SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY  
Psychology Department  
Winter 2021  

PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY (PSYC 193)  

COVID-19 PANDEMIC ADAPTED SCHEDULE  

DRAFT 2: 12/6/20  

SUBJECT TO CHANGE  

Instructor: Thomas G. Plante, Ph.D., ABPP  
Office: Alumni Science 203 but mostly via Zoom from home (Zoom address = 358-201-2190)  
Telephone, E-Mail, web: 408-554-4471 (Office), tplante@scu.edu, www.scu.edu/tplante  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Course Meeting Room: Zoomville  
Course Meeting Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:30am-12pm  

Required Text:  

Additional readings may be provided during the class.  

Course Evaluation:  
Midterm Quest 1: Week 3 or so  
Midterm Quest 2: Week 6 or so  
Midterm Quest 3: Week 9 or so  
Final Quest: Tuesday of exam week  

Spiritual Formation Paper Project: Last day of class  
Class Participation, Behavior, Scholarly Enthusiasm, and Attendance: +/- can improve or decrease your course grade.  

Pass everything, get an “A.” Fail any one of 4 assigned tasks and get a “B.” Fail two of the tasks and get a “C”…..Two low passes equal one fail.  

Course Description:  

Psychology of religion and spirituality involves the discipline and principles of psychology and human behavior in understanding religion and spirituality. Class topics include empirical research and theory on religious and spiritual behavior and transformation from the various religious, spiritual, and historical wisdom traditions. Contemplative practices and spiritual tools from the various religious/spiritual wisdom traditions for psychological and physical health will be highlighted. A spiritual formation project will help students experience a hands-on activity to examine their own spiritual formation and development. The class is inclusive in that no particular religious/spiritual tradition or any tradition affiliation is assumed or required. It also highlights evidence based empirical approaches as well. Prerequisites include PSYC 1 or 2 and a RTC 1 class. The course fulfills the religious studies core (RTC 2) and vocations pathway requirements.
**Course Goals:**  
(1) To provide a basic and broad based overview of the field of the psychology of religion and spirituality.  
(2) To provide a practical and experiential understanding of the challenges involved in spiritual formation and transformation.  
(3) To provide the foundation for students taking additional courses and advanced training in psychology and religion.

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**Learning Assessment Plan** (LAP; from the University Core Curriculum)

1. Students will be able to analyze complex and diverse religious phenomena (such as architecture and art, music, ritual, scriptures, theological systems, and other cultural expressions of religious belief).
2. Students will be able to integrate and compare several different disciplinary approaches to a coherent set of religious phenomena.
3. Students will be able to clarify and express beliefs in light of their critical inquiry into the religious dimensions of human existence.

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**Sequence of Topics and Readings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction to the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality</td>
<td>(LAP 1, 2) 1: 1, 2: Intro*</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Biological Foundations and Benefits of Religious/Spiritual Practices</td>
<td>(LAP 1, 2) 1: 2, 3, 2: 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Youth Religious &amp; Spiritual Development</td>
<td>(LAP 1, 2) 1: 4 &amp; 5</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Adult Religious &amp; Spiritual Development, Adult</td>
<td>(LAP 1, 2) 1: 6 &amp; 7</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Religious &amp; Spiritual Transformation &amp; Conversion on Feb 6</td>
<td>(LAP 1-3) 1: 8, 2: 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Religious Experience &amp; Morality</td>
<td>(LAP 1-3) 1: 9 &amp; 10, 2: 6</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Religion, Coping, Health, and Treatment</td>
<td>(LAP 1-3) 1: 11, 2: 7</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Religious Communities &amp; Cultures</td>
<td>(LAP 1-3) 1: 12 &amp; 13</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Tools for Spiritual Development on Mar 5</td>
<td>(LAP 3) 2: 2, 4 &amp; 5</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Future Directions, Ethics, Career Issues and Conclusions</td>
<td>(LAP 1-3) 1: 14, 2: 8-10</td>
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* Please have readings completed during the first class session of each week (with the exception of the Sisemore book, #1 above, where 2 chapters are assigned expect the first chapter on Tues and the second on Thur). Also, note that **1, 2** above refers to each of the 2 books (i.e., 1 = Sisemore, and 2 = Plante. Also note that the number after the colon refers to chapter number within each book.

**Final Learning Adventure Scheduled:** Tuesday exam week.

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**Additional Items**

**Empirical approach.** Although the topic of religion and spirituality can be very personal and based on highly personal and subjective institutional sets of beliefs and practices, the class will emphasize an empirical, evidence based and research approach to the topic that is endorsed and highlighted within the American Psychological Association and affiliated groups (e.g., Division 36, the Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality). Thus, traditional research approaches will be highlighted.

**Spiritual formation project:** The goal of the spiritual formation project is not to endorse any particular religious/spiritual organizations, beliefs, or practices and no assumptions about personal beliefs or practices will be made. The project seeks to help you evaluate and consider your own sense of spiritual formation, very broadly defined, that may or may not have anything to do with organized religious/spiritual traditions.

The **spiritual formation project** should focus on a plan to assess and reflect upon your own spiritual engagement very broadly defined. Please note that you do not need to consider yourself religious or spiritual to participate in the project and class and that those maintaining an agnostic or atheistic perspective are perfectly fine. You should write your paper that outlines your spiritual formation project (written in APA style). You should integrate theory and research presented in class and in the readings with experiential application to your own life and experience. Research findings have practical application that you could highlight in your paper. How to design such a project in particular will be discussed in class. Grades for late papers will reflect a 10 point per day reduction. Papers won’t be accepted after the final.
A few additional items

We are all trying the best we can to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic and adapt to online teaching and learning and so forth. It is far from ideal but we are all trying our best to manage and cope. Here are a few thoughts to make the most out of our class.

1. If you can do so, please keep video camera on during our Zoom classes but mute your audio unless you want to speak. I understand that some of you might have broadband issues or that you feel that you are not presentable to be on camera. That is all fine but we want to do whatever we can do, within reason, to approximate the real classroom experience.
2. Feel free to use the chat box feature to ask questions and make comments freely during class.
3. I’m happy to talk with you individually in “office hours.” Just make an appointment with me and we’ll Zoom during a mutually convenient time.
4. I’m reluctant to record our class sessions for later viewing since I want students to feel comfortable and free to speak their minds in class and not worry that somehow their comments will be shared elsewhere or placed on social media. Additionally, I use clinical examples in class regularly and want to be very careful about confidentiality as well.
5. I’m always open to your comments and suggestions. We are in this together and let’s do our best to make the most of challenging circumstances.