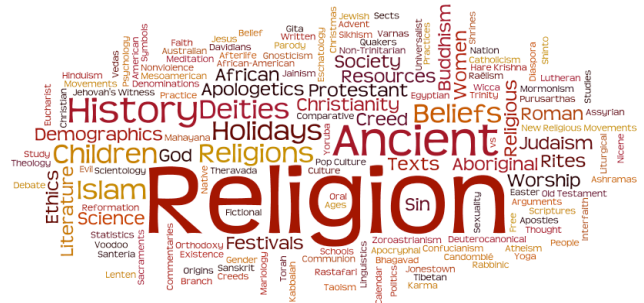


# THE RELIGIOUS MIND

**SPRING 2017**

■ **Instructor**

Dr. Julien Musolino  
[www.julienmusolino.com](http://www.julienmusolino.com)  
[julien@julienmusolino.com](mailto:julien@julienmusolino.com)  
 Office hours by appointment

■ TA

Ana Bennett  
[Anb136@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:Anb136@scarletmail.rutgers.edu)  
 Office hours: Mondays, 4:00-5:00pm

## ■ Class meetings

Monday/Wednesday, 1:40pm-3:00pm, SEC 111

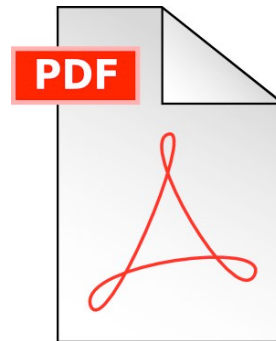
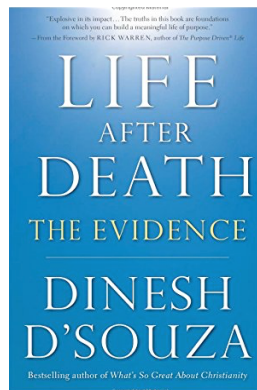
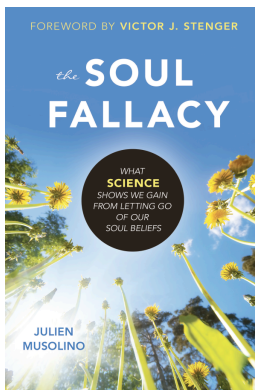
## ■ Course description

Religious thought and behavior are quintessential human traits, present in all modern cultures, and evident in archeology from all periods of human history and pre-history. Today, religion represents one of the most ubiquitous forces shaping people's beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. It would indeed be difficult to make sense of most of human existence, including culture, politics, law, morality, and war, without an appreciation of what religion is and how it works. Within the last few decades, psychologists, anthropologists, biologists, and neuroscientists working under the banner of what has come to be called *The Cognitive Science of Religion* have joined forces in an effort to try to understand how human minds acquire, generate, and transmit religious thoughts and practices. In this course, we will discuss these fascinating developments and review major theoretical and empirical advances as we explore the nature, origins, and implications of religious thought.

## ■ Learning objectives

- Students will be able to use insights from different academic disciplines in order to reflect upon and analyze current societal issues.
- Students will apply psychological concepts and content to become engaged citizens.
- Students will use critical thinking, skeptical inquiry, and, when possible, the scientific approach to ask, answer and understand questions related to behavior and mental processes.

## ■ Reading materials



- *The Soul Fallacy* (Prometheus, 2015) by Julien Musolino (ISBN # 978-1616149628)
- *Life after death: The evidence* (Regnery, 2009) by Dinesh D'Souza (ISBN # 978-1596980990)
- Other reading materials in PDF format that will be made available to students through SAKAI

The readings listed above are required for the course. *The Soul Fallacy* and *Life after death: the evidence* are popular books that can be purchased for about \$10 or less each. They will be used to introduce students in a fun and engaging way to the core issues discussed in class. These two books will be supplemented with a selection of cutting-edge research articles made available to students through SAKAI. All these readings will be discussed in class and serve as a basis for exams and class assignments.

## ■ Lectures

Due to the large enrolment for this class, lectures will not be interactive.

However, I will be available after class for more informal discussion.

The class will also include a number of guest lectures by well-known academics, authors, public intellectuals or activists.

- **Exams and grades**

Grades will be determined by performance on the following activities:

- **2 midterms**

The midterms will be taken in class.

- **4 online assignments**

The assignments will be due at regular intervals during the semester and will need to be posted on SAKAI by a specific deadline. For each assignment, students will be asked to answer a series of questions (between 5 and 10) bearing on either the assigned readings or issues discussed in class. A complete assignment will typically consist of two or three pages of text, including the questions themselves. Students can of course write more if they feel so inclined.

- **Final Exam**

The final exam is CUMULATIVE (i.e., it covers the entire content of the course over the whole semester). For university policy regarding finals exams, please visit:

<http://registrar.rutgers.edu/NB/EXAMRULE.HTM>

- **Attendance**

Attendance will be taken and is linked to the extra credit policy described below.

