

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

ART HISTORY, CLASSICS AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

RELI 106 PRAYER, MEDITATION, TRANCE AND ECSTASY: A STUDY OF THE TECHNIQUES OF SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION

20 POINTS

TRIMESTER 2 2013

Important dates

Trimester dates: 15 July to 17 November 2013

Teaching dates: 15 July to 18 October 2013

Mid-trimester break: 26 August to 8 September 2013

Study period: 21–25 October 2013

Withdrawal dates: Refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds

If you cannot complete an assignment or sit a test or examination (aegrotats), refer to www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat

Class times and locations

Class times and locations

Lecture place: KK 301.

Time: Tuesday 10:00-11:50

Start date: Tuesday 16 July 2013.

- Tutorials: Tutorials start the second week of term and occur in weeks when there are *no* essays due.
- Tutors will be available in their offices during tutorial times in weeks when assignments are due.
- Sign up for tutorials via S Cubed.
- Tutorial list will be out up on the Notice board outside Hunter room 318 after the second week of term.

Names and contact details

Coordinator: Dr. Joseph Bulbulia

joseph.bulbulia@vuw.ac.nz

463 5043

Hunter HU 322.

Office Hours: Monday 4pm→5pm or by appointment.

Tutors names will be posted on Blackboard by week 2:

Communication of additional information

- Additional information or information on changes will be conveyed to students on Blackboard.
- Because information about the course will change from time-to-time, students are expected to check Blackboard for updates regularly (at least once per week).

Prescription

This course explores religion through the things that people do. It considers how spiritual practices - rituals, bodily postures, altered states of consciousness, music - shape individual and collective experience. The course is also an introduction to some of the prominent methods and debates that define the discipline of religious studies

Course content

The Lecture Schedule

Week 1. July 16

Methods appropriate to understanding religious experience: perspectives and debates.

1. (Durkheim 1965/1915): 'Introduction'. pp.1–20.
2. (Durkheim 1965/1915): 'Definition of Religious Phenomena and of Religion'. (*NOTE: These readings are TOUGH. Just do your best. Don't worry if you don't get everything. We'll come back to the reading repeatedly throughout the term.*)
pp.23–47. [Download](#)

Week 2. July 23

Healing Dance/Empathetic Social Science

1. (Katz 1984): 'Kung Hunter-Gatherers' & 'The Kung Approach to Healing'.
pp.13–57. [Download](#)
2. *Extra*(Renfrew 2008): pp.2041–2047. [Download](#)

Week 3. July 30

Meditation/History

1. (Gómez 1995) [Download](#)
2. (Bhikkhu 1995) [Download](#)
3. (Bhikkhu 1995) [Download](#)

Week 4. August 6

Psychedelics/Psychology

1. (Pahnke and Richards 1966) pp.175–208. [Download](#)
2. (Phillips and Lawton 2004) pp.32–41 [Download](#)

Week 5. August 13

Sacrifice/Scapegoat Theory

1. (Girard 1997) pp.73–105 [Download](#)
2. (Carrasco 2000) pp.58–91. [Download](#)

Week 6. August 20

March 28: Postures/Embodied Mind

1. (Goodman 1990): pp.9-26; pp.42-50; pp.215–223. [Download](#)
2. (Blanke and Metzinger 2009) pp.7–13. [Download](#)

Mid trimester break August 26 – September 8 2013

Week 7. September 10

Yoga/ Phenomenology

1. (Eliade 1969) pp.xii–xxii. [Download](#)
2. (Stoler-Miller 1996) pp.ix–35. [Download](#)
3. (Geertz 1973) pp.3–30. [Download](#)

Week 8. September 17

Tantra/ Orientalism

1. (Fields 2001) [Download](#)
2. (Said 1979) [Download](#)

Week 9. September 24

Christian Song /Political History

1. (Kirk-Duggan 2007) pp.317–342. [Download](#)
2. (Sacks 2008) 'A Bolt From The Blue. Musicophilia'. pp. 3–20. [Download](#)

Week 10.October 1

Prayer/The Neuroscience of Religion

1. (Bulbulia, Schjoedt, 2012) pp.169-190 [Download](#)
2. ****extra****(Haidt, Patrick Seder et al. 2008) [Download](#)

Week 11.October 8

Technology/Philosophy

1. <http://humanityplus.org/learn/transhumanist-faq/>
2. <http://www.nickbostrom.com/ethics/dignity.html/>
3. http://www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/features/2011/debating_extreme_human_enhancement/why_i_dont_want_to_be_a_cyborg.html

Week 12. October 15

TEST

Course learning objectives (CLOs)

Students who pass this course will be able to:

1. Acquire a basic understand of major religious studies research methodologies.
2. Acquire familiarity with ritual traditions in eastern and western religious traditions.
3. Write a clear and persuasive critical commentary.

Purpose

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

Teaching format

Lecturers and tutorials.

Readings.

Five response essays of about 500 words each.

Two proposals for original research about 500 words.

Final test

Mandatory course requirements

In addition to achieving an overall pass mark of 50%, students must:

Attend a minimum of 7 out of 9 tutorials

Submit at least 4 assignments

Workload

For 20 point one trimester courses, 13 hours per week are recommended. An average student should spend 10 hours per week for preparation, reading and writing in addition to attendance at lectures and *tutorials*.

