

PSYC/RELS 375: Psychology of Religion and Spirituality
Course Syllabus
Spring 2023
T, Th: 12:45 – 2:30 (5s)

<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Office</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>Google Classroom Code</u>
Chris Dabbs, Ph.D.			

Time & Place:

CLASS: 5s period (12:45-2:30), TTh, SMC D-205

Student hours: I host virtual drop-in hours via Zoom on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00AM – 11:00AM. These are optional times for you to come ask any course-related questions you may have! [Click here](#) for the Zoom link to student hours.

Email: Email will be the form of communication that I will use most and will respond to quickest. My email hours are 9:00am to 6:00pm, Monday-Friday. I will try to respond to your emails within 24 hours, unless I am otherwise unable. If email is sent outside of my email hours, response times may vary.

Description of course from the Knox College Office of the Registrar Course Catalog:

PSYC/RELS 375 – Psychology of Religion and Spirituality

1 credit

This course examines the psychological science of religion and spirituality (R/S). Course readings will survey the history of the scientific study of R/S, including exploration of major psychological theories and intersections with other fields: sociology, anthropology, political theory, and feminist theory. Through overview of primary literature, this course explores empirical definitions of R/S, why people believe (or don't), and the psychological functions of R/S at the individual and group levels. These questions culminate in a quantitative or qualitative research project. Other course topics include: morality, prejudice, mysticism, death, wellness, and the relation of religious and spiritual belief to psychotherapeutic practice.

Texts for the course:

1. Pals, D. (2021). *Ten Theories of Religion*. 4th edition.
 - a. The 2nd edition (Eight Theories of Religion) and 3rd edition (Nine Theories of Religion) are also acceptable.
 - i. The 3rd edition adds a chapter on William James and the 4th edition adds a chapter on Mary Daly, both of which I can provide.
2. Hood, R. W., Hill, P. C., and Spilka, B. (2018). *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. 5th edition.
 - a. **This is not a required purchase.**
 - b. We will read chs. 1, 2, and 9, which I will provide.

Course Goals and Learning Objectives

Welcome to PSYC/RELS-375, Psychology of Religion and Spirituality! Throughout this course, we will be exploring the wide world of religious and spiritual belief through an interdisciplinary lens. We will discuss why people believe (or don't), the cognitive processes underlying religious and spiritual belief, sociocultural influence on religion and spirituality, the intersections of belief and psychotherapy, and so much more. Throughout this course, I am not expecting you to be experts on religion or theologians—I only expect you to use the critical thinking skills you've garnered throughout your time in college to evaluate the material we read, discuss, and research. My hope is that you take the skills you have learned in previous research classes and apply them to a new topic: religion and spirituality.

Unlike a traditional undergraduate course that centers lectures and textbooks, this course is modeled on graduate, seminar-style courses. This means that you will be expected to engage with the material on a much deeper level than you might otherwise. Notice: there are no tests in this class. Our knowledge of the material will be honed through critical discussion amongst ourselves and reflections on the material. There are methodological components of some of our readings that I still struggle to understand; I am not an expert. I will learn from you, you will learn from me, and we will all learn from each other.

This is an inclusive course, in that no religious/spiritual/value belief system is assumed or required for participation. Respecting individual differences is a core priority. Some of the topics and material covered in this course may be considered controversial based on their nature. Learners are invited to share about their lived experiences in this course, and ways in which the material interfaces with their self-understanding, but sharing or withholding personal views in class is not a required component of the course and will not impact your grade. Learners in this course may both agree and disagree with the material, one another, and the instructor—this is normal and expected. (Dis)agreement will not impact your grade, but disrespect will.

In addition to our informal goals, every course that you take at Knox is designed to help you acquire formal knowledge and skills. The course will help you achieve the following psychology department learning goals:

1. Effectively and ethically apply the scientific method to studying the mind, the brain, and behavior
2. Successfully search the scientific psychological literature to find existing work that can inform the specific claims they are making
3. Understand the basic theoretical approaches and classic empirical findings of psychology
4. Select and conduct appropriate statistical tests in order to empirically test a claim*
5. Effectively communicate with clear, grammatically-correct writing that conforms to APA style
6. Make effective oral presentations that are clear, well-organized, and interesting
7. Demonstrate an empathetic understanding of people of diverse abilities, experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives

