



RELI 106
Prayer, Meditation, Trance and Ecstasy: A Study of the Techniques of Spiritual Transformation
Trimester 1, 2010

RELI 106 Prayer Meditation Trance Ecstasy

A Study of the Techniques of Spiritual Transformation

Basic course information

0.1 Class times and locations

This course is titled: '**RELI 106 Prayer, Meditation, Trance and Ecstasy: A Study of the Techniques of Spiritual Transformation**'.¹

Lecture place: Lectures will meet every week in Cotton LT 122
Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Lecture time: Wednesday: 11:00 am→12:50 pm

Tutorials: Tutorials begin in the second week of term. Please check **Blackboard** for more information.²

0.2 Coordinator

Dr. Joseph Bulbulia Department phone: (04) 463 5043

Email: joseph.bulbulia@vuw.ac.nz

Homepage: www.victoria.ac.nz/religion/staff/joseph_bulbulia/index.html

0.3 Tutors

The names and contact coordinates of your tutors can be found on **Blackboard**.

0.4 Key dates

0.4.1 Essays

Response essays are due every second FRIDAY of term by 5pm. Specifically:

1. March 12
2. March 26
3. April 23
4. May 7
5. May 21

0.4.2 Test

The final **take home** test is due:

- June 4 by 5pm.

¹CRN 9163

²<http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>

0.4.3 Tutorials

Tutorials will meet every week, **except** weeks beginning

- March 1
- March 29
- May 31

0.5 Blackboard: a key tool

Blackboard A website of materials related to RELI 106 is being maintained in Blackboard. You can find it by visiting <http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz>.

Your user name is the one issued to you by Student Computing Services.

Your password is your Student ID Number. If in doubt, please contact the Student Computing Services Help Desk, 463-5050 (extension 5050 from VUW phones) or by email scs-help@vuw.ac.nz

All of the readings for this course can be found under 'course materials', except those readings given by a link to the world wide web, below.

0.6 Course delivery

The delivery component of this course consists of: **lecturers and tutorials.**

The course also consists of:

- Readings: in which information about the topics will be conveyed.
- Five response papers
- Take home test

0.7 Content

The following gives a brief statement of the learning objectives for Reli 106.

This paper explores religion through the things that people do. It considers how spiritual practices –rituals, bodily postures, song, altered states of consciousness, and music– are used to shape individual and collective experience. We also examine debates over methods appropriate to the study of religion.

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to religion, and as an important and fascinating human phenomenon. The course also introduces students to how scholars describe and explain religion. It is also an introduction to some of the prominent methods that define the discipline of religious studies.

1 Learning objectives

1.1 Skills

1. **Knowledge of Discipline:** to introduce students to research methodologies in the academic study of religion.
2. **General knowledge:** to broaden student perspectives about the influences of culture on perception, memory, prediction, and behavior.
3. **Critical thinking:** to enhance critical thinking skills, as students consider the arguments and evidence of others.
4. **Writing and verbal expression:** to enhance writing and verbal expression, as students present arguments and evidence to others.
5. **Creative thought:** to foster creativity and imagination.

2 Assessment requirements

2.1 Response essays

Students are assigned five response essays.

2.1.1 Length

Each essay should be no more than 1000 words and no fewer than 800 words.

Any essay that is less than 600 words and more than 1200 words will not be assessed.

Full instructions and templates to help you organise your papers are available on Blackboard under 'course resources'.

2.1.2 Marking criteria

- 33.3% for clarity
- 33.3% for critical engagement
- 33.4% for creativity

2.1.3 Due dates

Response essays are due every second FRIDAY of term by 5pm. Specifically papers are due:

1. March 12
2. March 26
3. April 23
4. May 7
5. May 21

2.1.4 Penalties

1. Late response papers will receive a 1% deduction from the total course mark for each day your submission is late.
2. Late response papers will not receive written feedback.

2.1.5 Contribution of assessment mark to course mark

Each paper will be worth 10% of your mark.

2.2 Test

Students are assigned a **take-home** test.

2.2.1 Learning objectives

The learning objectives of the test:

1. The test gives you the opportunity to demonstrate your understanding of the material presented in the course.
2. It also gives you the chance to creatively engage with the readings and lectures by drawing together themes considered in separate weeks.

A copy of your final test is posted on Blackboard under 'course resources'.

