

The Self and Beyond: Psychology and Spirituality PY/RS 306

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"...let me remind the reader that I am only an experimenter. Do not set the least value on what I do, or the least discredit on what I do not, as if I pretended to settle anything as true or false. I unsettle all things. No facts to me are sacred; none are profane; I simply experiment, an endless seeker with no past at my back...People wish to be settled; only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them." -Emerson

Prerequisite

Sophomore standing in the Honor's Program

Course Description

This course adopts a cross-disciplinary approach to studying the question of the self, in light of both traditional spirituality and modern psychology. Texts from both the religious perspective and the perspective of psychology will be examined to illuminate the nature of myths, spirituality, transcendental experiences, religious practices, and other relevant topics.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course each student will be able to

- 1) understand and critically reflect upon classic and contemporary readings relating to spirituality and the self;
- 2) employ critical and synthetic thinking skills to examine fundamental questions about human existence and the self;
- 3) problem solve within a highly interactive learning environment;
- 4) present and explain advanced readings to colleagues in a seminar atmosphere;
- 5) understand how the educational process can lead to personal, spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth;
- 6) engage in intellectually challenging discussions within a supportive group atmosphere;
- 7) actively listen and constructively criticize others;
- 8) employ higher-level analysis and synthesis in written and oral communication.

Required Readings

Assigned Handouts (See Course Outline)

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Suggested Readings and Websites
See Attached Bibliography

Course Format, Assignments, and Grades

1) **Attendance, punctuality, and class participation** are mandatory. Any class absences will result in the lowering of your grade. I expect that all students will be prepared to discuss the assigned material. If an illness, family problems, or other events cause you to miss class, see me, call or leave a note immediately.

2) Class sessions will include a **presentation** of the assigned readings. The student should provide an overview and analysis of the readings, place the readings in context (e.g., biography of the author, historical era, etc.), and prepare questions for a group discussion of the material. In other words, identify important points in the readings, clarify the author's views, discuss how the readings contribute to our understanding of spirituality, and **construct questions which will provoke class discussion**. You should expect to spend several hours preparing for your presentation. The initial overview of the reading should be approximately 15 minutes while the discussion period will be approximately 60 to 90 minutes. Finally, there are materials at the Library to aid in the preparation of your presentation.

3) Class sessions will also involve a **group discussion** of the assigned readings. Students are required to ask questions and offer comments during these discussions. The class will be conducted in a seminar format. Therefore, YOUR participation is essential. These discussions are expected to be lively and courteous exchanges that will intellectually challenge everyone. Passionate debate is encouraged! However, this is not a forum for rudeness and intolerance of another's views.

Each class session may also include a variety of other activities which should further our understanding of the material. For example, we will occasionally have "**spiritual impact sessions**" where students are expected to share pieces of literature, music, movies, personal experiences, etc. that have spiritually influenced their lives. Other activities may include peer evaluation of the journal entries, videos, guest speakers, meditation sessions, and other appropriate endeavors.

4) **Journal Entries** will more fully allow you to explore the issues discussed in the class and readings. Detailed instructions and due dates will be provided in class for each entry. College level writing is expected (i.e., no spelling/grammatical errors, plagiarism, etc.). Make sure you use a three-ring binder to collect the **typed double-spaced** journal entries. This will ensure (hopefully!) a neatly organized journal. Also, each entry should be *dated and entitled*. A carefully organized journal is imperative since some will grow to over 50 pages!

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5) **Self-Evaluations** will take place during the middle and end of the semester. These will be similar in nature to your experience in CLS. In other words, you will evaluate your performance in a conversation with the instructor indicating strengths and weaknesses. Please see attached sheet for greater details.

6) Off-campus experiences may be required throughout the semester. Details regarding the nature of these activities will be discussed at a later date.

7) **Blackboard.com**: I have set up a “cyber-café” for the Honor’s students on Blackboard. The cyber-café is to facilitate open dialogue about course topics among the Sophomore Honor’s students. Therefore, Ms. Wedge and I do NOT have access to the cyber-café. How to access the site will be explained in class.

Course Outline

This is the planned course schedule. Any changes will be announced in advance. Please realize that this schedule is our tentative plan. However, it is not written in stone. Discussion, topic interests, questions, and problems may alter the schedule. You are expected to be in class to note any changes.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Activity/Readings</u>
8/25	Introduction/Syllabus/Presentation Assignments

Classic Contributions

9/1 Selection from Sigmund Freud’s *The Future of an Illusion*
Presenter: Brad Hastings

9/8 William James’s *Mysticism* from *The Varieties of Religious Experience*
Abraham Maslow’s *Cognition of Being in the Peak Experiences* from *Toward a Psychology of Being*

9/15 Erich Fromm’s *An Analysis of Some Types of Religious Experience* from *Psychoanalysis and Religion*
John Dewey’s *God as the Projection of Ideals* from *A Common Faith*
Paul Tillich’s *Faith and Religious Symbols* from *Dynamics of Faith*

Myth and Meaning

9/22 Carl Jung’s *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Prologue & Ch. 1 First Years),
The Concept of the Collective Unconscious and *The Spiritual Problem of Modern Man* from *The Portable Jung* (Joseph Campbell, Ed.)

9/29 Carl Jung’s *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Ch. 2 School Years),
The Differences between Eastern and Western Thinking from *The Portable Jung*
(Joseph Campbell, Ed.)
“SPIRITUAL IMPACT SESSION PART ONE”

10/6 Self-Evaluations

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10/13 Joseph Campbell's *The Emergence of Mankind* and *The Importance of Rites from Myths to Live By* and selections from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

10/20 Selections from Clarissa Estes's *Women Who Run with the Wolves*

"SPIRITUAL IMPACT SESSION " PART TWO

10/22-10/24 MONASTARY TRIP!

Development and Identity

10/27 Selection from James W. Fowler's *Stages of Faith*

Existential Meaning

11/3 Video & Discussion *Waiting for Godot*

Meditative Traditions

11/10 Selections from Shunryu Suzuki's *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*/ Jack Kornfield's *Training the Puppy: Mindfulness of Breathing* from *A Path with Heart*/ *Jesus & Buddha "A Conversation"*/ Thomas Keating's *Open Mind, Open Heart: The Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel*

Biological Foundations

11/17 Selections from Andrew Newberg, Eugene d'Aquili, and Vince Rause's *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* Huston Smith's *Do Drugs Have Religious Import?*

"SPIRITUAL IMPACT SESSION" PART THREE

Integration

12/1 Selections from Brad Hastings' *The Moirae: Psychology, Fatalism, and Freedom*

12/8 Self-Evaluations

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