

SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY
Psychology Department
Spring 2025

PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY
(PSYC 193)

Instructor:	Thomas G. Plante, Ph.D., ABPP
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Office Hours:	Typically before class or by appointment
Course Meeting Room:	Alumni Science 101
Course Meeting Times:	Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:20am-12:00pm

Required Text:

Sisemore, T. (2016). *The Psychology of Religion and Spirituality: From the Inside Out*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. ISBN 978-1-119-23972-7

Plante, T. G. (2024). *Living Better with Spiritually Based Strategies that Work: Workbook for Spiritually Informed Therapy (SIT)*, San Diego, CA: Cognella. ISBN: 979-8-8233-2186-0.

Additional readings may be provided during the class.

Power points for class:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0BzupUfpGqVzPVldpZG1rcDF2cVE?resourcekey=0-5FVi8kC3AVAhGdCFUi9T6w&usp=drive_link

Course Evaluation:

Midterm Quest 1: End of Week 3

Midterm Quest 2: End of Week 6

Midterm Quest 3: End of Week 9

Final Quest: When assigned during 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 assigned tasks and get a “B.” Fail two of the tasks and get a “C”.....Two low passes equal one fail.

Additionally, you are expected to take and attend class with integrity (at least 80% of the time unless you have a documented excused absence due to sports, sickness, and so forth). Only those who meet the attendance requirement will be eligible for an “A” in the class. Less than 60% % attendance will result in a double fail (i.e.,

two letter grade reduction) while less than 50% will result in a failing grade. Also, only pass minuses can be earned for late assignments after the offered grace period ends on Camino.

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.

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.

Sequence of Topics and Readings:

Week 1:	Intro to the Psych of Religion and Spirituality	(LAP 1, 2)	S: 1 *; P 1
Week 2:	Bio Found & Benefits of Relig/Spirit Practices	(LAP 1, 2)	S: 2, 3
Week 3:	Youth Religious & Spiritual Development	(LAP 1, 2)	S: 4 & 5
Week 4:	Adult Religious & Spiritual Development, Adult	(LAP 1, 2)	S: 6 & 7
Week 5:	Religious & Spiritual Transformation & Conversion	(LAP 1-3)	S: 8
Week 6:	Religious Experience & Morality	(LAP 1-3)	S: 9 & 10, P 8
Week 7:	Religion, Coping, Health, and Treatment	(LAP 1-3)	S: 11
Week 8:	Religious Communities & Cultures	(LAP 1-3)	S: 12 & 13
Week 9:	Tools for Spiritual Development	(LAP 3)	P 2-7, 9
Week 10:	Future Directions, Ethics, Career Issues	(LAP 1-3)	S: 14, P 10

Paper Due: Last day of class.

* Please have readings completed during the first class session of each week (where 2 chapters are assigned expect the first chapter on Tues and the second on Thur). Note that S = Sizemore book and P = Plante book

Final Learning Adventure Scheduled: Exam week.

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. Papers won't be accepted after the final.

What to Expect in your SCU Psychology Courses

1. Mutual Respect. The faculty in the psychology department are committed to an environment of mutual respect. Please be courteous in your communications with us and your fellow students, get to class on time, do not pack up your belongings when class is still in session, and if possible, use the restroom before coming to class. It's our intent to show you similar levels of respect!

2. Cell Phones and Other Devices. Please turn off or silence your cell phone during class. If you need to take an important call, e.g., you have a family member in surgery, please let your professor know at the start of class. Not all professors allow use of laptops in classes—please ask!

3. In Person Classes. Almost all of our classes in psychology are scheduled as fully In Person classes. This means that there will be no way to participate via Zoom. If you have to miss a class, refer to your professor's policies for details on how to handle that.

