RELI 226 Psychology of Religion

**The Treachery of
Images: Ren´e
Magritte 1928-29**

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

RELI 226: Psychology of Religion 1 Basic course information

1.1 Class times and locations

Lecture place: Lectures will meet every week in HULT 119 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 about meeting times and places[1]

1.2 Contact details

Joseph Bulbulia phone: (04) 463 5043 email: joseph.bulbulia@vuw.ac.nz

1.3 Tutors

The names and contact coordinates of your tutors can be found on Blackboard under 'staff contact'.

1.4 Key dates

Essays

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

1   23 July

2   6 August

3   20 August

4   17 September

5   1 October

1.5 Test

The final take home test is due 22 October 2010 by 5pm.

1.5.1 Tutorials

Tutorials will meet every week, beginning week 2. There will be no tutorials in the month of August (i.e. for these lectures: 4, 11, 18 August 2010). There will be not tutorials for the final week's lecture: 13 October 2010.

[1]http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz

1.6 Blackboard: a key tool

A website of 226 materials is being maintained in Blackboard. Visit: http://blackboard.vuw.ac.nz.

For help with Blackboard, 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.

1.7 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.
- A take-home test.

1.8 Content

The following gives a brief statement of the learning objectives for Reli 226.

This paper explores ten simple questions about the psychology of religion:

1. Why do we believe in the unseen?

2. Why do gods have superpowers?

3. How do children acquire their religion?

4. How do we remember religions?

5. What does the culture have to do with religion?

6. How does the brain support religion?

7. Why do we perform rituals?

8. Why do we care about religion?

9. Why doesn't religion harm us?

10. Why do people distinguish spirituality from religion?

Each week we will review debates surrounding recent answers that cognitive psychologists have proposed to these questions.

2 Learning objectives/Skills

This course will help you in three basic ways:

1   To understand recent research in the psychology of religion.

2   To better evaluate arguments based on quantitative data.

3   To write more clearly and persuasively.

3 Assessment requirements

3.1 Response essays

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.

Format

Find detailed instructions Blackboard, under 'course materials'.

Rules

1. Assignment should evaluate only one reading.

2. This reading should be selected from the readings (required or recommended) assigned in the two weeks prior to the essay due date.

3. No two assignments may analyze the same reading.

4. All assignments must be submitted via Blackboard.

5. The text of every submission must be copied and pasted to the 'student comments' section of Blackboard.

6. The copy that is submitted to 'student comments' must start with your name and student number

7. All assignments must be attached in one of the following formats: .doc, .rtf, .txt, or pdf. Unfortunately we cannot accept submissions in any other format.

8. The document should be saved with your name and assignment number (e.g. John Smith ID0908322 response paper 1.rtf, John Smith ID090832 response final.rft)
9. Documents must include the following information:
(a) Your name.

(b) Your email address or other preferred contact detail.

(c) The essay due date.

(d) The essay submission date.

(e) Word count.

(f) If late, a sentence indicating whether your late test has been excused.
10. Students must reference any ideas taken from the work of other authors. Please consult the university policy of plagiarism:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx

11. See general statement about university policies here:
http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy

3.1.1 Submissions

Marking criteria

- 30% for clarity.
- 30% for critical engagement.
- 30% for creativity.
- 10% for following the rules exactly.

Due dates

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

1   23 July

2   6 August

3   20 August

4   17 September

5   1 October

Penalties

1   Unexcused late response papers will receive a 1% deduction from the total course mark for each day your submission is late.

2   Unexcused late response papers will not receive written feedback.

3   Work that is more than two weeks late will not be accepted.

Contribution of assessment mark to course mark

Each response paper will be worth 10% of your mark. Response papers sum to a total of 50% of your mark.

3.2 Test

Students are assigned a take-home test. Test instructions and questions will be posted to Blackboard on 16th September.

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.

Your test will consist of two questions, each worth 25% of your final mark. Therefore your test sums to 50% of your final mark.

Marking criteria

•   30% for clarity.
•   30% for critical engagement.
•   30% for creativity.
•   10% for following the rules.

Length

Each should be about 1,250 words. Therefore your total test should sum to about 2,500 words. Tests will not receive written feedback. This is a Religious Studies Programme policy. However I'm happy to discuss your answers and mark, or to provide written feedback, by request.

Rules

1. All tests must be submitted via Blackboard.

2. The text of every test submission must be copied and pasted to the 'student comments' section of Blackboard.

3. This copy that is submitted to 'student comments' must start with your name and student number

4. All tests must be attached in one of the following formats: .doc, .rtf, .txt, or pdf. Unfortunately we cannot accept submissions in any other format.
5. The documents must contain the following information:
(a) Your name.

(b) Your email address or other preferred contact detail.

