

## SUL ROSS STATE UNIVERSITY – BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE (BASS) DEPARTMENT

### PSY 4310 COURSE SYLLABUS – FALL 2019

Course Title: Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

Prerequisites: General Psychology (PSY 1302)

Contact Information: Alicia M. Trotman, PhD, [alicia.trotman@sulross.edu](mailto:alicia.trotman@sulross.edu), 432-837-8147

Office (LH306) Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays (10:30am – 12:30pm) & Thursdays (12:30 - 1:30pm)

---

*“That the controlling energies of nature are personal, that your own personal thoughts are forces, that the powers of the universe will directly respond to your individual appeals and needs, are propositions which your whole bodily and mental experience will verify.” – William James*

#### COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Welcome to the realm of the *personal* and *public*! Religion (and spirituality) are two very powerful forces in our world today because both are used to rationalize actions from the most heinous to the most awe-inspiring. Given their span in the context of reason, religion (and spirituality) implicate the self in twisted ways. One can claim to be religious, yet their actions betray their beliefs, and one can be spiritual, but refrains from venturing near any religious community. A paradox that exists in the self, and manifests itself outward in relationships, and eventually institutions. The classic question is Why? The aim of this course is to begin asking these questions, and to explore possible solutions, and in some cases, remain in the indefinite. We will review well known pioneers in the field (William James, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow) and lesser known pioneers (Gloria Anzaldua, Lillian Comas-Diaz, Kwame Nkrumah, Thich Nhat Han).

We will approach psychology of religion and spirituality from the inside out, in a similar fashion as the textbook for this course. We will begin reviewing the intentions of the well known pioneers as they attempted to provide their version of religion (and spirituality). We will then undertake the developmental context of how religion (and spirituality) infuse the lives of human beings from birth to death. Finally, we will take a personal journey as you discover ways how religion (and spirituality) work from you individually, and gradually building to identifying your values, virtues, coping styles, and coming towards the end examining your actions in your own community and culture. We will attempt to make the personal public, and the public personal.

You will conduct basic research analyzing yourself in a unique setting. The view of self is crucially important to the religion (and spirituality) and we will most likely employ a phenomenological methodology. Phenomenology is a methodical investigation to study self-awareness and existence. Thus, the goal of these activities is to help you understand the varieties of religious (and spiritual) constructs, and how these constructs shape understanding in personal and public realms, including your own.

## Student Learning Outcomes

- i. Learn the religious (and spiritual) approaches, perspectives and vocabulary that are introduced in this course.  
**Method of Assessment:** Reading Exercises
- ii. Describe and critique the major explanations in the religion (and spirituality). Attend to their affective and spiritual responses to the material.  
**Method of Assessment:** Reading Exercises
- iii. Consider and cogently discuss the inter-relationship between psychology and religion, and psychology and spirituality, and begin to articulate their own methodology.  
**Method of Assessment:** Reading Exercises
- iv. Apply the varieties of religion (and spirituality) to understand how human beings translate their value and existence, and subsequent actions.  
**Method of Assessment:** Reading Exercises
- v. Create a discovery portfolio that showcases your personal investment (or not) into religion (and spirituality) effectively making your research public.  
**Method of Assessment:** Reading Exercises, Portfolio

## TEXT

*The required text must be obtained (online, offline or older edition is acceptable).*

Required Text: Sisemore, T. A. (2016). *The psychology of religion and spirituality: From the inside out*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. *The text must be obtained and can be a physical or digital publication.*
2. Respect for students and lecturer must be maintained at all times when we meet. Respect is a basic human characteristic that entitles each person to their own right and identity. It also helps to nurture a healthy learning environment. If you recognize that respecting others may be a problem, please be courteous and alert me or more suitable personnel (e.g. Sul Ross State University psychologists, family members, lecturers, close friends) and or refer to the Student Conduct and Discipline section of the [SRSU Student Handbook](#).

3. During the course of this class, you may have strong emotional/psychological reactions to the course material and/or discussions. If you feel that you are having difficulty with the learning environment, please discuss this with me immediately before continuing the course. Counseling and Accessibility Services (<http://www.sulross.edu/section/2408/counseling-accessibility-services>) can provide brief, short-term individual and group counseling or refer you to off-campus providers. You have already paid for these services through your Student Service Fee, whether you use them or not.

### AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT STATEMENT:

Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. **In order to receive accommodations on exams or assignments, you must first provide proper documentation to the Office of Counseling and Accessibility Services.** *Please contact Mary Schwartz, Counselor, Accessibility Services Coordinator (Office: 112 Ferguson Hall) to set up an accommodations meeting, call (432) 837-8203 or mail to P.O. Box C-171 Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas 79832.* Students must then present this documentation to the instructor as soon as possible so that accommodations may be arranged.

