



**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

***ART HISTORY, CLASSICS AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES***

***RELIGIOUS STUDIES***

***RELI 226 PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION***

***CRN: 10402***

***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](http://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](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/exams-and-assessments/aegrotat)

**Names and contact details**

Course Coordinator: Dr. Joseph Bulbulia  
Office: Hunter 322  
Telephone: 463-5043  
Course Tutors: Names and details are given on Blackboard under:  
`communications' → `contacts'.  
Administrator: Aliko Kalliabetsos  
HU 318, 463 5299, [aliko.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:aliko.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz)

**Class times and locations**

Lecture time: Thursday 14:10 – 16:00  
Lecture venue: Hunter HU LT 220  
Tutorial time/venue[s]: Times/venues vary; please enrol in tutorials through S Cubed

**Communication of additional information**

Religious Studies is in the Hunter Building. The Programme administrator, Aliko Kalliabetsos, is in HU 318. We will communicate additional information by Blackboard and by student email.

## Office Hours

The main Religious Studies office is open Monday - Friday, 9:30- 12:00 noon and 2:30 – 3:30. You can arrange to meet with Joseph Bulbulia by appointment.

## Prescription

This course provides an introduction to the psychology of religion. Many people identify with religious groups or traditions and claim to have religious or spiritual experiences. This course explores how contemporary psychological research sheds new light on human religiosity. Topics include: the development of religion in children, the relationship between religion and morality, rituals, altered states of consciousness, and religion and identity. 100% internal assessment.

## Course content

### Lecture Schedule and Readings

#### PART I. Religious Belief

1. **July 18** What can we learn from the psychology of religion?

Theory:

W. James. The varieties of religious experience: a study in human nature, Lecture 1. "Religion and Neurology" Amazon Digital Services Inc., Seattle, WA, 1902.

Website: <http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/james/toc.htm>

Evidence:

A. Norenzayan, J. Henrich, and E. Slingerland. Religious prosociality: A synthesis. In P. Richerson and M. Christiansen, editors, Cultural Evolution. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, In press. [PDF](#)

2. **July 25** How are religions transmitted?

Theory:

P. Boyer. Religious thought and behaviour as by-products of brain function. Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 7(3):119–124, 2003. [PDF](#)

Evidence:

J. Barrett and F. Keil. Conceptualizing a nonnatural entity. Cognitive Psychology, 31:219–247, 1996. [PDF](#)

3. **August 1** How does 'spirituality' differ from 'religion' (and atheism)?

Theory:

J. Bulbulia. Are there any religions? Method and Theory in the Study of Religion, 17(2):71–100, 2005. [PDF](#)

Evidence:

M. Wilson, J. Bulbulia, and C. G. Sibley. Differences and similarities in religious and paranormal beliefs: a typology of distinct faith signatures. Religion, Brain and Behavior, (ahead-of-print):1–23, 2013 [PDF](#)

4. **August 8** Why do people believe in the unseen?

Theory:

R. McKay and D. Dennett. The evolution of misbelief. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 32(06):493–510, 2010. [PDF](#)

Evidence:

M. Bateson, D. Nettle, and G. Roberts. Cues of being watched enhance cooperation in a real-world setting. *Biology Letters*, 2(3):412–414, 2006. [PDF](#)

5. **August 15** How do children learn about religion?

Theory + evidence:

D. Kelemen. Are children "intuitive theists"? Reasoning about purpose and design in nature. *Psychological Science*, 15:295–230, 2004. [PDF](#)

Evidence + theory:

P. Harris and M. A. Koenig. Trust in testimony: How children learn about science and religion. *Child Development*, 77(3):505–524, 2006. [PDF](#)

6. **August 22** In class test worth 25%

**Mid-trimester break August 26– September 8**

**PART II. Religious Action/Feeling**

7. **September 12** How do high and low arousal rituals affect memory?

Theory (+ evidence):

Q. D. Atkinson and H. Whitehouse. The cultural morphospace of ritual form examining modes of religiosity cross-culturally. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 32(1):50–62, 2011. [PDF](#)

Evidence (+ theory)

D. Xygalatas, U. Schjoedt, J. Bulbulia, I. Konvalinka, P. Reddish, E. Jegindoe, A. Geertz, and A. Roepstorff. Autobiographical memory in a firewalking ritual. *Journal of Cognition and Culture*, 2013 (ahead-of-press). [PDF](#)

8. **September 19** How does religious action affect the brain?

Theory (+ evidence):

J. Bulbulia and U. Schjoedt. The neural basis of religious belief. In F. Krueger and J. Grafman, editors, *The Neural Basis of Human Belief Systems*. Psychology Press, 2012. [PDF](#)

Evidence (+ theory)

U. Schjoedt, H. Stødkilde-Jørgensen, A. W. Geertz, and A. Roepstorff. Highly religious participants recruit areas of social cognition in personal prayer. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 4(2):199– 207, 2009. [PDF](#)

9. **September 26** What are the social effects rituals?