Assessment

Assessment items and workload per item	%	CLO(s)	Due date
1 Critical Response Essay (1,000 – 1,500 words)	10%	1,2,3	August 2, 2013
2 Critical Response Essay (1,000 – 1,500 words)	10%	1,2,3	August 16, 2013
3 Critical Response Essay (1,000 – 1,500 words)	10%	1,2,3	September 13, 2013
4 Critical Response Essay (1,000 – 1,500 words)	10%	1,2,3	September 27, 2013
5 Critical Response Essay (1,000 – 1,500 words)	10%	1,2,3	October 11, 2013
6 Final Test (in class 1 hour 50 minutes)	50%	1,2	October 15, 2013

Marking Criteria

Critical response essays:

33.3% for clarity.

33.3% for critical engagement.

33.4% for creativity.

Test:

- 33.3% for clarity.
- 33.3% for critical/creative engagement.
- 33.4% for accuracy.

Submission and return of work

Response essays must be submitted electronically via Blackboard. All grades will be posted on Blackboard.

Penalties

- Essays longer than 1,500 words will not be marked.
- Any late submission will *not* receive written feedback (verbal feedback is always possible).
- Unexcused late submissions will receive a 1 point deduction for each day that the assignment is late.
- Students will have a 48-hour grace period before receiving point deductions. This period includes weekends and holidays (e.g. if an essay is due 5pm Friday, points will be deducted beginning 5pm Sunday).
- No unexcused work that is more than ten days overdue will be marked.
- For work to be excused as late, a student will need to provide evidence of a valid excuse (such as a medical certificate) to the student's tutor.
- If the tutor does not approve of a student's excuse, a student may write the coordinator for meeting between the student and tutor.
- Eating or talking in lecture is inappropriate. Students who violate this rule or who disrupt the lecture in any way will be dismissed for the remainder of the lecture.

Materials and equipment and/or additional expenses

- Students are permitted computers, tablets, and phones in class for the purposes of taking notes. Students must disable wireless.
- During lecture, cell phones must be switched off.

Set texts

PDFs to readings are available as links from this document. There is no course reader.

REFERENCES

Bhikkhu, Ñ. (1995). Anupada-sutta MN 111. trans. Middle-Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya, Wisdom Publications: 899-902.

Bhikkhu, Ñ. (1995). Satipatthāna-sutta MN 10. t. M.-L. D. o. t. B. A. N. T. o. t. M. Nikāya. Boston, Wisdom Publications: 145-155.

Blanke, O. and Metzinger, T. (2009). "Full-body illusions and minimal phenomenal selfhood." Trends in Cognitive Sciences 13(1): 7-13.

Bulbulia J, and Schjoedt, U. (2012). The neural basis of religious belief. In F. Krueger and J. Grafman, editors, The Neural Basis of Human Belief Systems. Psychology Press: 169-190.

Carrasco, D. (2000). City of Sacrifice: The Aztec Empire and the Role of Violence in Civilization. Boston MA, Beacon Press.

- Durkheim, E. (1965/1915). The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. New York, George Allen and Unwin Ltd.
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- Fields, G. P. (2001). Religious Therapeutics: Body and Health in Yoga, Ayurveda, and Tantra. Albany NY, State University of New York Press.
- Geertz, C. (1973). The Interpretation of Cultures; Selected Essays. New York, Basic Books.
- Girard, R. (1997). Violent Origins: Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation. Violent Origins. R. Hamerton-Kelly, W. Burkert, R. Girard and J. Z. Smith, Stanford University Press: 73-105.
- Gómez, L. (1995). Two Tantric Meditations: Visualizing the Deity. Buddhism in Practice. D. Lopez. Princeton, Princeton University Press: 318-327.
- Goodman, F. (1990). Where the Spirits Ride the Wind: Trance Journeys and Other Ecstatic Experiences. Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press.
- Haidt, J., J. Patrick Seder, et al. (2008). "Hive Psychology, Happiness, and Public Policy." The Journal of Legal Studies 37(June): S153-S156.
- Katz, R. (1984). Boiling Energy: community healing among the Kalahari Kung. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
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- Pahnke, W. N. and W. A. Richards (1966). "Implications of LSD and experimental mysticism." Journal of Religion and Health: 175-208
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- Renfrew, C. (2008). "Neuroscience, evolution and the sapient paradox: the factuality of value and of the sacred." Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences 363(1499): 2041-2047.
- Sacks, O. (2008). Musicophilia: Tales of Music and the Brain. Picador, London.
- Said, E. (1979). Orientalism and Religion. New York, Vintage: 1-28.
- Stoler-Miller, B. (1996). Yoga: Discipline of Freedom. Berkeley, CA, University of California Press: xi-35.

Class representative

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, to the Course Coordinator, and to the class. The class representative will provide a communication channel to the Course Coordinator on behalf of students. The contact details for the Class Representative will be placed on Blackboard under:

COURSE RESOURCES → PEOPLE → CLASS REPRESENTATIVE

Class Rep name and contact details:

Student feedback

This course will be evaluated by CAD

Student feedback on University courses may be found at www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/feedback/feedback_display.php.

Other important information

The information above is specific to this course. There is other important information that students must familiarise themselves with, including:

- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism
- Aegrotats: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat
- Academic Progress: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/academic-progress (including restrictions and non-engagement)
- Dates and deadlines: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/dates
- FHSS Student and Academic Services Office: www.victoria.ac.nz/fhss/student-admin
- Grades: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/grades
- Resolving academic issues: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/publications2#grievances
- Special passes: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcacademic/publications2#specialpass
- Statutes and policies including the Student Conduct Statute: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy
- Student support: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/viclife/student-service
- Students with disabilities: www.victoria.ac.nz/st_services/disability
- Student Charter: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/viclife/student-charter
- Student Contract: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/enrol/studentcontract
- Turnitin: www.cad.vuw.ac.nz/wiki/index.php/Turnitin
- University structure: www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about
- VUWSA: www.vuwsa.org.nz