

Soul Beliefs: Causes and Consequences (Spring 2015)

Professor Lyra Stein, Ph.D.

Email: Lyra@rci.rutgers.edu

Office: Tillett 313 <http://rumaps.rutgers.edu/?q=tillett+Hall>

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:00-1:00, Thursdays 2:00-3:30

01:830:123 Soul Beliefs: Causes and Consequences (4 cr) Exploration of the causes and consequences of various beliefs about the soul. Topics such as the self, mind/body dualism, evolution, culture, death anxiety, afterlife, religious and political conflict.

Course Reader:_

Ogilvie, D. & Hamilton, L. (2014) *Soul Beliefs: Causes and Consequences* Pearson etext. (the etext for this semester is required)

Course Materials

Weekly readings will be available through the etext that can be purchased on the course site (see the "course home"). Other readings will be linked to the weekly tab. These readings will include journal articles, essays by authorities in the field, book chapters, videos, court rulings, etc. Students will also be encouraged to find related resources on their own and share these references in the discussion forum.

Facebook Site:

I created a Facebook group for this class called Soul Beliefs <https://www.facebook.com/groups/173436286152542/> I will be posting articles and course related issues to enhance your knowledge of the area. Feel free to use this site to communicate with me and other students in the class. I find that many students have the same questions and this is a place for you to clarify any topics which are confusing.

Course Goals

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Explain how life experiences shape people's worldviews.
- Analyze a contemporary global issue from a multidisciplinary perspective.
- Analyze the relationship that science and technology have to a contemporary social issue.
- Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, method, evidence, arguments, and theory in social and historical analysis.

- Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time, including the history of ideas or history of science.
- Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.
- Apply concepts about human and social behavior to particular questions or situations.

Grading Policies

20 pts	intro quiz
60 pts	Mid-term exam 1
60 pts	Mid-term exam 2
100 pts	Take-home final exam
108 pts	Assignments
<u>132 pts</u>	<u>(11 x 12) discussion posts</u>
470 pts	TOTAL

A: 423-470, B+: 399-421, B: 376-398, C+: 352-375, C: 329-351, D: 282-328, F: 0-281

Academic Integrity

You are expected to be honest with yourself and fair to your fellow students. We will enforce the University's regulations on academic integrity, and we ask your individual assistance in reporting any suspected violations to us or to the Office of Student Conduct. The University's regulations are appropriately strict, and if you are tempted to violate them, you should first read the regulations and potential consequences: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Students with Disabilities

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>.

Logistics of the class:

You are welcome to access the course lectures at your own pace. The syllabus is just a general guide to pace your studying. I suggest that you do not wait until the last minute to access the lectures given that you will have discussion posts due each week. For each lecture, recordings of the lectures divided into 20-30 minute clips, the PowerPoint slides, and the readings are listed under each week tab. I suggest breaking up your viewing sessions by the 20-30 min. sections.

Because this is an online class, the recitations will be carried out on the discussion boards. Each week, you will be assigned to a group and discuss the group topic with your classmates. In addition, you will post in a topic of your choice. These 2 initial posts are due by 11:59pm on Thursdays. Students in your group, other groups or I may reply to your posts. By 11:59pm on Sundays, you will respond to those replies. These posts are to be discussions, not just isolated posts or responses such as "I agree" and "you are right" or asking a question. Each week, your posts will be graded out of 12 points based on quality and timeliness-please see the course site for the grading rubric. You will get 2 extra credit points when you correct incorrect content posted by another student.

By Thursday at 11:59: 1) Response to your group. **You may not post information already posted by someone else in your group. You must add new information.**

2) A response to another student's post in another group. This must add more information to the topic. I will give an extra credit points if you correct someone who posts erroneous information.

By Sunday at 11:59: 1) Respond to my follow up questions to **all of your** posts (not just the initial post)

2) Respond to any classmate responses to your posts.

In addition to posting on the discussion board, you will submit 7 assignments. Assignments should be uploaded to the dropbox for the assignment on the course site. In addition to listing the assignments at the end of the syllabus, the weekly tab also includes a description of the assignment and the grading rubric.

Your assignments should be double spaced and referenced in APA style. This include in-text citations and a reference page. Please see the following links for APA style.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/03/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/05/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/06/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/07/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/08/>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/09/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/10/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/11/>

Because this is an online class, I would like you to feel free to contact me via email with any question. In addition, you may also contact me by phone if you would like extra help.