*#4 is only applicable to people who choose to engage in data analyses as a component of their final project

Assignments

Learner-Facilitated Discussions (25%):

A core component of many seminar-style classes is exposure to regular discussion facilitation. In the spirit of this, students will be tasked with facilitating discussions throughout the term. You're not alone in this, though, as facilitators will be *teams* of two students. Each team of students will be tasked with facilitating three class sessions throughout the term. As discussion-facilitators, you are responsible for providing a brief overview of the material and you must show evidence of, and employ, a concrete discussion plan. This plan could include questions for the class based on the reading, topical conversation prompts, and/or in-class activities. Discussion leaders will bring their own discussion questions to class, and/or they may request questions from the class ahead of time. You will show evidence of your discussion plan to the instructor before class begins. Discussion preparedness is graded on a traditional A-F scale.

Reaction Papers (25%)

Students will be asked to submit a reaction paper before every class focused on the readings for the day. Think of these reaction papers as some of the fuel for our in-class discussions. The paper can take any form: reaction, critique, reflection, etc. Discussion facilitators are not required to submit reaction papers for days they are leading discussions. Discussion papers are single-spaced and one-page *maximum*. Reaction papers are not graded on style or grammar, but on your ability to reflect on the material in a critical way—they are graded on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory. These papers are due at 10:00AM the day of class via Google Classroom and will not be accepted late.

Group Research Reports (50%)

Students will be asked to complete an empirical research report for this course in the style of a peer-reviewed, APA-style manuscript. Students will be assigned to groups of four. Amongst your group, you will design a study, gather independent data, and analyze your data. This report may be quantitative, qualitative, mixed, or multi-method in design. Major report sections will include: a Brief Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion. One figure or table is required. Significance of results does not factor into your grade. Research report length is expected to be between 10 and 12 double-spaced pages (before title page, references, appendices, etc.). Group members will grade the participation of other group members: 50% of your grade for this assignment (25% of your total course grade) will be determined by your group members. The final paper is graded on a traditional A-F scale.

Grading:

There grade cutoffs in this course are: A = 93%; A- = 90%; B+ = 88%; B = 83%; B- = 80%; C+ = 78%; C = 73%; C- = 70%; D+ = 68%; D = 63%; D- = 60%; F < 60%.

Attendance:

Decades of college learning research shows a positive connection between class attendance and success—when you come to class you do better. **Regular attendance is expected and required in this course.** In giving you agency over your decisions as budding scholars, I will not be

micromanaging your time. My attendance policy is to encourage you to take time off when you **absolutely need it**. A non-exhaustive list of time-off needs may include: unexpected family or friend emergencies, dependent-care needs, irregular employment conflicts, or mental/physical health needs. Please let me know via email if you are going to miss class. This is a small, discussion-based class, and your presence will be missed if you are absent.

Mask Policy

The nature of COVID can rapidly shift throughout the semesters. Especially in Winter Term, when students are returning to campus after traveling and visiting extended family, COVID may be a more significant consideration. This class is a mask-friendly environment.

Illness Policy:

Please do not come to class sick. In coming to class ill, you expose everyone in the class to your illness. Please don't share your germs.

Late Work:

It is your responsibility to see that work is turned in on time. If you know that you will be unable to submit an assignment on time, please let me know, and we can work through it together. Communication is a vital part of becoming a successful professional, and your communication with me regarding your work will be important to your success.

Plagiarism and Writing:

The Knox College Honor Code was written by students, just like you. You are expected to follow the Honor Code throughout your time at Knox. You can find information on plagiarism, the Knox College Honor System and the Psychology Department writing policy at the following links:

https://www.knox.edu/documents/AcademicAffairs/Honor_System.pdf

Use of AI:

Artificial Intelligence has begun to democratize the workplace and education, permeating many facets of everyday academic life. There are ways to use AI as a tool to assist in writing, and ways that using AI would be a violation of the Honor Code. Having an AI write sections of your paper for you is an example of an Honor Code violation. Please see [this helpful Twitter thread](#) for ways that AI can be used morally and ethically to assist in writing and reading.

Academic accommodations: Students with disabilities who have approved accommodations should have Disability Support Services notify me about the specifics of the accommodations as soon as possible. If you receive accommodations, please schedule a meeting with me early in the semester so we can discuss how to most effectively implement these for you in the term!