Your test will consist of five questions worth 20% each.

2.2.2 Marking criteria

- 33.3% for clarity
- 33.3% for critical engagement
- 33.4% for creativity

2.2.3 Length

There will be five test questions. The answer to each question should be about 500 words. Therefore your total test should be about 2500 words.

2.2.4 Due date

Your test is due before 5pm on 4 June, 2010.

2.2.5 Penalties

1. Late tests will receive a 1% deduction from the total course mark for each day your submission is late.
2. Tests will not receive written feedback (this is a programme policy).
3. Late tests will receive a 1% deduction from the total course mark for each late day.

2.2.6 Contribution of assessment mark to course mark

The test counts for 50% of your final mark.

3 The Lecture Schedule

Essential texts are given in this outline under the headings 'Required readings' and 'Recommended readings'. These can be found on **Blackboard**, or where appropriate, by the url link next to the title of the reading.

March 3: Methods appropriate to understanding religious experience: perspectives and debates.

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

No required reading:

Recommended readings:

- [Phillips and Lawton, 2004] pp.32–41
- [James, 1928] Chapters XVI and XVII
Find reading here: <http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/james/toc.htm>

March 10: Collective Rituals/Functionalism

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

Required reading:

- [Durkheim, 1912] 'Introduction'. pp.1–20.
- [Durkheim, 1912]'Definition of Religious Phenomena and of Religion'. pp.23–47.

Recommended reading:

- [Renfrew, 2008] pp.:2041–2047.
- [Haidt et al., 2008] pp.S153–S156.

(12 March, paper due)

March 17: Tradition/Religious Studies

Lecturer: Paul Morris

Required reading:

- [Morris, 1996] pp.223–249.
- [Haidt, 2007] pp.998–1002.

March 24: Yoga/Cultural Anthropology

Lecturer: Rick Weiss

Required reading:

- [Stoler-Miller, 1996] pp.ix–35.
- [Geertz, 1973] pp.3–30.
- [Eliade, 1969] pp.xii–xxii.

(26 March, paper due)

March 31: Tantra/Comparative Anthropology

Lecturer: Rick Weiss

Required reading:

- [Fields, 2001] pp.139–166.
- [Said, 1979] pp.1–28.

Apri 21: Meditation/History

Lecturer: Michael Radich

Required reading:

- [Bhikkhu, 1995b]pp.145-155. [(Note in the Course Outline that the above reading includes an iteration of the canonical description of the charnel-ground contemplation, pp. 148–149.)]
- [Bhikkhu, 1995a] pp.899–902.
- [Gómez, 1995] pp.318–327.

(23 April, paper due)

Apri 28: Prayer/Neuroscience

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

Required reading:

- [Schjoedt et al., 2009]pp.199–207.

Recommended reading:

- [Vaitl et al., 2005] pp.98–127.
- [Taber and Hurley, 2007] pp.iv–4.
- [Pahnke and Richards, 1966] pp.175–208.

May 5: Postures/Embodied Mind

Lecturer: Art Buehler

Required reading:

- [Goodman, 1990]pp.9-26; pp.42-50; pp.215–223.

Recommended reading:

- [Blanke and Metzinger, 2009]pp.7–13.
- [Deeley, 2003]pp.161–167.

(May 7, paper due)

May 12: Christian song /Political History

Lecturer: Geoff Troughton

Required reading:

- [Kirk-Duggan, 2007] pp.317–342.

Recommended reading:

- [Wiltermuth and Heath, 2008] pp.1–5.

May 19 Healing dance/Empathetic Social Science

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

Required reading:

- [Katz, 1984] ‘Kung Hunter-Gatherers’ & ‘The Kung Approach to Healing’. pp.13–57.

Recommended Reading:

- [Sacks, 2008]‘A Bolt From The Blue. Musicophilia’. pp. 3–20.

(May 21, Paper due)

May 26 Sacrifice/Scapegoat Theory

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

Required reading:

- [Carrasco, 1990] pp.58–91.
- [Girard, 1997] pp.73–105.