Unit 1: Historical Foundations of Science, Religion, and

Dates	Lecture Topics	Reading Assignments
Week of 1/19	Introduction to the Course	
	What I was told to believe	
MANDATORY!!!! 1/23	In class meeting- 1:40-3:00 in Tillett 254 http://rumaps.rutgers.edu/?q=tillett+Hall	
Week of 1/26	Historical Foundations of Soul Beliefs – Part I	Chapter 1: <i>A Partial History of Soul Beliefs</i> , p. 1-
	Historical Foundations of Soul Beliefs – Part II	Chapter 1: <i>A Partial History of Soul Beliefs</i> , p. 21 Ted talk- Kelli Swazey: Life that doesn't end with
Week of 2/2	Historical Foundations of Soul Beliefs – Part III (with guest contribution by Prof. Tracy Shors)	Chapter 2: <i>The Evolution of Religious Behavior</i> (V
	Functions of Religion in Ancient & Modern Times	TED talk- Jonathan Haidt: Religion, evolution, and the ecstasy of self-transcendence
Week of 2/9	Religions Under Attack	<i>The Four Horsemen of Atheism</i> Video Part 1: (Link) Video Part 2: (Link)

	Big Ideas and Big Controversies	<i>The Crime of Galileo and Scientific Revolution</i> http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1630galileo.a
Week of 2/16	Darwin's Dangerous Idea	Chapter 3: <i>Essays on Darwin :Ever Since Darwin</i> Darwin's Delay, (2) Darwin's Sea Change, (3) Darwin's The Odyssey of Evolution, and (4) Darwin's Untimely (Gould) Chapter 4: p 99-104- <i>The Development of Evolution</i> Chapter 5: <i>My Brain Made Me Do It</i> (Gazzaniga) <i>Did Your Brain Make You Do It?</i> (Monterosso & S http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/29/opinion/sunday/and-moral-responsibility.html?_r=1 <i>The Mind-Body Problem</i> (Eliasmith) http://philosophy.uwaterloo.ca/MindDict/mindbody
	H: The Mind-Body Problem	

**** **Exam 1-online** ****
**** **Feb. 27** ****

Unit 2: Belief Systems as a Part of Our Lives

Dates	Lecture Topics	Reading Assignments
Week of 3/2	Thinking and Feeling	Chapter 6: <i>Unpleasantness in Vermont</i> (Damasio)
	Terror Management (Prof. Solomon)	Chapter 7: <i>Tales from the Crypt</i> (Solomon et al.) TED talk: Stephen Cave: The 4 stories we tell ourselves about <i>Anatomy of Internalized Beliefs</i> (Ogilvie), p 1-21
Week of 3/9	Internalized Beliefs I	
	Internalized Beliefs II: The Evolution of Senses of Self in Childhood	Chapter 8: <i>Religion is Natural</i> (Bloom) Chapter 9: <i>Mirror Neurons and Imitation: Learning</i> (Ramachandran)
Week of 3/23	After-Life, Out of Body, and Disembodied: What's the evidence? (Prof. Musolino)	Chapter 10: <i>Psychology and Scientific Thinking</i> Ted talk-Naomi Oreskes: Why we should trust scientists
	After-Life, Out of Body, and Disembodied: What's the evidence? (Prof. Musolino)	Chapter 11: <i>My Heavens</i> Ted talk-David Chalmers: How do you explain consciousness
Week of 3/30	The Brain and Our Emotional Future	Re-Read Chapter 8: <i>Religion is Natural</i> (Bloom)

	The Biology of Thou Shalt Not	Chapter 12: <i>The Biology of Thou Shalt Not</i> (Hamilton) Re-read Chapter 5: <i>My Brain Made Me Do It</i> (Gazzaniga) Neuroscience in Court (Kelland) http://news.yahoo.com/insight-neuroscience-court-brain-ma-070322193.html
Week 4/6	The Evolution of the Human Brain	Chapter 4, p 104-119 :Evolution, Heredity &Behavior
	Evolutionary Psychology	Cosmides & Tooby, Evolutionary Psychology: A Primer, http://www.cep.ucsb.edu/primer.html

**** **Exam 2-online** ****

Friday April 17

Unit 3: How Does It All End?

Dates	Lecture Topics	Reading Assignments
Week of 4/20	The Undesired Self	Chapter 13: <i>The Undesired Self</i> (Ogilvie, Cohen, & Solomon)
	The Human Spark	NPR interview with Richard Leakey: http://www.npr.org/2011/04/15/135442954/richard-leakey-re-human-past-and-future
Week of 4/27	The Scopes Trial: Human Origins and the Public Classroom	Chapter 14: <i>Defeating Creationism in the Courtroom, But Not in the Classroom</i> (Berkman & Plutzer) <i>The Scopes Trial</i> http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/evolut.htm
	The Dover Board of Education: Intelligent Design and the Public Classroom	<i>Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District: Teaching Intelligent Design in Public Schools</i> (Lee) http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/crcl/vol41_2/lee.pdf
Week of 5/4	Where Do We Go From Here?	