Commercial course material websites: Use of (e.g., uploading to or downloading from) websites that charge fees or require uploading of course material (e.g., Chegg, Course Hero) has the potential to violate Knox College's honor policy. Also, please do not upload or distribute any aspect of the course materials that the instructor has created (e.g., handouts, exams, assignments, presentations) outside of this class as that is a violation of copyright.

*Research assignments are due on Fridays by 11:59PM

Date	Topics and Readings	Discussion Leaders	Research Assignment*
03/23	Intro to the course. Syllabus overview. Leader and group sign-ups.		
Psychological Study of Religion and Spirituality William James			
03/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hood et al., Chapter 1 (25 pages) ● Pals, Chapter 6, <i>The Verdict of Religious Experience</i> (42 pages) <p>Total pages: 67</p>		
03/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gibson, N. J. (2017). Recruiting and pursuing the big questions in the scientific study of religion. <i>Religion, Brain, & Behavior</i>, 7(4), 354-360. (6 pages) ● Emmons, R. A. & Paloutzian, R. F. (2003). The psychology of religion. <i>Annual review of psychology</i>, 54(1), 377-402. (25 pages) <p>Total pages: 31</p>		Submit three research ideas via Google Classroom with two research articles supporting each idea
Methods: How Do We Know What We Know?			
04/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hill, P. C. & Pargament, K. I. (2017). Measurement tools and issues in the psychology of religion and spirituality. In R. Finke & C. D. Bader (Eds.), <i>Faithful measurement: New methods in the measurement of religion</i> (pp. 48-77). NYU Press. (29 pages) ● Hood et al., Chapter 2 (30 pages) <p>Total pages: 59</p>		
04/06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Zinnbauer et al. (1997). Religion and spirituality: Unfuzzifying the fuzzy. <i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>, 36(4), 549-564. (15 pages) ● Jong, J., Zahl, B. P. & Sharp, C. A. (2017). Indirect and implicit measures of religiosity. In R. Finke & 		Submit final research question with three additional research articles supporting

	<p>C. D. Bader (Eds.), <i>Faithful measurement: New methods in the measurement of religion</i> (pp. 78-107). NYU Press. (29 pages)</p> <p>Total pages: 44</p>		idea. Submit hypothesis.
<p>Theory of Religious and Spiritual Belief E. B. Taylor and J. G. Frazer</p>			
04/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spilka, B., Shaver, P., & Kirkpatrick, L. A. (1985). A general attribution theory for the psychology of religion. <i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i>, 24, 1-20. (19 pages) ● McIntosh, D. N. (1995). Religion-as-schema, with implications for the relation between religion and coping. <i>The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion</i>, 5(1), 1-16. (15 pages) <p>Total pages: 34</p>		
04/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pals, Chapter 1, <i>Animism and Magic</i> (34 pages) ● Atran, S., & Norenzayan, A. (2004). Religion's evolutionary landscape: Counterintuition, commitment, compassion, communion. <i>Behavioral & Brain Sciences</i>, 27, 713-730. (17 pages) ● Barrett, J. L. (2000). Exploring the natural foundations of religion. <i>Trends in Cognitive Sciences</i>, 4(1), 29-34. (5 pages) <p>Total pages: 56</p>		First draft of introduction due via Google Classroom
<p>Functions of Religious and Spiritual Belief Max Weber</p>			
04/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cherniak et al. (2021). Attachment theory and religion. <i>Current Opinion in Psychology</i>, 40, 126-130. (4 pages) ● Pals, Chapter 5, <i>A Source of Social Action</i> (42 pages) <p>Total pages: 46</p>		

