

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

PSY 4310 COURSE SYLLABUS – FALL 2020

Course Title: Psychology of Religion and Spirituality
Prerequisites: General Psychology (PSY 1302)
Contact Information: Alicia M. Trotman, PhD, alicia.trotman@sulross.edu

“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. Given various religious (and spiritual) approaches, students can describe perspectives and vocabulary that are introduced in this course, and critique the major explanations.
Method of Assessment: Reading Exercises
- ii. Given the sensitivity of religious and spiritual approaches to persons' identities, students can respond to their affective and spiritual responses to the material.
Method of Assessment: Reading Exercises
- iii. Given the inter-relationships between psychology and religion, and psychology and spirituality, students can examine their own beliefs, and cogently compose viewpoints.
Method of Assessment: Reading Exercises
- iv. Given the existential and ontological typologies of religion (and spirituality), students can construct how human beings translate their value and existence, and subsequent actions.
Method of Assessment: Reading Exercises
- v. Given the personal investment of religion and spirituality to person's lives, students can create a discovery portfolio that publicly showcases their journey (or not) into religion (and spirituality).
Method of Assessment: Reading Exercises, Portfolio

TEXT

The required text must be obtained (online preferred).

Perusall helps you learn faster by collaboratively annotating the readings and communicating with your classmates. Collaboration gets you help whenever you need it, makes learning more fun, enables you to help others (which research shows is also a great way for you to learn), and helps the instructor make class better by emphasizing information that you need.

Log into Perusall and create an account. Once you create the account, enter the code below to access the two texts for the class.

Code: TROTMAN-YRBXE

Required Texts (2):

Sisemore, T. A. (2016). *The psychology of religion and spirituality: From the inside out*. John Wiley & Sons.
(Cost: \$21.00 for 6 months on Perusall)

Sisemore, T. A., & Knapp, J. J. (2020). *The psychology of world religions and spiritualities: An indigenous perspective (Spirituality and mental health)*. Templeton Press.
(Cost: \$17.00 on Perusall)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. ***The texts must be obtained (digital preferred).***
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.

SRSU DISABILITY SERVICES:

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. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Rebecca Greathouse Wren, LPC-S, SRSU's Accessibility Services Coordinator at 432-837-8203 (please leave a message and we'll get back to you as soon as we can during working hours), or email rebecca.wren@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C-122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832..

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](#).

Marketable Skills:

1. Speaking Effectively: Students will demonstrate competency in public speaking and communicating scientific information to diverse audiences.
2. Describing Feelings: Students will demonstrate empathic or active listening and conversational skills, and/or write clearly about their affective stance, respectfully attuned to the needs of their audiences.
3. Identifying Resources: Students will demonstrate the aptitude to locate, organize and evaluate the credibility of information from multiple sources.
4. Analyzing: Students will demonstrate ability to examine the underlying issues of a scientific problem, attending to the pertinent details and creating a plan of action, recognizing ambiguity and complexity as essential components.

OBSERVING CLASS GUIDELINES

CLASS PARTICIPATION

This is a course that requires online discussion and 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, and engaging in discussions.* 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 phones are welcomed 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.

DISTANCE EDUCATION STATEMENT - Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as Smarthinking, library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login information to verify students' identities and to protect students' information. The procedures for filing a student complaint are included in the student handbook. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website.

THE ONLINE SUPPORT DESK

The Support Desk is where you can direct your more technical questions. For example, if you are having issues submitting a document, getting videos to play, or you are dealing with a technical error in the course. The support desk is open 24 hours a day/7 days a week for your convenience. You can reach the support desk:

- By calling 888.837.6055
- Via email blackboardsupport@sulross.edu
- Using resources from the Technology Support tab within blackboard
- Clicking the Support Desk graphic on the course homepage

REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PROFESSOR - It is essential that you keep me current on your progress and any difficulties you may be having so that I can respond in real time to support your success. **GENERAL QUESTIONS** are to be posted to a discussion board for all. For **PERSONAL** or **PRIVATE ISSUES** email me at alicia.trotman@sulross.edu or call me at 432-837-8147. I strive to respond as soon as possible. If you do not receive a reply within 24 hours during the work week, please resend your email. The most efficient way of contacting me is by email, meeting with me during our weekly Zoom meetings or scheduling a meeting with me at which provides you with contact hours for the rest of the semester.

