it in class*** (for full credit).

Introduction: The Surprising Benefits of Religion (or Spirituality)

(Class Notes)

2.1 Religion and the “Flourishing” Life

Surprising Findings and Unresolved Questions

Reader: Myers, *Religion and Human Flourishing*

(Read and Write a Reading Reflection)

2.2 The Difference Between Religiosity and Spirituality

Why the Distinction May Matter

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

(Read and Write a Reading Reflection)

•**Check course packet for next week’s reading:** Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution*, Ch. 10

6.

Week 3 (Feb 2)

What Do You Mean by “Spirituality”?

Introduction: The New Great Debate about “Ultimate Concerns”

(Class Notes)

3.1 Multiple Meanings of “Spirituality”

A Guide for the Perplexed

(Class Notes)

3.2 Awe and Mystical Illumination

Spirituality as “Numinous Experience”

Reading: Vaillant, *Spiritual Evolution*, Ch. 10 **(Reading in course packet)**

(Read and Write)

Week 4 (Feb 9)

Spirituality for “Goodness” Sake

Introduction: Does Religion (or Spirituality) Make Us Good?

(Class Notes)

4.1 The Heart of “Mature” Spirituality

Moral Goodness and the “Triangle of Ultimate Concerns”

Reader: Symington, *Emotion and Spirit*

(Read and Write)

4.2 The Moral Core of “Mature” Religion

The “Natural” Moral Foundation of Religious Spirituality

Reader: Armstrong, *Wish for a Better World*
(Read and Write)

Week 5 (Feb 16)

“Deep Architecture” of Spirituality

Note: Select either 6.1 or 6.2 to Write (not both)

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

5.1 “Beyond Belief”

The (Possible) Natural Origins of Religious Moral Codes

Reader: Graham & Haidt, *Beyond Beliefs*

(A-F Write a Reading Reflection)

5.2 “Spiritual Evolution”

Moral Emotions that Connect Us to God and Others

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

(G-W Write a Reading Reflection)

Mid-Term Essay Exam Questions Distributed in class (Due: Tue, Mar 23)

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 6 (Feb 23)

Christian Spirituality: What Do You Really Mean?

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

6.1 How Does God Change Lives?

Contrasting Visions of Divine-human Interaction

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

(Read and Write)

6.2 Which Spiritual Practices, and Why?

The Ends-Means “Mismatch” in Christian Practices

Reader: Bennett, *Practices of Love*, Preface

(Read and Write)

Week 7 (Mar 2)

“Dark Night of the Soul” (Part 1)

Introduction: Overview of a “Lost” Psychology of Spirituality
(Class Notes)

7.1 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)

(Read and Write)

7.2 The Liberation of Love

The Quest of “Likeness in Love”

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

(Read and Write)

Mar 9

Happy Spring Break

8.

Week 8 (Mar 16)

“Dark Night” (Part 2)

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

8.1 When Darkness is Light

The “Problem” of the Dark Night

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

(Read and Write)

8.2 Introduction to the “Glittering Vices”

Why Virtues and Vices Are Still Important

Reader: DeYoung, *Glittering Vices*, Introduction

(Read and Write)

Week 9 (Mar 23)

“Dark Night” (Part 3)

Introduction: Vice and the “Subtractive Action” of Spiritual Transformation
(Class Notes)

9.1 Why “Less is More”

The “Process” of the Dark Night

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

(Read, but don’t Write)

9.2 Walking in the Dark

Practical Tips for Everyday Life

(Class Notes)

Mid-Term Exam Due: Please bring Hard Copy to class; don't email

9.

Part 3

The "Silver Key"

Exploring the Dilemma of Selfishness and Pride

Themes to Develop: 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 processes of spiritual transformation in the moral likeness model.

Week 10 (Mar 30)

The Psychology of Selfishness, Pride, and "Vice"

Introduction: Framing the Issue for "Healing Spirituality"

(Class Notes)

10.1 Pride or Self-Contempt? (K. Horney, Part 1)

Framing the Great Debate

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

(Read and Write)

10.2 "Glittering Vices"

Why Vices Are More Important Than We Have Believed

(Class Notes)

•Final Exam Questions Distributed in Class

Week 11 (Apr 6)

How is Pride the “Root” of Our Problem?

Introduction: Pride and the “Tree of Vice”
(Class Notes)

11.1 The Tragic “Search for Glory” (K. Horney, Part 2)

Horney’s Conception of Pride and the “Idealized Self”

Reader: Cooper, Ch. 6, pp. 126 – 134

(Read and Write)

11.2 Vainglory: “Image is Everything”

The Confusion of Pride and “Arrogance”

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

(Read and Write)

Apr 13

Happy Easter Recess

10.

Week 12 (Apr 20)

12.1 The “Pride System” of Personality (K. Horney, Part 3)

How the Idealized Self Makes Us ‘Less Loving, More Selfish’

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

(All Read and Write)

Week 13 (Apr 27)

To Be Determined

FINALS WEEK (May 4)

Part 4

Crafted 4 Care

“Ancient” Spirituality Meets 21st Century Virtue Science

Major Themes: 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.