Take-Home Final Exam

Assignments

Assignment 1 – Due Feb. 1 Talking About the Soul (20pts)

According to a poll taken in 2008, ninety-six percent of adults in the United States report they believe each person possesses a soul and 82% believe heaven exists. This means there is a high probability that you and other people you know believe that souls exist and a large portion of that group believe in Heaven. But we don't have much information about what people believe comprises the soul and it is very likely there are many versions of afterlife beliefs. Your kick-off written assignment is to help fill in some gaps regarding *what* people believe about the soul, whether or not it survives death, and *how* they came to believe whatever they believe.

Here are the mechanics of your paper.

1. Write your **sex, age, ethnicity** and **religious affiliation** at the top of the first page of your paper. Use the rest of the single or double-spaced page to write your own answer to the question, "**What is the soul?**" Define it as clearly as you can. (Note that there is no correct answer and you won't be graded on your definition). Then, on the same page, **state whether or not you believe it will survive your death (yes or no is enough)**, and, if yes, **What are the options for its final destination?**
2. Interview three (3) people about their definitions of, or beliefs about, the soul. Then ask them the same question you answered: **What is the soul? Does it survive death? What are the options for its final destination?** Condense the information into one page. Include their **age, sex, ethnicity, religious affiliation** and **occupation** on the top of the page. Do not give their names.
3. On the final page briefly compare all four responses (yours and the 3 people you interviewed).

Please use 12 pt. font, double spaced.

Assignment 2 – Due Feb. 8 Religion in Societies (10 pts)

Historians/Anthropologists say that no society has existed without religion. Why do you think this is so? Be sure to include some element of Wade's argument in your 1-page paper.

Please use 12 pt. font, double spaced and follow APA style (including a reference page) outlined in the links above.

Assignment 3 -- Due Feb. 22 Darwin's Theory and a New Worldview (15 pts)

Charles Darwin refused to make a distinction between “higher” and “lower” species in his theory of evolution, arguing that all species, including human beings, are products of natural selection. He delayed publishing *The Origin of Species* because he knew that his ideas severely challenged basic assumptions about how human beings “arrived” on Earth.

Write a 2-page paper that 1) summarizes Darwin’s theory of “descent by modification”, 2) how “natural selection” contradicted the prevailing worldviews of his time, and 3) provide evidence that resistance to the theory of evolution remains strong in some sectors of our society 150 years after his seminal work was published.

Please use 12 pt. font, double spaced and follow APA style (including a reference page) outlined in the links above.

Assignment 4 – Due March 15 Core Beliefs (20 pts)

The assigned reading titled *The Anatomy of Internalized Beliefs* deals with how beliefs about the soul can be transformed into unquestioned assumptions about how things are. These assumptions need not be conscious in order for them to direct the course of a life. But beliefs about the soul are not the only beliefs that can be internalized as assumptions. Early on in our lives or subsequent to childhood, we make various decisions about who we are. Some of these decisions can become enduring and persistent beliefs that can be transformed as basic assumptions that covertly guide our thinking, decisions, and actions. Some of these non-conscious “who I am” assumptions can be sources of empowerment. Others can limit what we do, place restrictions on our relationships, and distort our self-perceptions. For the purpose of this exercise, these assumptions about ourselves will be referred to as *core beliefs*. If you are not able to articulate one of your core self-beliefs, select one of the above that comes close to describing how you sometimes feel.

In this assignment, identify one of your core beliefs about yourself and write a 2-page paper that includes the following elements:

- A statement of the core belief
- When and under what conditions do you think it was formed
- How it has influenced your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the past
- How it currently influences your thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Finally, after you have thought about one of your core self-beliefs, consider (in writing) if it “makes sense” to keep it or if the time has come revise it or let it go.

One of the most difficult parts of this assignment is isolating a core self-belief because core self-beliefs tend to be elusive. In fact, you might not be able to identify a core belief, but you will be able to locate one of its neighbors. It might be useful to review the following examples of core self-beliefs that students have identified and written about in the past.

- I am a special person, destined for fame
- I am courageous
- I am imposter – “I hope nobody ever discovers how weak and incompetent I really am”
- I am under-rated by people around me
- I am honest
- I am stupid
- I am unloved and unlovable
- I am a person who is consistently misunderstood
- I am polite
- Underneath it all, I don't feel like I am a person of worth
- I am invincible
- I am unattractive
- It's important to me that everyone like me
- Underneath it all, I am a phony
- I am outgoing
- I am a good listener
- I always keep my word

Please use 12 pt. font, double spaced.