4. **Responses to Email.** In the interest of valuing work-life balance, and respecting that your professors have both professional and personal responsibilities beyond your class, faculty may not reply to your emails during certain hours of the day. This depends on the course time and your professor, of course. Please ask us what our policies are!
5. **The Final Exam.** When a final exam is required in a course, you must take it on the day and time it is scheduled. The [schedule is established by the University](#) and we as professors do not control it. If you know in Week 1 that you will not be able to attend the final exam in a course, you should consider taking a different course or discussing your conflict with your professor.
6. **Late Policies, Extensions, and Incompletes.** Please check with your professor about their policies on late work and requests for extensions. For Incomplete grades, keep in mind that these are typically only given when you have missed a single major assignment due to circumstances beyond your control and do not have time to make it up before the course grading period ends.
7. **Absences due to Illness.** Please consult the [University policy](#) on what to do if you test positive for COVID. If you have to miss class due to illness or an emergency beyond your control, please consult with your individual professor for their policies on what to do.
8. **Extra Credit.** Extra credit will not be awarded to make up for missed assignments or to increase scores on completed assignments.
9. **Equity in Course Policies and Grading.** Your Psychology professors are making every effort to make sure that course policies and grading are implemented the same way for all students. Some students may be used to asking for exceptions, believing “It can’t hurt to ask.” But granting such exceptions would violate the principle of equity and the transparency of our syllabus statements. Please think twice before asking for exceptions, showing us that you value these principles too!
10. **Enjoy the Ride!** You are here to learn and grow as a whole person! We expect you to make mistakes and to struggle with learning from time to time. If you weren’t doing that, you wouldn’t grow very much over the course of your college experience. And remember that you are more than your grades.

SYLLABUS STATEMENTS

Required Policy Information for all
Course Syllabi

Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of—and commitment to—a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.

Academic integrity is part of your intellectual, ethical, and professional development. I expect you to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. I will clarify expectations on academic integrity -- including the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT and course sharing sites for all assignments and exams in this course. If you have questions about what is appropriate on any assignment, please let me know before you hand in work. For more resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see this [LibGuide on Academic Integrity](#).

Discrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)

Santa Clara University is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment free of all forms of discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Please know that as a faculty member, California law SB 493 requires me to report any information brought to my attention about incidents of sexual harassment or misconduct to the SCU [Equal Opportunity and Title IX Office](#) (408) 551-3043. This includes, but is not limited to, disclosures in writing assignments, class discussions, and one-on-one conversations.

Should you need support, SCU has dedicated staff trained to assist you in navigating campus resources, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and filing a formal complaint with the University or with law enforcement. Please see the [Student Resources](#) page for more information about reporting options and resources.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence and wishes to speak to a **confidential** resource who is not required to report, please contact one of the following SCU resources for support:

- [SCU Wellness Center](#)
- [CAPS](#)
- Any individual (clergy, counselors) acting in a professional capacity for which confidentiality is mandated by law

I am happy to help connect you with any of these resources.

Accommodations for Pregnant and Parenting Students

Santa Clara University does not discriminate against any student on the basis of pregnancy or related medical conditions. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy and

childbirth will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student's doctor, and students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Students needing accommodations can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Students needing accommodations can also seek assistance with accommodations from the Office of Accessible Education (OAE) or from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX Office. This [resource page](#) from Title IX provides information for students and faculty regarding pregnancy rights.

Office of Accessible Education

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact the Office of Accessible Education (oae@scu.edu, <http://www.scu.edu/oae>) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through OAE, please be sure to request your accommodations through your myOAE portal and discuss them with me during my office hours within the first two weeks of class.

To ensure fairness and consistency, individual faculty members are required to receive verification from the Office of Accessible Education before providing accommodations. OAE will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assistive technology. Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible. The Office of Accessible Education must be contacted in advance (at least two weeks notice recommended) to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations.

In light of shifting health advisories related to COVID-19, exams may be administered online. Students with approved testing accommodations should contact me (at least two weeks notice recommended) prior to an exam date to notify me of their intent to use their testing accommodations on the upcoming exam to ensure their accommodations are effectively implemented.

Safety Measures

In order to meet our learning objectives, we will adhere to the highest standards for safety and mutual respect. I expect everyone to adhere to current university mask mandates at all times; to make their best attempt to make themselves heard when asking questions or contributing to discussions; and refrain from eating or drinking in class. It is expected that everyone will follow university guidelines about health and public safety measures outlined on the [Prepared SCU website](#).

