CO 621 Psychology of Religion

Javier Sierra

Follow this and additional works at: http://place.asburyseminary.edu/syllabi

Recommended Citation
http://place.asburyseminary.edu/syllabi/2290
CO 621 Psychology of Religion

Area of Counseling and Pastoral Care
Javier Sierra, Psy.D., LMHC, LMFT
Associate Professor of Counseling

Phone: (407) 482-7642
E-mail: Javier_Sierra@asburyseminary.edu

Office Hours: By appointment
Office: 232
Class Time: T 9:00 – 11:40 AM
Enrollment Limit: 30

Course Description:
This course is designed to explore topics in the psychology of religion with the goal of relating the findings to the helping professions. The course is also designed to encourage thought about the psyche as it works in religious thought, feeling, and behavior. One tool we will use to facilitate this kind of reflection is reading of some of the major approaches to the psychology of religion. Another is observation of religious practice. Another is a habit of asking questions— and following them up with questions. Questions are important because psychology, like most fields of study, is a process of inquiry. A seminar format allows for sharing results of student research on selected topics. A key goal is to consider the significance of the research findings for Christian ministry.

• Everyone should come to class prepared to say what he or she sees as the main point of the reading.
• Everyone should attempt to understand the structure of the author’s argument, and have two questions about the readings.

Course Goals:
At the end of this course, you should be able to:
1. Think about how the psyche works in religious thought, feeling, and behavior.
2. Become familiar with the psychological methods and tools by which religion is studied.
3. Explore the interplay of religion and culture as it affects individuals.
4. Develop awareness of approaches to evaluating the effects of religion upon individuals’ lives.

About the Readings:
This is a seminar/reading course (assume a total of @ 1500-1600 pp. of assigned and collateral readings). Some class time will be reserved to process/discuss textual reading and suggested readings, but the student will be expected to pursue reading
CO 621 Psychology of Religion

in depth along the lines of personal interest and topic chosen. Most textual reading will be directly related to class process. Individually prepare 2 questions or statements per assigned class readings and hand to the professor at beginning of class. We will also divide up some of the other assigned readings first day of class.

Required Texts:
Mbiti, John. S., African Religion and Philosophies, 1970(Chap: Introduction, 6 & 17) (will be on reserve)
William James, Varieties of Religious Experience (available online for free) http://www.human-nature.com/reason/james/contents.html

Recommended Texts:

Cokesbury will no longer be available on the Florida-Dunnam Campus. All students are responsible for ordering their textbooks online. Some possible online sources are: www.cokesbury.com, www.gettextbooks.com, www.amazon.com, www.christianbook.com, or www.bookfinder.com. If you need assistance or have any questions please contact Kandace Brooks at 407-482-7584.
CO 621 Psychology of Religion

Course Policies:

Attendance is required and essential for understanding and processing the material. Any absence or missed work due to an excused absence should be discussed with the instructor.

Each student is expected to complete the reading assignments as outlined in the class schedule. Students are also responsible for any and all additional assigned readings and workbook assignments. Informed participation is expected and considered in your final grade.

In order to promote a respectful learning environment, the use of laptop computers is limited to matters related to the course, such as taking notes or reading materials for the class. Activities like checking e-mail, chatting, browsing the net or alike, during class time, are not allowed.

Written Papers should followed the following guidelines:

All papers should have your name and your SPO number on them.

All written material should follow APA style. Use the Publication Manual for the American Psychological Association, 5th ed. for details. The basic standards of all written material include a standard 12-point font, typed, double-spaced with a one-inch margin.

As expected in any graduate-level course, quality of writing, clarity of thought, and logical development of the papers would be significantly considered for grading.

Written materials should be submitted electronically (or otherwise required) by the due date. Although late papers will be accepted, they will receive fewer written comments and lower grades (by 1/3 of the total grade).

Because of the nature of this course some self-disclosure and personal examination should be expected. This information is confidential and must be treated as such.