COURSE BEHAVIORS - RESPECT AND DISRUPTIONS - Watch the VIDEO on NETTIQUETTE -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FWMk_Zv7nB8

and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=80uRE972uQ0>

.

You are encouraged and expected to openly engage in discussions, ask questions, share ideas, and express your thoughts in this web-based course in the same manner as in a face-to-face course. Please treat each other with dignity and respect and avoid disruptive behaviors. You are responsible for knowing what behaviors are acceptable versus unacceptable as referred to in the Student Conduct and Discipline section of the [SRSU Student Handbook](#).

DISCUSSING EVALUATION

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

ASSIGNMENTS AND JOURNAL EXERCISES

These assignments identified by (A) and journal exercises by (J) are short answer or essay questions you'll be asked to answer individually. These exercises are based on your understanding of the most pertinent concepts from assigned chapters of the readings that will be discussed using [Perusall](#). These exercises are worth thirty (30) points.

DISCOVERY 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 9th, 2020**. 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 10th, 2020**. 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.

Grading:	1000 points total	Percentage
Attendance/Participation:	200 points total (15 @ 10 points each)	20%
Assignments:	300 (10 @ 30 points each)	30%
Journal Exercises:	300 (10 @ 30 points each)	30%
Discovery 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

Day	Content
August 24 th & 26 th	Introduction to the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality (Aug. 27 th – Last day for late registration and schedule changes)
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 1 of Sisemore (2016) & Part 1 [Chapter 1] of Sisemore & Knapp (2020)
August 31 st & September 2 nd	Review - Discussion
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 2 of Sisemore (2016) (A1) Assignment 1 & (J1) Journal Exercise 1
September 7 th & 9 th	History of the Psychological Study of Religion and Spirituality (Sept 9 th – Last day to drop classes without creating an academic record) September 9th – Final decision on self-analysis journaling project
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 3 of Sisemore (2016) (A2) Assignment 2 & (J2) Journal Exercise 2
September 14 th & 16 th	Ch3 - Biological Aspects of Religion and Spirituality
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Part 1 [Chapter 2] of Sisemore & Knapp (2020) (A3) Assignment 3 & (J3) Journal Exercise 3

UNIT 2: RELIGION & SPIRITUALITY – CULTURE & COMMUNITIES

Day	Content
September 21 st & 23 rd	Indigenous Psychologies of Spirituality
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 12 of Sisemore (2016) (A4) Assignment 4 & (J4) Journal Exercise 4
September 28 th & 30 th	Religious Communities

Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 13 of Sisemore (2016)
October 5 th & 7 th	Religion in the Context of Culture First report of self-analysis journaling project due
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Part 2 [Chapter 2] of Sisemore & Knapp (2020) (A5) Assignment 5 & (J5) Journal Exercise 5
October 12 th & 14 th (MOON)	Indigenous Christian Psychology
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Part 1 [Chapter 6] of Sisemore & Knapp (2020) (A6) Assignment 6 & (J6) Journal Exercise 6
October 19 th & 21 st	Psychology of North American Indigenous Spirituality
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 8 of Sisemore (2016) (A7) Assignment 7 & (J7) Journal Exercise 7

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

Day	Content
October 26 th & 28 th	Individual Spiritual Transformation
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 9 of Sisemore (2016)
November 2 nd & 4 th	The Individual and the Religious Experience Second report of self-analysis journaling project due
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 10 of Sisemore (2016) (A8) Assignment 8 & (J8) Journal Exercise 8
November 9 th & 11 th	Religion and Spirituality Promote Virtues and Values; (November 10 th : Last day for instructor initiated drop for excessive absences; November 13 th : Last day to drop a course with a 'W' by 4pm)
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 11 of Sisemore (2016) (A9) Assignment 9 & (J9) Journal Exercise 9
November 16 th & 18 th	The Psychology of Religious Coping and Psychotherapy
Homework	(A10) Assignment 10 & (J10) Journal Exercise 10 Work on Discovery Portfolio
November 30 th	Work on Discovery Portfolio Final report of Discovery Portfolio due
Tuesday December 10 th	FINAL PRESENTATIONS (online)