Use of Classroom Recordings

All online class meetings will be recorded and made available on Camino. As is stated in the Student Conduct Code: "...Dissemination or sharing of any classroom recording without the permission of the instructor would be considered "misuse" and, therefore, prohibited. Violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action by the University. At the instructor's discretion, violations may also have an adverse effect on the student's grade."

Copyright Statement

Materials in this course are protected by United States copyright laws. I am the copyright holder of the materials I create, including notes, handouts, slides, and videos. You may make copies of course materials for your own use and you may share the materials with other students enrolled in this course. You may not publicly distribute the course materials without my written permission.

Technology Support

SCU can provide you with technology assistance, and you can also reach out to our providers directly for questions. For Camino (SCU's branded instance of Canvas) support, contact caminosupport@scu.edu or call 408-551-3572. You can also use the help button within the Camino platform (on the left hand navigation) for 24/7 support via chat or phone with our vendor.

For Zoom assistance, contact Media Services at mediaservices@scu.edu or 408-554-4520. You can also get support from the [Zoom Help Center](#) website.

For SCU network and computing support, contact the SCU Technology Help Desk at techdesk@scu.edu or 408-554-5700. They can provide support for MySCU Portal, Duo, eCampus, hardware and software issues, and more.

Syllabus Statements on Diversity, Inclusion, and Wellness

Santa Clara University syllabi are encouraged to include information for students to promote a more inclusive classroom. Below are recommended examples of syllabi statements that faculty may use. For more on developing an inclusive syllabus and course design see a campus resource on [Inclusive Teaching](#) and a toolkit from the [Association of College and University Educators \(ACUE\)](#).

Land Acknowledgment

Santa Clara University occupies the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ohlone and Muwekma Ohlone people.

Respect for Diversity

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, religion, and culture. Your suggestions are

encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

Gender Inclusive Language

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you go by a name different from what is on the class roster, please let me know. Using correct gender pronouns is important to me, so I encourage you to share your pronouns with me and correct me if I make a mistake. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. For more on personal pronouns see www.mypronouns.org

Wellness Statement and Mental Health Resources

I know you will do the best you can in this class (and all of your classes); however, it should never be at the expense of your own mental health, physical health, and/or well-being. Jesuit education is grounded in *cura personalis*, concern for the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. What does this mean for you? Be kind to others, and more importantly, be kind to yourself. Attend to your sleep (quantity and quality); drink lots of water; move; get outside; and pay attention to beauty that isn't coming to you on a screen. Eat good food; laugh; enjoy friends and family; look for opportunities to connect with others in new ways; pray, meditate, or otherwise attend to your spirit. And ask for help, even if you don't think you need it. Lots of folks, including me, are here to support you. It's never too late to reach out, and I am committed to helping you.

SCU has many resources and programs to support you. These resources may be especially helpful:

Wellness Center: <https://www.scu.edu/wellness/>

The Wellness center provides resources to aid and promote student well-being across the eight dimensions of wellness, including student peer groups for healthful living, violence prevention, and recovery.

CAPS: <https://www.scu.edu/cowell/counseling-and-psychological-services-caps/>

Santa Clara students are provided confidential counseling sessions at no cost through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Students have access to clinically appropriate, short-term therapy; group therapy; and other resources for care. A new 24/7 support line is also available: **408-554-5220**.

SCU Culture of Care: <https://www.scu.edu/osl/culture-of-care/>

If you are concerned for the mental or physical welfare of one of your peers, the [Office of Student Life Culture of Care](#) website provides resources for recognizing and helping someone in distress.

Academic Concerns

If you are concerned with your progress in this class, please contact me so that we can find solutions together. [Drahmann Center](#) can also offer support with issues regarding your academic progress more broadly.

SCU also has multiple options for free academic tutoring. Students can make appointments to discuss work in a range of courses:

- [Drahmann Tutoring](#) (Numerous courses in the College of Arts & Sciences including Natural Sciences, Modern Languages, Economics, and Computer Science)
- [The HUB Writing Center](#) (Writing and Public Speaking)

- [Mathematics Learning Center](#) (MATH 4, 6, 8, 11-14, 30-31, 35-36, 51, 53)