

Psychology of Religion: PSYC 390

2:15-3:30pm, Tue/Thur, Roe 238

Instructor: Taylor Newton, Ph.D.

Office: Roe 231A

Contact: newtont@central.edu and x5149 (email is much better, generally)

Office hours: Email for appointment or stop by my office anytime my door is open.

Text:

Required readings can be found on Blackboard (BB).

What this course is:

An examination of the theory and research leading to a psychological understanding of religious belief, experience, and behavior drawing upon biological, developmental, social, cognitive, and cultural approaches to the study of psychology.

What this course is not:

A theology or apologetics course attempting to prove or disprove the truth claims of any particular religious tradition, nor a "how to" course on meditation or prayer.

Academic integrity:

Plagiarism, cheating, and unauthorized collaboration in any form are violations of academic integrity and may result in course penalties ranging from a lowered grade on the assignment to a failed grade for the course. In the case of serious or repeated instances, students may also be suspended or dismissed from the college. A copy of Central's Academic Integrity policy can be found in the Student Handbook, the Central Catalog, and at <http://guides.central.edu/copyright>. It is your responsibility to read and understand the contents of that policy before you submit work to be graded. Further, more information about plagiarism is on BB under the "Other Resources" tab. Questions regarding the policies and enforcement of the policies may be addressed to me at any time.

Students with disabilities:

Central College abides by interpretations of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that stipulates no student shall be denied the benefits of an education "solely by reason of a handicap." Disabilities covered by law include, but are not limited to, learning disabilities, hearing, sight, or mobility impairments, and other health related impairments. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class for which you may require accommodations, please see me and Nancy Kroese, Director of Student Support Services and Disabilities Services Coordinator (x5247), during the first two weeks of the semester so that such accommodations may be arranged.

Attendance policy:

I will not take daily attendance. However, keep in mind that participation is a part of your grade and it difficult to participate unless you are present in class. Further, all assignments are still due on the assigned date at the assigned time, whether your absence is excused or not, so be sure to make necessary arrangements in advance.



If the college closes due to weather, we will not have class. If I must cancel class for some other unforeseen reason, I will send an email through BB as soon as possible.

Late assignment policy:

All assignments are due at 2:15pm on the date of the deadline. If you are not present in class the day an assignment is due, you are still required to get it to me by 2:15pm. You can drop it off at my office, ask a classmate to turn it in for you, or email it to me. Computers and internet connections can be finicky. Electronic problems are not an excuse for a late submission, so plan ahead.

One no-questions-asked late submission of an assignment (up to 1 week) is allowed.

Subsequent late submissions will result in a 20% reduction in your grade for that assignment every day it is late.

Grading:

Grades will be based on reading responses, student-led class discussions, the debate, the *Jesus Camp* analysis, the Wikipedia article/research paper, the final exam, and class participation.

Some assignments, including the reading responses, will be graded with a check system. √+ (100%, “exceptional”), √ (95%, the “standard”), √- (90%, “passable”), √- - (85%, “poor”), or ⊕ (< 85%, “inadequate”) will be used to evaluate your performance. Other assignments will be graded by points using a grading rubric. Final grades will be awarded as follows:

A = 94 – 100%	B- = 80 – 83%	D+ = 67 – 69%
A- = 90 – 93%	C+ = 77 – 79%	D = 64 – 66%
B+ = 87 – 89%	C = 74 – 76%	D- = 60 – 63%
B = 84 – 86%	C- = 70 – 73%	F = 0 – 59%

Requirements and weights are:

Reading responses: 20%

You are expected to write thoughtful responses to assigned readings throughout the semester. The content of these responses can vary widely. For example, some may write about a related personal experience, some may critique the methods of the study, and some may relate the material to things we discussed in class. The lowest grade of the 11 reading responses will be dropped, so if you cannot submit a reading reaction for any reason, your final grade will not be affected.

Student-led class discussions: 15%

Once during the semester, you and an assigned partner are expected to deliver a professional, clear, and organized 5-10 minute presentation on assigned articles, including a review of the literature, methods, results, and conclusion. Following your presentation you and your partner will lead the class in a discussion of the article for approximately 30 minutes. Because discussion often lags without extensive preparation, you are expected to prepare many discussion points and/or learning activities in advance to encourage participation. Feel free to meet with me to determine key discussion points. Partners leading a class discussion will almost always receive the same grade.

