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# CO 621 Psychology of Religion

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**CO 621**  
**Psychology of Religion**  
Tapiwa N. Mucherera, Ph.D.  
Asbury Theological Seminary  
Summer 1, 2006

Office: SH409

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Class meets May 23-June 2, 2006, (1-5:00pm)  
**(Note: Class meets all day only on June 2<sup>nd</sup>)**  
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Course Description:

This course is designed to explore topics in the psychology of religion with the goal of relating the findings 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 some of the psychological research findings for counseling or for Christian helping relations ministries.

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. Everyone should have questions about the readings.

Note the pages that are the basis of your questions.

Course Objectives:

After having completed this course the student will:

1. be able to 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. be aware of the interplay of religion and culture as it affects individuals.
4. gain awareness of the relationship between religion, psychology, health and coping
5. develop awareness of approaches to evaluating the effects of religion and psychology upon individuals' lives in personal and faith development.

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 in depth along

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 readings (6 for first day, and 4 for 2<sup>nd</sup> day of class) 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:**

Spilka & McIntosh The Psychology of Religion: theoretical approaches. Westview Press, 1997.

Wulff, David, S. Psychology of Religion John Wiley & Sons, 1997.

**Course Packet**

***Chapters from Texts - (I understand the course packets are about \$18)\* If you can get Mbiti and Geertz used texts for about the same, then buy the books over the net.***

Geertz Clifford, The Interpretation of Culture, 1973, (Chapter: 4)

Mbiti, John. S., African Religion and Philosophies, 1970(Chap: **Introduction, 6 & 17**)

**Recommended Texts:**

William James, Varieties of Religious Experience (available online for free)

Freud S. The Future of an Illusion, NY: NY, WW. Norton, 1961.

Freud S. Totem and Taboo, NY: NY, WWW. Norton, 1950.

H. Newton Malony (ed) Psychology of Religion: Personalities, Problems and Possibilities. Baker Book House, 1991.

Rizzuto, Ana-Maria, The Birth of the Living God, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1979.

3. Part of the course will be seminar sessions led by class (group) or individual members on topics selected from the following list:
  1. Conversion
  2. Mysticism
  3. Healing and Health (body/mind/spirit)
  4. Spiritfilleddness and Leadership (power)
  5. Tongue Speaking and Charismata (objective study)
  6. Faith development
  7. Dividedness and Wholeness of the Self
  8. Developing of the image of God
  9. Evil and the attribution theory
  10. Fundamentalism and psychology

## 11. Religion, culture and psychology

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Regular attendance.
2. Write your own *psycho-bio-religious (faith) development*. (7-8 pages) Interact with the text Stages of Faith by James Fowler. **Due June 2, 2006**
3. Try to complete textual and other assigned readings by specified days. **Individually prepare 2 questions or statements per assigned readings (6 for first day, and 4 for 2<sup>nd</sup> day of class) and hand to the professor at beginning of class.** Points will be taken off if you come unprepared without the questions or statements.
4. Working with a small group or individually (depending on the class size), prepare a 60-minute seminar presentation on a selected topic.
5. Final Paper: Write a 15-18-page research paper on any of the topics covered in class or in the field of psychology of religion -check with professor if topic was not covered in class **June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006.**
6. Grades will be developed from class participation, reading responses, seminar presentation, and the two papers.

Class meets **May 23 – June 2, 2006; (1:00 – 5:00pm)**  
**Seminar Assignments with Daily Readings**

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#### Day 1 Psychology and Religion

**Mbiti**, African Religion and Philosophies, Read: Introduction, Chp 4 & 7).

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

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

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

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#### Day 2 Psychology and Religion

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

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

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

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#### Day 3 Typologies of Religious Orientation: Intrinsic and Extrinsic.

1. **Wulff**, Psychology of Religion, "The Quest for Correlates of Religion," pp.199-204, 205-237.
2. Gorsuch, Richard L., "Toward Motivational Theories of Intrinsic Religious Commitment," in Spilka and McIntosh. (p. 11 – 26)

*Question:* How does Allport 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? of the psyche?

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#### **Day 4            Attachment Theory and Psychology of Religion**

Kirkpatrick, Lee A., "An Attachment-Theory Approach to the Psychology of Religion," pp.97-104; 114-133 in Spilka and McIntosh.

**Wulff:** Object-Relations Theory  
p.321 – 322, 329-348, 359-367.

*Question:* In what ways can attachment theory and object-relations theories help us to understand how people develop religiously? What are the down sides of the theories?

#### **Day 5            Religion and Mature Adulthood**

**Wulff**, Psychology of Religion, pp.371-413.

*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?

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#### **Day 6            Religion as a Means of Dealing with Life:**

Pargament, Kenneth I., and Crystal L. Park, "The Religion-Coping Connection," in Spilka and McIntosh, pp.43-53.

McIntosh, Daniel N., 'Religion-as-Schema, with Implications for the Relation Between Religion and Coping,' in Spilka and McIntosh, pp.171-183.

**Wulff**, Psychology of Religion pp.243 –257

*Questions* What are the main aspects of religious beliefs that help people to cope as per readings? What does this say about the relationship between psychology and religion?

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#### **Day 7            Religion and Thought Processes, Judgment Causes**

1. Ozorak, Elizabeth Weiss, "In the Eye of the Beholder: A Social-Cognitive Model of Religious Belief," in Spilka and McIntosh, pp.194-203.
2. Proudfoot, Wayne, and Phillip R. Shaver, "Attribution Theory and the Psychology of Religion," in Spilka and McIntosh, pp.139-152.
3. Spilka, Bernard, Phillip R. Shaver, and Lee Kirkpatrick, "A General Attribution Theory for the Psychology of Religion," pp.153-170.

*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?

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**Day 8 (Morning)****Psychology on Religious Experiences**

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

**James** Varieties of Religious Experiences (Online