Assignment 5- Due March 29 Intercessory Prayer (13 pts)

Research on the Effects of Prayer on Coronary Care Patients.A 1988 study by Randolph C. Byrd used 393 patients at the San Francisco General Hospital coronary

care unit (CCU). In this study, people prayed for some patients to get better but not for others. Measuring 29 health outcomes using three-level (good, intermediate, or bad) scoring, the group that was prayed for suffered fewer newly diagnosed ailments on six of them. Byrd concluded that "Based on these data there seemed to be an effect, and that effect was presumed to be beneficial", and that "intercessory prayer to the Judeo-Christian God has a beneficial therapeutic effect in patients admitted to a CCU."

A 1999 follow-up by William S Harris et al. attempted to replicate Byrd's findings under stricter experimental conditions, noting that the original research was limited to only "prayer-receptive" individuals (57 of the 450 patients invited to participate in the study refused to give consent "for personal reasons or religious convictions"). Additionally, the patients in the study knew that they were being studied, so some of the results may be attributed to some kind of placebo effect, where thinking that someone was praying for you made you feel better (this happens all the time with medications).

In other words, what Harris et al. did was give the names of 990 patients to volunteers who prayed for them daily. The volunteers were not updated on the patients' statuses and prayed for each person for 28 days regardless of how quickly they were discharged from the hospital. Additionally, the patients were not told that someone was praying for them, and they weren't asked if they wanted to participate (this is ethically okay, because the patients didn't actually do anything, and because asking them might cause additional distress).

Harris et al. (1999) used a different scoring system than Byrd, where hospitals patients were assigned points for anything that happened during their hospital stay. For example, getting a fever was 1 point, needing a pacemaker, defibrillator, or catheter counted as three points each, and going into cardiac arrest was 5 points. Using this weighted scoring system – which admittedly was, like Byrd's scoring, "an unvalidated measure of CCU outcomes," meaning that it was a new way of measuring how well someone did that hadn't been used before – Harris et al. found that patients who were prayed for scored an average of 6.35 on this scale, and those who were not prayed for scored an average of 7.13 – a 10% difference that was statistically significant. They found a similar difference if they just counted bad things that happened and didn't assign points – people who were prayed for did a little better. They concluded that "supplementary, remote, blinded, intercessory prayer produced a measurable improvement in the medical outcomes of critically ill patients". In other words, the prayers worked by making the people who were prayed for get better more quickly. However, when they applied Byrd's scoring system to their data, they could not document an effect of prayer.

Your assignment, based on this research, is to suggest what question(s) you would ask about this research to decide if this study proves that prayer helps people. In your one-page paper, you should specify what additional information you would want to know (for example, the theory of how prayer might have worked in this study, how the study was conducted, different groups that might have been tested, etc.). Since your commentary is limited to one page, identify only one or two items of information

that would be needed to confirm or dis-confirm the hypothesis that prayer helps patients recover from heart conditions. It is strongly recommended that you use of information contained in Chapter 6 of the Course Reader (Psychology and Scientific Thinking) as your guide and make proper citations when you do so.

The original article can be found in the resources for the week

Please use 12 pt. font, double spaced and follow APA style (including a reference page) outlined in the links above.

Assignment 6 -- Due April 5 Dualism: Bloom vs. Descartes (10 pts)

In his Meditations, Rene Descartes sums up his central dualist thesis when he states: "There is a vast difference between the mind and the body, in that the body...is always divisible, while the mind is completely indivisible"

Although Paul Bloom also posits a sort of dualism in his work, it is somewhat different, as can be understood when he states: "[Children] are dualists in the sense that they naturally see the world as containing two distinct domains...'physical objects and real events' and 'mental states and entities'."

Although they may seem similar at first, consider the full implications of their stances. Then, in a 2-page paper, compare Descartes' version of dualism with the dualism of children proposed by Paul Bloom, using this week's readings as your primary sources.

Please use 12 pt. font, double spaced and follow APA style (including a reference page) outlined in the links above.

Assignment 7 – Due may 3 Soul Reversal (10 pts)

During the past few weeks, you've learned about different beliefs about the soul, how these beliefs have changed over time, and how they differ in the modern day depending on religious and cultural influences. You've also heard arguments declaring that there is no evidence that souls actually exist.

This assignment is a "what-if" exercise. Imagine a scenario in which your beliefs about the soul are found to be wrong. If you believe in souls, what if you found out that souls don't really exist? If you don't believe in souls, what if you found out souls really *do* exist? In a one page paper, describe how you'd feel, and if and how your life would change as a result.

Please use 12 pt. font, double spaced