

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

### PSY 4310 COURSE SYLLABUS – FALL 2022

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: Tuesdays & Thursdays (3:30 to 5:30pm), Wednesdays (3:00 to 6:00pm) & Fridays (Online 2:00 to 5:00pm)

Appointment: <https://calendly.com/amtsulross/office-hours-appointment>

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*“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) implicates 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 ‘outside in’ and ‘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) from the outside in. Finally, we will take a ‘inside out’ 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 through Blackboard to create your account.*

## 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: \$17.99 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 (<https://www.sulross.edu/counseling-and-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:

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. Alpine Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mary Schwartz, LPC, 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 [mschwartz@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartz@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall (Suite 112), and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

## LIBRARY SERVICES STATEMENT

The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [library.sulross.edu](http://library.sulross.edu). Off-campus access requires logging in with your LoboID and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or phone (432-837-8123).

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*“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

Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. A scholar is expected to be punctual, prepared, and focused; meaningful and pertinent participation is appreciated. Examples of academic dishonesty include but are not limited to: Turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying

from professional works or internet sites without citation (plagiarism); collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Other instances of academic misconduct are lying in connection with your academic work, cheating, and misrepresenting facts and/or collusion. All these 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. 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. Further information about *Academic Honesty* can be read in the [SRSU Student Handbook](#).

#### 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 3 missed class sessions) WILL result in a failing grade for the course.**

##### 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 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](mailto: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](mailto: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 <https://calendly.com/amsulross/office-hours-appointment> 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](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](#).

## CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM

The policy described here is thus, a reflection of my own beliefs and commitments to student, staff, and faculty parents.

1. All exclusively nursing/breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary to support the nursing/breastfeeding relationship. Because not all nursing parents can pump sufficient milk, and not all babies will take a bottle reliably, I never want students to feel like they have to choose between feeding their baby and continuing their education. You and your nursing baby are welcome in class anytime.
2. For older children and babies, I understand that minor illnesses and unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to choose between missing class to stay home with a child and leaving him or her with someone you or the child does not feel comfortable with. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.
3. I ask that all students work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status.
4. In all cases where babies and children come to class, I ask that you sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their need has been met. Non-parents in the class, please reserve seats near the door for your parenting classmates.
5. Finally, I understand that often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have finally gone to sleep. The struggles of balancing school, childcare and often another job are exhausting! I hope that you will feel comfortable disclosing your student-parent status to me. This is the first step in my being able to accommodate any special needs that arise. While I maintain the same high expectations for all student in my classes regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem solve with you in a way that makes you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance.
6. Don't forget to check out and utilize the ADA-compliant SRSU Lactation Room on the 2nd floor (Room 205) of Lawrence Hall!

## DISCUSSING EVALUATION

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

## 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, 30% for lateness beyond one day, and 50% beyond one week for unexcused absences. In other words, if my assignment, journal exercise or Discovery Portfolio submission is more than one week late and it is unexcused, my submission will be deducted by 80%. For excused absences (university-authorized, legal or medical issues), speak with me **before the absence** so arrangements can be made.

## 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 8th 2022**. 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 8th 2022**. 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%
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 23 <sup>rd</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 1	Introduction to the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality (Aug. 26 <sup>th</sup> – 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 30 <sup>th</sup> & September 1 <sup>st</sup> MODULE 1	Review - Discussion
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 2 of Sisemore (2016) (A1) Assignment 1 & (J1) Journal Exercise 1
September 6 <sup>th</sup> & 8 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 2	Ch2 - History of the Psychological Study of Religion and Spirituality (Sept 7 <sup>th</sup> – Last day to drop classes without creating an academic record) <b>September 8<sup>th</sup> – Final decision on self-analysis journaling project</b>
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 3 of Sisemore (2016) (A2) Assignment 2 & (J2) Journal Exercise 2
September 13 <sup>th</sup> & 15 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 3	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 20 <sup>th</sup> & 22 <sup>nd</sup> MODULE 4	Indigenous Psychologies of Spirituality
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 12 of Sisemore (2016) (A4) Assignment 4 & (J4) Journal Exercise 4
September 27 <sup>th</sup> & 29 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 5	Religious Communities
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 13 of Sisemore (2016)
October 4 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 6	Religion in the Context of Culture Oct. 7 <sup>th</sup> : LAST Day to apply for Fall graduation with late fee 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 11 <sup>th</sup> & 13 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 7	Indigenous Christian Psychology
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Part 1 [Chapter 6] of Sisemore & Knapp (2020) (A6) Assignment 6 & (J6) Journal Exercise 6
October 18 <sup>th</sup> & 20 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 8	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 25 <sup>th</sup> & 27 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 9	Individual Spiritual Transformation
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 9 of Sisemore (2016)
November 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> MODULE 10	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 8 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 11	Religion and Spirituality Promote Virtues and Values; November 8 <sup>th</sup> : LAST Day for instructor initiated drop for excessive absences; November 11 <sup>th</sup> : <i>Veteran's Day</i> November 14 <sup>th</sup> : LAST Day to withdraw from the 16-week course with grade of 'W'; November 14 <sup>th</sup> : LAST Day to apply for May graduation without a late fee
Homework	<i>Perusall</i> : Chapter 11 of Sisemore (2016) (A9) Assignment 9 & (J9) Journal Exercise 9
November 15 <sup>th</sup> & 17 <sup>th</sup> MODULE 12	The Psychology of Religious Coping and Psychotherapy
Homework	(A10) Assignment 10 & (J10) Journal Exercise 10 Work on Discovery Portfolio
November 22 <sup>nd</sup> MODULE 13	Work on Discovery Portfolio Final report of Discovery Portfolio due
Homework	Work on Discovery Portfolio
Homework	Make-Up Day
Tuesday December 6 <sup>th</sup>	FINAL PRESENTATIONS