Feedback on assignments will be timely and substantive:

Timely: For assessments of student work during the course of the academic term, the expectation of “timely” feedback is met when students have their work marked, graded, and returned within one week of its submission; in the case of classes enrolling more than 40 students, two weeks. Moreover, when assignment “B” builds on assignment “A,” assignment “A” should be returned before assignment “B” falls due. Longer assignments are often due at the end of term, and are not subject to this definition.

Substantive: For assessments of student work during the course of the academic term, the expectation of “substantive” feedback is met when students receive responses
that alert them to what they have done well and how they might improve their performance in subsequent work.

Students are expected to follow college policy with regards to issues of academic dishonesty (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) and proper conduct in the classroom. Any confirmed incident of cheating is grounds for failure in this course. Cheating includes passing off someone else’s written work as one’s own as well as looking at someone else’s test answers to formulate one’s own test answer(s).

Regarding incomplete work, a grade of “I” denotes that the work of a course has not been completed due to an unavoidable emergency, which does not include delinquency or attending to church work or other employment. If the work of a course is incomplete at the end of a term without an emergency, a letter grade will be given based on the grades of work done, with incomplete work counted as “F.”

Exchange of papers, questions and all other written information related to the course would be managed through the course’s webpage in Moodle. The following information can help you find support for any technical questions you may have related to the use of that resource.

**Virtual Support Contact Information:**

For **technical support, library research support, library loans, and Virtual media** contact Information Commons: *Info_Commons@asburyseminary.edu* Phone: (859) 858-2233; Toll-free: (866) 454-2733

For **general questions and administrative assistance regarding the Virtual program**, contact Dale Hale: *ExL_Office@asburyseminary.edu* Phone: (859) 858-2393

**Accessing Information Commons Materials**

1. General Questions:
   a. The Information Commons is a "one-stop shop" for all student research, circulation and technical needs. The Information Commons hours are posted here: [http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.htm](http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/hours.htm)

2. Materials Requests:
   a. To search the library catalog for available materials, click here: [http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm](http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm)
   b. Virtual Students may request books, photocopies or emailed attachments of journal articles/portions of reference books from Asbury Seminary’s Library. Please allow 3-10 business days for all requests to be filled. Contact the Information Commons for costs and instructions on how to make requests.
c. Virtual students are encouraged to make use of local library resources. Students who live within a 50-mile radius of either the Florida or the Kentucky campus should come to campus to obtain their materials.

3. Research Questions:

   a. Virtual students are encouraged to contact the Information Commons for research assistance including help determining the best sources to use for a paper, finding book reviews, or research questions about using the online databases or any other library materials.

4. Online Databases:

   a. To access the online library resources including the library catalog and full-text journal databases, go to [http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm](http://www.asburyseminary.edu/information/index.htm) and enter your 10-digit student ID# number in the login box. Your student ID# is provided on the biographical information section of the student registration webpage. Add a 2 and enough 0's to the front to make a 10-digit number (20000XXXXX where XXXXX = your student id).

**Copyright Policies**

The copyright law of the United States (title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specific conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excess of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law.

**Virtual Media Copyright Information**

By the using this material, you are consenting to abide by this copyright policy. Any duplication, reproduction, or modification of this material without express written consent from Asbury Theological Seminary and/or the original publisher is prohibited.

**Course grading:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fall, 2008
CO 621 Psychology of Religion

Course Requirements:

1. Participation

You are expected to attend all classes and actively participate in all class related activities and discussions. More than one absence during the semester will result in a reduction of one letter grade. If you miss 3 or more class sessions, you will not receive a passing grade. Poor participation will hurt your grade significantly too. Part of the course will be seminar sessions led by class members on topics selected from the following list:

- Conversion
- Mysticism
- Healing and Health (body/mind/spirit)
- Spiritfilledness and Leadership (power)
- Tongue Speaking and Charismata
- Faith development
- Dividedness and Wholeness of the Self
- Developing of the image of God
- Evil and the attribution theory
- Fundamentalism and psychology

2. Write a thorough personal religious auto-biography (8-10 pages) centered on your own bio-psycho-religious development. Due

3. Complete textual and other assigned readings by specified dates. Write (2 questions or statements) about your response to weekly reading assignments and these are to be presented in class each Tuesday.