### CONVERSATIONS CAN CHANGE LIVES

Have you ever been worried about a student or friend on campus? Faculty, staff, and students are in an ideal position to recognize when someone is struggling emotionally and may need help. KognitoCampus is an online simulation that lets you practice conversations with a virtual student, so you'll know what to say in real life.

Sul Ross State University is making this program available to you to help create a safer and more supportive campus. To access this free resource, visit <https://kognitocampus.com/> or contact Counseling & Accessibility Services (<https://blogs.sulross.edu/counseling/>) for more information.

---

*“Our heart is restless until it rests in you.” – Saint Augustine*

*“When I am out in nature, it makes me feel like I am enough... I feel taken out of my personal chatter because you feel that everything is unfolding as it should...” – Brianna, Dancing the Labyrinth*

### HONORING ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any instance of academic misconduct such as (1) turning in an identical written assignment for another course without approval, (2) copying from any source without proper citation, (3) crossing the boundary of what is allowed in a group project, (4) lying in connection with your academic work, (5) cheating, (6) plagiarism, (7) misrepresenting facts and/or collusion are contrary to the purpose of any educational institution and will be dealt with **most severely** to the extent of the university's disciplinary policy

and/or through legal action if indicated. You will be held responsible for your actions. Particular attention will be directed to the appropriate use of materials available through the Internet. Whether intentional or not, improper use of materials is a violation of academic honesty and integrity. If you are unsure as to what is permissible, please speak with me. An instructor who determines that a student has been dishonest academically can at a minimum issue no credit for the assignment/exam, and/or pursue more severe penalties, including but not limited to failing the course. Before the penalty is imposed, the student has the right to appeal to the division chairperson or Assistant Provost for the Academic Affairs. Further information about *Academic Honesty* can be read in the [SRSU Student Handbook](#) and procedures for dealing with these acts are outlined in the [Scholastic Dishonesty Policy](#).

## OBSERVING CLASS GUIDELINES

### CLASS PARTICIPATION

This is a course that requires in class discussion and online experiences. **Class attendance IS REQUIRED and participation is important.** Class participation and attendance will be worth 15% of the final grade, and includes *prompt and regular attendance, active listening, writing, participating via an online poll or quiz, engaging in discussions, volunteering or doodling*. Early departure or late arrival for class (more than 15 minutes) on a weekly basis will lower your participation grade. If you repeatedly leave early or are late to class (**more than twice**), this will be counted as one absence and may result in a failing grade for the course. Besides attendance, all other forms of participation judged subjectively by me that showcases active involvement will increase your participation grade. Excused absences due to established religious observance, or emergency, university-authorized, legal or medical issues and events will not count toward the absence limit but do require written documentation. At your earliest convenience, arrange to make up any missing work as far in advance of your absence as possible. If you are unable to attend a class session for other circumstances, please discuss the reason with me and make arrangements with another student to obtain any notes, handouts or assignments you may have missed. **Excessive unexcused absences (more than 6 missed class sessions) WILL result in a failing grade for the course.**

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS/PROJECTS

You are expected to meet assignment deadlines. Late response posts or projects will be reduced by 10% of the overall assignment for the first day of lateness and 20% for lateness beyond that for unexcused absences. For excused absences (university-authorized, legal or medical issues), speak with me **before the absence** so arrangements can be made.

### CELL PHONE AND COMPUTER USE

During the entire class period, you should be fully engaged in the day's activity. Laptop computers or tablets are welcomed at every class meeting for the academic purposes of note taking or following along with the instructor's lesson. Inappropriate computer usage (e.g. checking your e-mail, using instant messaging, accessing Facebook, etc) or off-topic activity (e.g., reading the newspaper, cell phone use) is

highly discouraged and very disrespectful to the instructor and your peers. Please be advised that computer or cell phone use not pertaining to the class activity or discussion will be noted and result in being marked “absent” for the day.

## DISCUSSING EVALUATION

Students are expected to demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter and understanding of class material and discussions in the following ways:

### READING EXERCISES

These are short answer or essay questions you’ll be asked to answer individual or in pairs in class. These exercises are based on your understanding of the most pertinent concepts from assigned chapters of the readings assigned for each class. These exercises are worth twenty (20) points. These are graded in class so you obtain immediate feedback.