(c) The essay due date.

(d) The essay submission date.

(e) Word count.

(f) If late, a sentence indicating whether your late submission has been excused.
6. Students must reference any ideas taken from the work of other authors. Please consult the university policy of plagiarism:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx

7. See general statement about university policies here:
   http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy

Due date

Your test is due before 5pm on 22 October, 2010.

Penalties

1. Late tests will receive a 1% deduction from the total course mark for each late day.

Contribution of assessment mark to course mark

The test counts for 50% of your final mark.

The Lecture Schedule: topic breakdown in weeks

1. Introduction

2. Why do we believe in the unseen?

3. Why do gods have superpowers?

4. How do children acquire their religion?

5. How do we remember religions?

6. What does the culture have to do with religion?

7. How does the brain support religion?

8. Why do we perform rituals?

9. Why do we care about religion?

10. Why doesn't religion harm us?

11. Why do people distinguish spirituality from religion?

12. Review

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.

14 July: Introduction

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia No required reading:

Recommended readings:

- (Renfrew, 2008)

21 July: Why do we believe in the unseen?

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia Required reading:
- (Guthrie, 2008) Recommended reading:
- (Foster and Kokko, 2009) (23 July, paper due)
- (Boyer, 2003) Recommended reading:

28 July: Why do gods have superpowers?

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia • (Boyer and Bergstrom, 2008)

4 August: How do children acquire their religion?

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia Required reading:
- (Bering, 2005) Recommended reading:
- (Kirschner and Tomasello, 2009) (6 August, paper due)

11 August: How do we remember religions?

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia Required reading:
- (Whitehouse, 2005) Recommended reading:
- (Bulbulia and Schjoedt, ming)

18 August: What does culture have to do with religion?

Lecturer: David Murphy Required reading:
- (Renfrew and Zubrow, 1994)
- (Tribble, 2010) (20 August, paper due)

3.3 Mid-trimester break: 23 August -5 September

8 September: How does the brain support religion?

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia Required reading:
- (Barsalou et al., 2005) Recommended reading:
- (Bulbulia and Schjoedt, ming)

15 September: Why do we perform rituals?

Lecturer: Required reading:
- (Boyer and Lienard, 2006) Recommended reading:
- (Xygalatas, 2008) (17 September, paper due)

22 September: Why do we care about religion?

Lecturer: Required reading:
- (Johnson and Bering, 2009) Recommended reading:
- (Norenzayan and Hansen, 2006) 24 September: Associate Dean's signature required to withdraw from course after this date

29 September: Why doesn't religion harm us?

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia Required
reading:
- (Rey, 2005) Recommended Reading:
- (Bulbulia, 2009) (1 October, Paper due)

6 October: Why do people distinguish spirituality from religion?

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia Required
reading:

- (Bulbulia, 2005)

13 October: Review and course business

Lecturer: Joseph Bulbulia No required readings: work on test.

22 October: take home test due

Important information

Class representative

A class representative will be elected. That person's name and contact information 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.

Policies about cheating

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

General university policies and statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University

Os 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 sup-port/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx

Minimal requirements

The minimal requirements to gain a pass in this course:

1   submit and pass at least three response papers.

2   A passing mark on the final test.

3   Attend 50% of the tutorials.

Note:[2]

•   It is a students responsibility to keep a copy of all submitted work.

•   It is a students responsibility to backup all work before it is submitted.

•   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.

4.1 Withdraw dates

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at:
http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawlsrefunds.aspx

4.2 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 toward the end of the course.

5 Other information

5.1 Trimester dates

Teaching dates: 12 July–15 October 2010 Mid-trimester break: 23 August–5 September 2010

[2]Free on-line backup is available from: http://www.getdropbox.com

Study week: 18-22 October 2010 Examination/Assessment period: 22 October 13 November 2010

5.2 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.

5.3 Readings, Submissions, Computers

All readings will be placed on Blackboard, unless there is a link to the 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. These can be used to write and submit assignments.

5.4 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 this course consists of 13 weeks of lectures and one week for the take home test. I calculate that students should devote about 15 hours per week to this course. While work styles will vary, the following is a rough-and-ready guide.

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

5.5 Taping of lectures

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

5.6 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

5.7 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 attend lectures and tutorials (50% tutorials required/).

2 arrive at the lecture and tutorial on time

3 submit at least three response papers, via Blackboard.

4 submit a final test, via Blackboard.

5 avoid disturbing their classmates during lecture (e.g. by leaving early or arriving late, in a conspicuously.)

Acknowledgements

The image on page 1 is called The Treachery of Images. Ren´e Margitte painted it in 1928/29. The image is in the public domain, and can be accessed here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:MagrittePipe.jpg