“To the psychologist the religious propensities of man must be at least as interesting
as any other of the facts pertaining to his mental constitution.”

William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

**Course Description:** For millennia, religion and psychology have addressed issues pertaining to the nature and functioning of the human soul (*anima*) or mind (*psyche*). This course will explore some of the intertwined history of religion and psychology, touching upon the religious underpinnings of modern psychology and looking into the psychological foundations of religious experience, doctrine, ritual, and belief.

**Learning Objectives:** In addition to learning about religion and psychology, I expect that you will develop your ability to read with discernment, to think carefully and analytically, to listen with respect and comprehension, to discuss openly and honestly, to work efficiently and productively both alone and in groups, to give adequate attention to detail while showing appropriate creativity in thinking and in producing a religious or spiritual autobiography-with-commentary, and to express yourself articulately both in writing and in conversation.

**Learning Process:** This course will be run as a seminar. It will depend upon everyone’s active participation. You will be expected to come to class fully prepared to discuss the assigned material. (Please bring the appropriate readings to each class.) You will also be expected to hand in reports on the reading assignments, to facilitate class discussions, to write several papers in response to our readings and autobiographical assignment, and to compose a religious or spiritual autobiography-with-commentary. To be successful in this course, you should expect to devote an average of 10-14 hours each week to preparing for class, participating in class sessions, studying course related materials, and working on course assignments. (See the Syllabus Supplement for more details.) We will rely upon one another to make the experience of this course worthwhile and enjoyable. Each of us should do what we can to assure that everyone leaves this course with good memories as well as enhanced knowledge and skills. I look forward to working with each of you. Please feel free to come and see me during my Office Hours.

**Required Texts:** Except for the five books below that should be purchased from the campus bookstore, the required texts for this course are available on Blackboard. They should be printed, annotated, and brought to class on the day for which they are assigned. The entire list of required texts is provided in the reference section at the end of this syllabus. The books to be purchased are:


**Other Course Details:** See the Syllabus Supplement.

**Introduction**

1/12 Overview & Orientation
AN OVERVIEW OF RELIGION


1/19 No Class – Martin Luther King Day


1/26 Interlude: Responses to Questions about Religion and Spirituality

There is no assigned reading for today, but you are to respond in writing to Questions about Religion and Spirituality, as described on the handout with this title, which you received on the first day of class. You should be prepared to speak about your responses and to submit a printed copy at the end of class. Be sure to save your own copy.


AN ORIENTATION TO RELIGION AND ITS STUDY


2/9 Religion in Scientific Research: Asma (2011), Azar (2010), Barash (2007), and “Resources”

In addition to reading and writing reports on the three listed articles, you are to review the materials posted under “Resources” on our course’s Blackboard site. No written report on these resources will be required, but you will be expected to discuss what you learned as you reviewed this material, some of which may be useful to you as you work on your autobiography-with-commentary.

RELIGION AS EXPERIENCE, ILLUSION, AND MEANING

2/11 Religion as Experience: James (1902/2013), pp. 17-63

2/16 Religion as Experience: James (1902/2013), pp. 63-116

2/18 Religion as Experience: James (1902/2013), pp. 117-160

2/23 Religion as Illusion: Freud (1927/1961), pp. 5-71

2/25 Religion as Illusion: Freud (1930/2010), pp. 23-75

3/2 Religion as Illusion: Freud (1930/2010), pp. 77-149

3/4 Interlude: Major Insights, Questions, and Concerns to Date

There is no assigned reading for today. You are to reflect on the major insights, questions, and concerns that have occurred to you to date, and write a 3-5 page report that you will discuss and then hand in at the end of class. The focus should be on what you are learning about religion and psychology, not on your own specific situation. That will be the focus of another short paper to be submitted on March 25. As appropriate, your report should cite specific authors and works, and should give page references for any quotations or for discussions of specific passages. Be sure to save your own copy.

Spring Break
3/16  No Class: Work on Your Emerging Thoughts on Your Autobiography
You should also begin the relatively long reading for 3/18.

3/18  Religion as Meaning: Frankl (1946/2006), pp. 3-93


3/25  Interlude: Emerging Thoughts on Your Autobiography
There is no assigned reading for today. You are to write and submit a 2-3 page progress report on your autobiography-with-commentary, indicating the progress you have made and, if possible, commenting on the approach you may take and the theoretical orientations, perspectives, authors, and works you may use in your commentary. You should also report on any problems or difficulties you are facing. You will be asked to make an oral report to the class. Be sure to save your own copy.

**Some Additional Views on Religion**


4/6  Destructive Spirituality: Griffith & Griffith (2002)


**Conclusion**

4/13  No Class – Individual Meetings with Instructor and Work on Your Autobiography

4/15  No Class – Individual Meetings with Instructor and Work on Your Autobiography

4/17  Due by 5:00 p.m. – First Draft of Your Autobiography-with-Commentary

4/20  No Class – Individual Meetings with Instructor and Work on Your Autobiography

4/22  Discussions of Autobiographies-with-Commentaries

5/1  Due by 5:00 p.m. – Autobiography-with-Commentary plus Written Reflections on the Autobiographical Assignment

**References**