Theory (+ evidence):

R. Sosis. Why aren't we all Hutterites? Costly signaling theory and religious behavior. *Human Nature-an Interdisciplinary Biosocial Perspective*, 14(2):91–127, 2003. [PDF](#)

Evidence (+ theory)

D. Xygalatas, P. Mitkidis, R. Fischer, P. Reddish, J. Skewes, A. W. Geertz, A. Roepstorff, and J. Bulbulia. Extreme rituals promote prosociality. *Psychological Science*, 2013 (ahead-of-print). [PDF](#)

10. **October 3** How is religion affecting our neighborhoods?

Theory (+ evidence):

C. G. Sibley and J. Bulbulia. The proportion of religious residents predicts the values of nonreligious neighbours: Evidence from a national sample. *Religion, Brain and Behavior*, 2012 (ahead-of-print). [PDF](#)

Evidence (+ theory)

D. Wilson, D. O'Brien, and A. Sesma. Human prosociality from an evolutionary perspective: variation and correlations at a city-wide scale. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 30(3):190–200, 2009. [PDF](#)

11. **October 10** Does religion matter to disaster recovery?

Theory:

S. Freud. *The Future of an Illusion*. Norton, New York, 1927. Sections 1- 3 pp 5-20 [PDF](#)

Evidence:

C. G. Sibley and J. A. Bulbulia. Faith after an earthquake: A longitudinal study of religion and perceived health before and after the 2011 Christchurch New Zealand Earthquake. *PLoS ONE*, 7(12):e49648 10.1371/journal.pone.0049648, 12 2012. Here: <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0049648>

12. **October 17** In class test worth 25%.

## Teaching format

- Lectures
- Tutorials

## Mandatory course requirements

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

1. Receive a mark of at least 10/25 for the mid term and 10/25 for the final class test.
2. Attend at least 50% of all tutorials or submit extra assignments

## Workload

This course is worth twenty points (20pts). One point typically equates to ten hours of work. For a twenty-point course, the 200 hours should be spread evenly over the 12-week trimester, break, study week, and exam period. While work styles will vary, the following is a rough-and-ready guide:

- Lectures and tutorials: three hours per week.
- Readings: four hours per week.
- Short writing assignments: five hours per assignment.
- Final research essay: forty hours.

## Course learning objectives (CLOs)

*Students who pass this course will be able to:*

1. Understand and form an opinion about cutting edge theories and research in the psychology of religion;
2. Better evaluate arguments based on quantitative data;
3. Write a clear, persuasive, and original commentary about an evidence-based argument.

*Normally, an aegrotat pass will only be considered if an applicant has completed at least 30% of the course assessment.*

## Assessment

Assessment items and workload per item	%	CLO(s)	Due date
1 One short research essay between 750-100 words	10%	1, 2, 3	August 2 2013
2 One short research essay between 750-100 words	10%	1, 2, 3	August 16
3 One short research essay between 750-100 words	10%	1, 2, 3	September 13
4 One short research essay between 750-100 words	10%	1, 2, 3	September 27
5 One short research essay between 750-100 words	10%	1, 2, 3	October 11
6 Midterm Test	25%	1, 2, 3	August 22
7 Final Test	25%	1, 2, 3	October 17

## Assessment requirements

1. A midterm test worth 25pts (out of 100pts), in class on **22 August, 2013**.
2. A final test worth 25pts (out of 100pts), in class **17 October, 2013**.
3. The course is assessed by five response papers of between 750-100 words, each worth 10pts (out of 100pts).
  - Due dates for short essays are:
    - **August 2 2013**
    - **August 16, 2013**
    - **September 13, 2013**
    - **September 27, 2013**
    - **October 11, 2013**

Guidelines for these essays, along with templates, and examples of exemplary essays can be found under "Course Resources" on Blackboard. Please consult these documents before writing your short essays. Each essay should be roughly 800 words. Short essays must be submitted on Blackboard. It is each student's responsibility to ensure that his or her work has been submitted (when in doubt, ask your tutor to verify).

### Submission and return of work

1. All work must be submitted by Blackboard, unless special permission is given prior to the due date.
2. All work must contain a student's name, a student's ID number, and relevant contact details, and a word count (inclusive of notes/bibliography).
3. Normally, the only valid excuse for an extension will be a medical certificate or a note from a professional counsellor.
4. Students are required to check Blackboard and their student email address (or the email address that is linked to Blackboard) at least once per a week for up to date information about any course changes.

### 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).
- 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 to use personal computers in the classroom for note-taking purposes only.

### Recommended and Required readings

All readings are available by clicking PDF links on this course outline above

### Class representative

The class representative provides a useful way to communicate feedback to the teaching staff during the course. A class representative will be selected at the first lecture of the course. The representative's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, and posted on Blackboard under 'communications' → 'course contacts'. The class representative communicates with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

Students may like to write the Class Rep's name and details in this box:

Class Rep name and contact details:
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### Student feedback

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