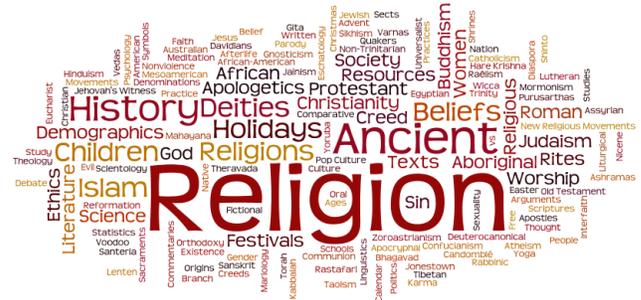
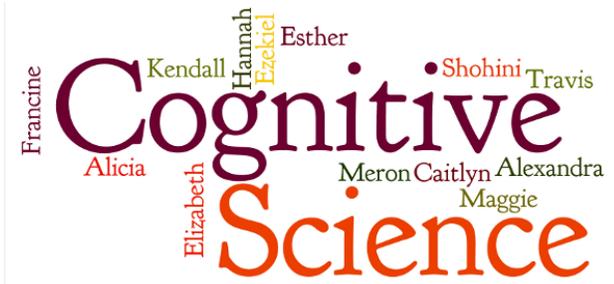


THE RELIGIOUS MIND

FALL 2019



- Instructor

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Office hours by appointment

- TA

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- Class meetings

Monday/Wednesday, 1:10pm-2:30pm, AB 2125

- 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

- No textbook will be used in this class. Instead, reading materials in PDF format will be made available to students through SAKAI.
- These readings will be discussed in class and serve as a basis for exams and class assignments.
- Throughout the lectures, a number of books will be mentioned that bear on issues discussed in class. None of these books are required but simply serve as useful suggestions for students who want to explore more on their own.

■ Lectures

Due to the large enrollment for this class, lectures will, for the most part, not be interactive. However, I will be available after class for more informal discussion and will leave time during class for interaction with students.

■ 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 bearing on 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**

There will be a final exam scheduled on **December 18, 8:00am-11:00am**. For university policy regarding finals exams, please visit:

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

- **Attendance**

Attendance will not be taken in this class. However, students are strongly encouraged to attend class as the lecture slides provide only minimal information. Since the class will not be based on “memorization”, but rather on understanding complex arguments, attending the lectures is essential.

- **Extra credit**

Students will be given the opportunity to earn extra credit through the completion of an optional assignment.

- **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)
- Extra credit (up to 2% added to final mean)

- **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 (unless, of course, an error was made in the calculation of your grade). Your final grade will be based 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 (and documented) circumstances, e.g., 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/>

- **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 tentative schedule**

Date	Lecture topic	Readings
Week 1 Sept 04	Introduction	
Week 2 Sept 09 Sept 11	<u>Part 1:</u> The broader context Truth, speech, feelings, and freedom	- <i>Why free speech is fundamental</i> , Pinker - <i>The coddling of the American mind</i> , Lukianoff and Haidt
Week 3 Sept 16 Sept 18	What is religion?	- <i>What is the origin</i> , Boyer
Week 4 Sept 23 Sept 25	<u>Part 2:</u> Mindware How the mind works	- <i>Exploring the natural foundations of religion</i> , Barrett - <i>Religious thought and behaviour as by-products of brain function</i> , Boyer

<p>Week 5</p> <p>Sept 30</p> <p>Oct 02</p>	<p>The tools we need</p> <p>Part 3: Explaining religion</p> <p>The nature of supernatural concepts</p>	<p>- <i>Cognitive templates for religious concepts</i>, Boyer and Ramble</p> <p>- <i>Melting lizards and crying mailboxes</i>, Banerjee et al.</p>
<p>Week 6</p> <p>Oct 07</p> <p>Oct 09</p>	<p>Intuitive and theological God</p> <p>Mind reading</p>	<p>- <i>Conceptualizing a nonnatural entity: anthropomorphism in God concepts</i>, Barrett and Keil</p> <p>- <i>Core intuitions about persons coexist and interfere with acquired Christian beliefs about God</i>, Barlev et al.</p>
<p>Week 7</p> <p>Oct 14</p> <p>Oct 16</p>	<p>Midterm 1</p> <p>What predicts levels of religious belief?</p>	<p>- <i>Distortions of mind perception in psychopathology</i>, Gray et al.</p>
<p>Week 8</p> <p>Oct 21</p> <p>Oct 23</p>	<p>Individual differences in levels of religious belief</p> <p>Part 4: Religion science</p> <p>The traditional image of persons</p>	<p>- <i>Cognitive biases explain religious belief, paranormal belief, and belief in life's purpose</i>, Willard and Norenzayan</p> <p>- <i>Divine intuition: cognitive style influences belief in God</i>, Shenhav et al.</p>

<p>Week 9</p> <p>Oct 28</p> <p>Oct 30</p>	<p>The search for the human soul</p>	<p>- <i>The soul fallacy</i>, Musolino</p> <p>- <i>The perimeter of ignorance</i> (Neil de Grasse Tyson, to be found online)</p>
<p>Week 10</p> <p>Nov 04</p> <p>Nov 06</p>	<p>The scientific image of persons</p> <p>Freedom, choice, and responsibility in a material world</p>	<p>- <i>For the law, neuroscience changes nothing and everything</i>, Greene and Cohen</p>
<p>Week 11</p> <p>Nov 11</p> <p>Nov 13</p>	<p>Part 5: Religion and culture in the US</p> <p>Religion and the culture wars in America</p> <p>Is America a Christian nation?</p>	<p>- <i>The myth of America's Christian heritage</i>, Kerry Walters</p>
<p>Week 12</p> <p>Nov 18</p> <p>Nov 20</p>	<p>Cultural memes</p> <p>Midterm 2</p>	
<p>Week 13</p> <p>Nov 25</p> <p>Nov 27</p>	<p>Part 6: Religion and Morality</p> <p>The relationship between religion and morality</p> <p>No class - Thanksgiving</p>	<p>- <i>Religion, morality, and evolution</i>, Paul Bloom</p> <p>- <i>Believers' estimates of God's beliefs are more egocentric than estimate of other people's beliefs</i>, Epley et al.</p>

Week 14		
Dec 02	Where does morality come from?	<i>- The new synthesis in moral psychology, Jonathan Haidt</i>
Dec 04		
Week 15		
Dec 09	How did religion and morality get connected?	<i>- Does religion make people moral?, Are Norenzayan</i>
Dec 11	Course summary	<i>- Increased affluence explains the emergence of Ascetic wisdoms and moralizing religions, Baumard et al.</i>
Dec 18	Final exam, 8:00-11:00am	

* Please note that this schedule is subject to changes and modifications which, if they occur, will be announced in class. **Information announced in class always supersedes what can be found on the syllabus.**

- **Student-Wellness Services**

[Just In Case Web App](http://codu.co/cee05e)

<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/

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/

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.