4. Working with a small group, prepare and present a 75-minute seminar presentation on your selected topic. (to be presented in class).

5. Final Paper: Present a documented, 15-18-page research paper on any of the topics studied or presented in class. Due
6. Grades will be developed from class participation, reading responses, seminar presentation, and the research paper.

Seminar Assignments with Weekly Readings

Week 1  Psychology and Religion

**Wulff, Psychology of Religion.** 1-20; 49-116.

**Spilka/ McIntosh:** *The Psychology of Religion,* “Toward a Theory of religion 27-42"

**William James, Varieties of Religious Experience,** Lectures I.

http://www.human-nature.com/reason/james/contents.html

Week 2  Psychology and Religion

**Wulff:** 259 – 285, Freud on Religion or Future of an Illusion

**Freud, Sigmund,** *The Future of an Illusion.* Chapters IV-VII


The Interpretation of Cultures, Chapter 4, **Geertz**


**Question:** What is your response to Freud’s notion of religion as an illusion? How would Geertz respond to Freud’s notions of religion as an illusion?

Week 3  Cross-Cultural Challenges from Africa

**Mbiti,** *African Religion and Philosophies,* Read: *Introduction, Chp 6 & 17.* (On Reserve)

**Wulff, Psychology of Religion.** 70-103.

**Bergin and Payne;** (in Spilka & McIntosh) Proposed agenda for a Spiritual strategy in Personality and Psychotherapy. 54-70.

**Question:** Is there a relationship between Mbiti’s descriptions of religion in light of
what the psychologists we have read say?

Week 4  Typologies of Religious Orientation: Intrinsic and Extrinsic.


Question: How does Allport develop an empirical question? How does he relate psychology to other ways of knowing? What do you think of the distinction Allport draws between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientations?

Question: Which of the studies described seems to you to give the most insight into religion? Think about what aspect of religion it allows you to understand. How satisfying is this insight? Will it help you understand other aspects of religion? or the psyche?

Week 5  Religion as a Means of Dealing with Life:

Wulf, Psychology of Religion, pp.243 –257
http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3339731/site/newsweek/

Questions What are the main aspects of religious beliefs that help people to cope as per readings?

Week 6  Religion and Mature Adulthood


Question: What difference do social structures make to development, according to Erikson? When is religion most important to people in their lives? In what forms is religion important to people and at what ages, as Erikson sees it? Is development a concept which depends strictly on psychological investigation? How widely should a psychology of religion focus as it seeks variables to investigate? How can humanistic hunches help or hinder research?

Week 7  Religion and Judgments of Causes - Religion and Thought Processes:

CO 621 Psychology of Religion


Question: According to Proudfoot and Shaver, does the setting of an experience have any effect on how religious it seems?

Questions: What reasons do the writers give for thinking that attribution theory will help the psychology of religion? What do Spilka, Shaver and Kirkpatrick add to the ideas of Proudfoot and Shaver? How could you use these ideas in a field study?

Week 8  Psychology on Religious Experiences – Mystical Experiences

Wulff Psychology of Religion, pp.169-198; 472-504;


Lectures XVI & XVII

Question: Why is mystical experience important to psychology of religion?

Week 9  Attachment Theory and Psychology of Religion


Question: In what ways is attachment theory like psychoanalytically oriented theories? In what ways is it different?

Week 10  "Healing and Health" (body, mind & spirit)

Seminar:

“Evil and the attribution theory”

Week 11  “Conversion"

Seminar:
Reading: William James, *Varieties*, Lectures IX and X

http://www.human-nature.com/reason/james/contents.html

http://www.afrikaworld.net/afrel/conversion.htm

“Fundamentalism and psychology” or “Charisma and Tongue Speaking”

Week 12 - Reading week - no class

Week 13

Seminar

“Faith development”

“Developing of the image of God”

Week 14 Seminar

“Dividedness and Wholeness of the Self”

Spiritfilledness and Leadership (power)

Week FINALS WEEK - no class

** The professor reserves the right to modify the syllabus.**