Byproduct vs. adaptation debate: 5%

You will participate in a debate about the evolution of religion. As a team, you should deliver a well-researched and well-mannered opening statement supporting your team's position, arguments against the opposing team's position, rebuttals of the opposing team's arguments against your team's position, and a concluding statement. See the grading rubric for more details. You will be randomly assigned to a team. Good debates take enormous prep time; plan accordingly. The research articles posted on BB for that day are a good place to begin, but you should find at least 3 more sources (yes, Wikipedia is an acceptable source, but do not use it exclusively). Your team will submit a list of your references in APA style on the day of the debate.

Jesus Camp analysis: 5%

You will write a 2-3 page social psychological analysis of the movie *Jesus Camp*. This analysis should draw upon theories discussed in class as well as any relevant readings.

Wikipedia article or research paper: 30%

More details about this assignment and the associated rubrics can be found on Blackboard.

Final exam: 15%

The final exam will be 4-6 essay questions and will cover material from the entire semester.

Class participation: 10%

You are expected to read assigned material before class and regularly contribute to class discussion. I highly recommend you take notes as you prepare for every class, not only on days you are leading a class discussion. Many find it helpful to write down a summary of the reading including things you did not understand, things you might have done differently if you conducted that study, and connections to other articles or themes of the class.

Date	Topic	Reading Due	Assignment due @ 2:15pm
1/21 Tue	Course introduction		
1/23 Thur	Philosophy of science and religion	Wheeler, 2011	Reading response #1
1/28 Tue	The methodology hurdle	Hood et al., 2009	
1/30 Thur	Who is God? (psychologically speaking)	Barrett, 2008	Reading response #2
2/4 Tue	R/S and thinking	Pennycook et al., 2012	Student-led class discussion
2/6 Thur	Neural correlates of R/S	Neubauer, 2012	Reading response #3
2/11 Tue	R/S and drugs	Griffiths et al., 2006	Reading response #4
2/13 Thur	R/S development	Bering & Parker, 2006	Student-led class discussion

Date	Topic	Reading Due	Assignment due @ 2:15pm
2/18 Tue	Byproduct vs. adaptation debate prep	See BB for resources	
2/20 Thur	Byproduct vs. adaptation debate	See BB for resources	Reference list for each team
2/25 Tue	R/S and the self	Dijksterhuis et al., 2008	Student-led class discussion
2/27 Thur	Attachment to God	Granqvist et al., 2010	Reading response #5
3/4 Tue	Wikipedia tutorial	See BB for readings	
3/6 Thur	How to start a “cult”	Woody, 2009	Reading response #6
3/11 Tue	When prophecy fails	Dein, 2001	Student-led class discussion
3/13 Thur	<i>Jesus Camp</i> (85 mins)		
3/18 Tue	Spring Break: No class		
3/20 Thur	Spring Break: No class		
3/25 Tue	R/S as culture	Cohen, 2011	Reading response #7
3/27 Thur	R/S and finding meaning	Newton & McIntosh, 2013	Student-led class discussion <i>Jesus Camp</i> paper
4/1 Tue	Managing terror with R/S	Vail et al., 2012	Student-led class discussion
4/3 Thur	R/S and coping	McIntosh et al, 2011	Reading response #8
4/8 Tue	R/S and physical health	Masters & Knestel, 2011	Student-led class discussion
4/10 Thur	R/S and mental health	Koenig, 2009	Reading response #9
4/15 Tue	Service Day: No class		
4/17 Thur	R/S and racial prejudice	Johnson et al., 2010	Reading response #10
4/22 Tue	Wikipedia article/research paper peer review		Draft of Wikipedia article/research paper
4/24 Thur	R/S and morality	Preston & Ritter, 2012	Student-led class discussion
4/29 Tue	R/S and politics	Ross et al., 2012	Student-led class discussion Wikipedia article/research paper
5/1 Thur	Midwestern Psychological Association Annual Meeting: No class		

5/6 Tue	Nonreligiousness	Gervais, 2011	Reading response #11
5/8 Thur	Student chosen topic		
5/13 Thur	Final Exam @ 1:00pm		