04/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steger et al. (2010). The quest for meaning: religious affiliation differences in the correlates of religious quest and search for meaning in life. <i>Psychology of Religion and Spirituality</i>, 2(4), 206-226. (20 pages) Myers, D. G. & Diener, E. (1995). Who is happy? <i>Psychological Science</i>, 6(1), 10-19. (9 pages) <p>Total pages: 29</p>		<p>Final draft of Introduction due via Google Classroom</p> <p>Begin data collection by this date</p>
<p>What is god? Mircea Eliade</p>			
04/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pals, Chapter 7, <i>The Reality of the Sacred</i> (36 pages) Belzen, J. A. (1999). The cultural psychological approach to religion. <i>Theory & Psychology</i>, 9(2), 229-255 (27 pages) <p>Total pages: 63</p>		
04/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spilka, B., Armatas, P., & Nussbaum, J. (1964). The concept of God: A factor-analytic approach. <i>Review of Religious Research</i>, 6(1), 28-36. (8 pages) Davis, E. B., Moriarty, G., & Mauch, J. C. (2013). God images and god concepts: Definitions, development, and dynamics. <i>Psychology of Religion and Spirituality</i>, 5(1), pp. 51-60. (9 pages) Kapogiannis et al., (2009). Cognitive and neural foundations of religious belief. <i>PNAS</i>, 106(12), 4876-81. (5 pages) <p>Total pages: 22</p>		<p>First draft of Method due via Google Classroom</p> <p>Begin writing Results if able</p>
<p>Psychotherapy and Religious/Spiritual Belief and Practices Sigmund Freud</p>			
05/02	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pals, Chapter 2, <i>Religion and Personality</i> (32 pages) Captari et al. (2022). Spiritually integrated psychotherapies in real-world clinical practice: Synthesizing the literature to identify best practices and future directions. <i>Psychotherapy</i>, 59(3), 307-320. (13 pages) <p>Total pages: 45</p>		

05/04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grim & Grim (2019). Belief, behavior, and belonging: How faith is indispensable in preventing and recovering from substance abuse. <i>Journal of Religion and Health</i>, 58, 13-50. (37 pages) ● Weinandy & Grubbs (2021). Religious and spiritual beliefs and attitudes towards addiction and addiction treatment: A scoping review. <i>Addictive Behaviors Report</i>, 14. (12 pages) <p>Total pages: 49</p>		<p>Final draft of Method due via Google Classroom</p> <p>First draft of Results due via Google Classroom</p>
Atheists, Agnostics, and Non-Believers Karl Marx			
05/09	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pals, Chapter 4, <i>Religion as Alienation</i> (30 pages) ● McLaughlin et al. (2022). Who are the religious “dones?”: A cross-cultural latent profile analysis of formerly religious individuals. <i>Psychology of Religion and Spirituality</i>, 14(5), 512-524 (12 pages) <p>Total pages: 42</p>		
05/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● van Mulukom et al. (2023). What do nonreligious nonbelievers believe in? Secular worldviews around the world. <i>Psychology of Religion and Spirituality</i>, 15(1), 143-156. (13 pages) ● Karim, M. & Saroglou, V. (2023). Being agnostic, not atheist: Personality, cognitive, and ideological differences. <i>Psychology of Religion and Spirituality</i>, 15(1), 118-127. (9 pages). ● Abbott et al. (2020). “Isn’t atheism a white thing?”: Centering the voices of atheists of color. <i>Journal of Counseling Psychology</i>, 67(3), 275-287. (12 pages) <p>Total pages: 34</p>		<p>Final draft of Results due via Google Classroom, including at least one figure or table</p>
Prejudice and Morality Mary Daly			
05/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pals, Chapter 10, <i>Sexism and the Sacred</i> (53 pages) ● Snell et al. (2022). Does religious priming induce greater prejudice? A meta-analytic review. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>, 1-13 (13 pages) <p>Total pages: 66</p>		

05/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Graham & Haidt (2010). Beyond beliefs: Religions bind individuals into moral communities. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Review</i>, 14(1), 140-150 (10 pages). ● McKay, R. & Whitehouse, H. (2015). Religion and morality. <i>Psychological Bulletin</i>, 141(2), 447-473 (26 pages). <p>Total pages: 36</p>		First draft of Discussion due via Google Classroom
Sects and Cults Emile Durkheim			
05/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hood et al., Chapter 9 (49 pages) ● Brandt, M. J. & Reyna, C. (2010). The role of prejudice and the need for closure in religious fundamentalism. <i>Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin</i>, 36(5), 715-725 (10 pages). <p>Total pages: 59</p>		
05/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pals, Chapter 3, <i>Society as Sacred</i> (32 pages) ● Kruglanski et al. (2017). To the fringe and back: Violent extremism and the psychology of deviance. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 72(3), 217-230. (13 pages) <p>Total pages: 45</p>		
Final paper due via Google Classroom submission by May 29th at 11:59PM			