### DISCOVER PORTFOLIO

During the semester, each student will maintain an on-going portfolio. These portfolios are not group projects, and must be conducted individually. Student must identify a religious (or spiritual) activity with a subject/an object. This activity is to promote self-understanding and self-improvement that can be monitored on a weekly basis. The purpose of the portfolio is to provide a work-in-progress where students apply theory and findings in the course to a concrete, self-relevant situation. Students are expected to pick a subject/an object that is meaningful and important to them, and that they feel comfortable discussing with others because they will report on their portfolio in three written reports to the professor and in one oral presentation to the entire class. The instructor must approve the topic by **September 11th, 2019**. Projects that are deemed commonplace, immoral, illegal, or distasteful will not be approved (at the instructor’s discretion)

For each time students commit to their weekly activity, they must write, draw or create a journal entry. In addition, they must choose **one** concept learned in class and relate it to each journal entry. The concept **must** come from the varieties of religion (and spiritual) readings.

Throughout the semester, students will prepare three written reports (each will be 3-4 typewritten pages, double-spaced, normal fonts and margins) that present an account of their semester-to-date monitoring (less than a page) and an analysis of how themes discussed in class since the last report are being applied to the current report. This project is due on **December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019**. The presentations that are based on this project will be completed during finals week. You will present a couple of slides showing ways you integrated theories and the research findings discussed in class as pertinent to your portfolio. A model of this presentation and the rubric for assessment will be provided to you towards the end of the semester.

## GRADING

Students are expected to complete reading assignments prior to class sessions and to engage in thoughtful discussions in light of these assignments. In addition, students will post on a weekly basis and complete a self-analysis journaling project.

<b>Grading:</b>	<b>1000 points total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Attendance/Participation:	200 points total (15 @ 10 points each)	20%
Reading Exercises:	600 (20 @ 30 points each)	20%
Self-Analysis Project:	200 points	20%

*“Most of what is called religious bigotry is in fact the result of a confusion between ethnocentric self-interest and religion, with the latter called upon to rationalize and justify the former” ~ Gordon Allport*

**UNIT 1: INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Content</b>
August 26 <sup>h</sup> & 28 <sup>h</sup> (EARTH)	The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality (Aug. 30 <sup>th</sup> – Last day for late registration and schedule changes)
Homework	Read Chapters 1 and 2
September 4 <sup>th</sup> (MARS)	Review - Discussion
Homework	Read Chapter 3
September 9 <sup>th</sup> & 11 <sup>th</sup> (MERCURY)	Ch3 - Biological Aspects of Religion and Spirituality (Sept 12 <sup>th</sup> – Last day to drop classes without creating an academic record) <b>September 11<sup>th</sup> – Final decision on self-analysis journaling project</b>
Homework	Read Chapter 4
September 16 <sup>th</sup> & 18 <sup>th</sup> (VENUS)	Ch4 – Religions and Spiritual Development in Childhood
Homework	Read Chapter 5

**UNIT 2: RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY - DEVELOPMENT**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Content</b>
September 23 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup> (URANUS)	Ch5 - Religion and Spirituality in Adolescent and Emerging Adults
Homework	Read Chapter 6

September 30 <sup>th</sup> & October 2 <sup>nd</sup> (CALLISTO)	Ch6 – Religion in Adulthood
Homework	Read Chapter 7
October 7 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> (NEPTUNE)	Ch7 – Religion and Spirituality in Aging and Death First report of self-analysis journaling project due
Homework	Read Chapter 8
October 14 <sup>th</sup> & 16 <sup>th</sup> (MOON)	Ch8 - Individual Spiritual Transformation
Homework	Read Chapter 9
October 21 <sup>st</sup> & 23 <sup>rd</sup> (JUPITER)	The Individual and Religious Experience
Homework	Read Chapter 10

UNIT 3: RELIGIOUS & SPIRITUAL VIRTUES, VALUES AND COPING WITHIN THE INDIVIDUAL AND IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

Day	Content
October 28 <sup>th</sup> & 30 <sup>th</sup> (HALLOWEEN)	Ch10 – Religion and Spirituality Promote Virtues and Values
Homework	Read Chapter 11
November 4 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> (SUN)	Ch11 - The Psychology of Religious Coping and Psychotherapy
Homework	Read Chapter 12
November 13 <sup>th</sup> (SATURN)	Ch12 - Religious Communities (November 12 <sup>th</sup> : Last day for instructor initiated drop for excessive absences; November 16 <sup>th</sup> : Last day to drop a course with a ‘W’ by 4pm)
Homework	Read Chapter 13
November 18 <sup>th</sup> , 20 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup> (THANKS)	Ch12 – Religious Communities and Ch13 – Religion in the Context of Culture
Homework	Work on final presentations
December 2 <sup>nd</sup> (HOLIDAY)	Work on Final Presentations Final report of self-analysis journaling project due
Tuesday December 10 <sup>th</sup>	FINAL PRESENTATIONS (3 to 5pm)