June 2: Technology/Philosophy

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia

Required reading:

- [Bostrom, b] <http://transhumanism.org/index.php/WTA/faq/>
- [Bostrom, a] <http://www.nickbostrom.com/ethics/dignity.html>

June 4: take home text due

4 Important information

4.1 Class representative

A statement that a class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

5 Policies about cheating

5.1 Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work. Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification. The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

6 General university policies and statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC(Academic) website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at: http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx

6.1 Minimal requirements

The minimal requirements to gain a pass in this course:

1. Submit and pass at least three creative/critical papers.
2. Complete the final test.
3. Attend 80% of tutorials.

Note:

- It is the students responsibility to keep a copy of all your work.
- Students will generally receive written feedback within a week of work submitted on time.
- Late work will not receive written feedback.
- Students can receive verbal feedback by appointment.
- Work that is more than two weeks overdue, will not be marked and will not receive credit, unless excused.
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure that your tutor has received all blackboard submissions. Please check if you are uncertain.
- An aegrotat pass will normally be approved only when a candidate has completed at least 30% of the course assessment.
- **To receive credit, all response papers and the test must be submitted on Blackboard.**

6.2 Aegrotat regulations

Students who are ill, or who have difficult personal circumstances may be having problems completing assessment. The aegrotat provisions apply to all courses and apply to assessment which falls within the last three weeks of teaching or the final examination period, including preparation time for final tests and examinations.

Aegrotat provisions are detailed in section 4.5 of the Assessment Statute (2008 Calendar, p. 101) and here: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/timetables/aegrotat.aspx>

For guidance in essay writing and presentation of bibliographies, please refer to Religious Studies guidelines for essays under 'Course Resources' on **Blackboard**. If you have any doubt, please see your tutor.

6.3 Withdraw dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawlsrefunds.aspx>

6.4 Evaluation by UTDC of this Course

This course will be assessed by UTDC. Part of this assessment occurs through student input, in the form of course evaluation reports. These will be distributed to students during lecture in March.

7 Other information

7.1 Trimester dates

Teaching dates: 1 March to 4 June 2010

Mid-trimester break: 5 April to 18 April 2010

Study week: 7 June to 11 June 2010

Examination/Assessment period: 11 June to 4 July 2010

7.2 Communication of additional information

Additional information or information on changes will be conveyed to students by Blackboard.

Because information about the course will change from time-to-time, students are expected to check Blackboard for updates at least once a week.

Urgent updates will be sent through Email.

7.3 Materials and equipment

All readings will be placed on Blackboard, if there is no like to the readings on your syllabus.

Students are required to submit all work on blackboard.

Students are allowed to take notes with computers in class. They are not allowed to do anything but take notes (for example, Email, Facebook, web-surfing ... and similar).

There are computers in the Library, to which students have free access.

7.4 Workload

This course is worth 20 points. One point typically equates to 10 hours of work. For a 20 point course, the 200 hours should be spread evenly over the 12 week trimester, break, study week and exam period.

Because the course consists of 12 weeks of lecture and one week for the take home test. I calculate that students should spend about 15 hours per week. While work styles will vary, the following is a rough-and-ready guide.

- Lectures and tutorials: Three hours per week
- Readings: five hours
- Writing assignments: Ten hours

7.5 Taping of lectures

All students in the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies are welcome to use audiotapes to record lectures. If you want to do this, please see your lecturer, tutor or the relevant programme administrator and complete a disclaimer form. This covers copyright and other issues relevant to the recording of lectures.

7.6 Course delivery

The delivery component of this course consists of: **lecturers and tutorials**.
The course also consists of:

- Readings: in which information about the topics will be conveyed.
- Five response papers
- Take home test

7.7 Roles

Coordinator: It is the coordinators responsibility to assure that all course materials are available on Blackboard. The coordinator will mark all final exams.

Lecturers: The lecturers are responsible for organising and delivering all lecture materials. Many of the lectures will be given by the course coordinator.

Students: Students are required to:

1. to attend lectures and tutorials (80% tutorials required/).
2. to arrive at the lecture and tutorial on time
3. submit at least three response papers, on Blackboard.
4. submit a final test, on Blackboard.
5. avoid disturbing their classmates during lecture (e.g. to not leave early, except for unforeseeable emergencies, without lecturer permission.)

7.8 Acknowledgements

The image on page 1 is called ‘Mary Magdalen in Ecstasy’, and was painted by the Italian master Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio in 1606. The image is in the public domain, and can be accessed here:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mary_Magdalen_in_Ecstasy

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