- **Extra credit**

Students will be given the opportunity to earn extra credit in an amount which will increase their final grade by up to 2%. Extra credit will be based on attendance and calculated in the following manner: a student who does not miss any lectures will get the full 2%, a student who misses 1 lecture will get 1.5%, and a student who misses 2 classes will get 1%. A student who misses 3 lectures will not get any extra credit but will not incur any penalties either. ***Each additional class missed after the 3<sup>rd</sup> missed lecture will lower your final grade by 1%.***

## **Exam format**

All exams (with the exception of online assignments) will have the same format and include some or all of the following activities:

- Multiple choice questions
- True/false
- Fill in the blank
- Short answer

## **Grades will be computed using the following weights**

- Midterm 1 (30% of final grade)
- Midterm 2 (30% of final grade)
- Assignments (10% of final grade)
- Final Exam (30% of final grade)
- Attendance (see above)

## **Percentages converted to grades**

90% - 100% --- A  
87% - 89% --- B+  
80% - 86% --- B  
77% - 79% --- C+  
70% - 76% --- C  
60% - 69% --- D  
59% - 0% --- F

## **Changing Grades**

Students sometimes ask professors to change their final grade, usually based on the need to achieve a certain grade in order to, for example, get into the business school, retain a scholarship, or avoid academic probation. Although I wish all of you the best of success in your studies, please understand that changing one student's grade is unfair to all the other students in the class. Therefore, requested grade changes will not be considered. Likewise, additional assignments to earn extra credit are not available. Your final grade will be based solely on your scores on the course exams and assignments, as described above.

## ■ Responsibilities

### • Exams and assignments

Barring exceptional circumstances, all exams and assignments must be completed on the date they are assigned (in the case of exams) or by the relevant deadline (in the case of assignments).

### • Make-up exams and assignments

Under exceptional circumstances, e.g., severe illness, injury, etc., students will be allowed to make-up for a missed exam or assignment. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor so that proper arrangements can be made.

### • Conduct and Academic Honesty

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and respect. Conduct other than this will be disciplined following procedures detailed in Rutgers University policy on such matters. Academic dishonesty is defined as, but not limited to, plagiarism, harassment, cheating, disrupting behavior, or representing another student's work as your own. Please also note that use of computers and other electronic devices for anything other than note-taking is distracting to other students and is not permitted.

For further information on this topic, please visit:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>

### • Absences

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

### • Religious observances

Rutgers University's policy on accommodations for religious observances or holidays is available at the following site:

<http://registrar.rutgers.edu/NB/ENROL-NB.HTM#religious>

### • Special accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>

## ■ Course content and schedule

Date	Lecture topic	Readings
<b>Week 1</b> Jan 18	Introduction	
<b>Week 2</b> Jan 23 Jan 25	<b><u>Part 1: Explaining Religion</u></b>  What is religion? Cognitive bases of religious belief	
<b>Week 3</b> Jan 30 Feb 01	Religious belief as a by-product of ordinary cognition	<b>TSF: chapter 1; LADTE: chapters 1 &amp; 2</b> - Exploring the natural foundations of religion, <i>Justin Barrett</i> - Religious thought and behaviour as by-products of brain function, <i>Pascal Boyer</i>
<b>Week 4</b> Feb 06 Feb 08	Individual differences in religiosity <b>Assignment 1</b>	<b>TSF: chapters 2 &amp; 3; LADTE: chapters 3 &amp; 4</b> - Divine intuition: Cognitive style influences belief in God, <i>Shenhav et al.</i> - Mentalizing deficits constrain belief in a personal God, <i>Norenzayan et al.</i>
<b>Week 5</b> Feb 13 Feb 15	<b>No class</b>  <b>Midterm 1</b>	<b>TSF: chapters 2 &amp; 3; LADTE: chapters 3 &amp; 4</b>
<b>Week 6</b> Feb 20 Feb 22	The developing religious mind	<b>TSF: chapters 4 &amp; 5; LADTE: chapters 5 &amp; 6</b> - The natural emergence of reasoning about the afterlife as a developmental regularity, <i>Bering and Bjorklund</i>
<b>Week 7</b> Feb 27	Rituals, transcendence, and meaningfulness	<b>TSF: chapters 6 &amp; 7; LADTE: chapters 7-9</b> -

Mar 01		
<b>Week 8</b>	<b><u>Part 2: Religion and culture</u></b>	<b>TSF: chapters 8 &amp; 9; LADTE: chapters 10-13</b>
Mar 06	Religion, pro-social behavior, and societal health	
Mar 08	<b>Assignment 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Does religion make people moral? <i>Ara Norenzayan</i></li> <li>- Religion, evolution, and morality, <i>Paul Bloom</i></li> </ul>
<b>Week 9</b>		
Mar 13 Mar 15	<b><i>Spring Break – no class</i></b>	
<b>Week 10</b>	Religion and politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The righteous mind, <i>Jonhatan Haidt</i></li> <li>- How Corporate America invented Christian America, <i>Kevin Kruse</i></li> </ul>
Mar 20 Mar 22		
<b>Week 11</b>	Religion and science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Childhood origins of adult resistance to science, <i>Bloom and Weisberg</i></li> </ul>
Mar 27 Mar 29	<b>Midterm 2</b>	
<b>Week 12</b>	<b><u>Part 3: Beyond belief</u></b>	
Apr 03 Apr 05	<b>Assignment 3</b>	
<b>Week 13</b>	Cognitive roads to unbelief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Analytic thinking promotes religious disbelief, <i>Will Gervais</i></li> <li>- The origins of religious disbelief, <i>Ara Norenzayan and Will Gervais</i></li> </ul>
Apr 10 Apr 12		
<b>Week 14</b>	Morality, meaning, and spirituality without religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Grace without God, <i>Katherine Ozment</i></li> <li>- The Moral Arc, <i>Michael Shermer</i></li> </ul>
Apr 17 Apr 19		

<b>Week 15</b>		
Apr 24	Course summary	
Apr 26	<b>Assignment 4</b>	
May 09	<b>Final exam, 12:00-3:00pm</b>	

\* Please note that this schedule is subject to changes and modifications which, if they occur, will be announced in class.

## ■ Student-Wellness Services

### Just In Case Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

### Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /

[www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

### Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /

[www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

### Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable



accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

**Scarlet Listeners**

**(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>**

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.