

**Psych 404**  
**Psychology of Religion**  
**Term 1 2020**  
**13 Weeks from September 10-December 3, 2021**

Course Website at [canvas.ubc.ca](https://canvas.ubc.ca)

Thursdays 11:00-12:15 (Section 002)

Class Zoom: <https://ubc.zoom.us/j/65869388094?pwd=R1h3aGprZk1DU1h0UDhWUjhONTh4UT09>  
Meeting ID: 658 6938 8094

Thursdays 2:00-3:15 (Section 102)

Class Zoom: <https://ubc.zoom.us/j/61552051980?pwd=bER2SlkzU0h1K0J6Zk85M1A1eU1odz09>  
Meeting ID: 615 5205 1980

Professor:

Dr. Ara Norenzayan

Email: [ara@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:ara@psych.ubc.ca)

Office hour: Thur 12:30-1:30 and by appointment

<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/65190622367?pwd=TnJYS29xTUIESIFqODBHUUwvNkZwdz09>

Meeting ID: 651 9062 2367



Teaching Assistants:

Section 002 (11:00 am class)

Matthew Billet

Email: [m.billet@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:m.billet@psych.ubc.ca)

Office hour: Wed 9:00-10:30

<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/61124976701?pwd=OURiK3ozYWRGTFIRZUxFWk5sbmNWUT09>

Meeting ID: 611 2497 6701



Section 102 (2:00 pm class)

Gordon Heltzel

Email: [gheltzel@psych.ubc.ca](mailto:gheltzel@psych.ubc.ca)

Office hour: Mon 1:30-3:00

<https://zoom.us/j/3351420866?pwd=NVPzSVIVMERnNy95ejFGL2xMbFdydz09>

Meeting ID: 335 142 0866



## Course Description & Objectives

This advanced seminar introduces students to the psychological study of religion, current debates, and controversies. Religion is a fascinating aspect of human minds and societies. It is also a powerful lens through which we can better understand human nature, its shared features around the world, as well as its astonishing diversity. Topics include belief in supernatural agents and forces, rituals, sacrifice, sacred values, and existential anxieties. Phenomena such as animism, anthropomorphism, and magical thinking will also be discussed. We will look at religion's role in morality, the natural environment, cooperation and conflict, power, and intergroup relations. We will also explore explanations for secularization trends in the world and within societies. Although this is a psychology seminar, perspectives from anthropology, evolutionary biology, sociology, history, archeology, and religious studies, will also be covered. By the end of the course you will (1) have an understanding of how psychology gives rise to religious thought and behavior, (2) gain knowledge about how religious belief and experience (and their relative absence) in turn shape human psychology, and (3) cultivate critical thinking regarding debates surrounding the role of religion in multicultural civil societies in Canada and around the world.

## Seminar Format

This is an advanced undergraduate seminar. Class will be held on Zoom for the duration of the term. Class time is reduced from twice a week to once per week. This is out of consideration for the challenges presented by remote learning/teaching, and to allow for independent work students are expected to do that otherwise would be part of classroom learning. Please stick with the section you're registered in. I will sometimes do short (10-15 minutes) synchronous lectures during class time to put the readings in context or provide additional information. These lectures will be recorded and made available to the course on Canvas. Most of class time will consist of in-depth discussion and debates and activities.

## Readings and Pre-recorded Lectures

There is no standard textbook for this course. Original articles and chapters from a variety of sources are assigned. These readings are posted on the Canvas course website. In addition, you will watch pre-recorded short lectures by Drs. Azim Shariff and Ted Slingerland, as part of their Science of Religion series (see Weekly Readings and Guiding Questions on Canvas). The readings and pre-recorded lectures are accompanied with guiding questions to help with comprehension and critical thinking. You are expected to have done the readings and watched the assigned lectures before class time each week. The reading load for this course is similar to a graduate-level seminar, so be sure to devote ample time on a regular basis to stay on top of the readings.

## Course Evaluation

Students' final course mark will be based on:

- Film Reaction Paper (15%) **(Due on Oct 22)**
- Reading Assignments (10%)
- Oral Presentation (during Weeks 11-12, **Due on Dec 3**) (15%)
- Class participation (10%)
- Cumulative take-home final exam (50%) **(Questions on Dec 3; due: Dec 17)**

Detailed instructions will be provided for each assignment and the Final Exam on Canvas. All submitted work in this course should be the result of your individual effort only.

## **Film Reaction Paper**

Watch Kumare (2011), a documentary about a man who impersonates a wise Hindu guru and builds a spiritual following in Arizona. This film is available through Kanopy, via the UBC Library. Write a reaction paper reporting your reflections and thoughts about the film, grounding them in the concepts, theories, and findings from the psychology of religion.

## **Take Home Final Exam**

The Final Exam will be cumulative (covering the entire course), and take-home. It is similar to a comprehensive research paper. This means that you will receive the questions in advance, and you can consult class notes, readings, and do library research to prepare your answers in essay format. To do well on the final exam, it is expected that you demonstrate a thorough understanding of the theories and concepts covered in the course, and a high level of critical and original thinking. Students are responsible for all readings assigned in the required readings and presented in class, as well as lectures.

## **Reading assignments**

This is a seminar class. This means it follows a mostly discussion format, and works best when students actively participate. To help facilitate discussion, students are to submit one short paragraph (100-200 word) with thoughts or questions about the assigned readings, up to 5 total for the course (you can pick any 5 of the 10 weeks with assigned readings, but 3 must be before October 15 inclusive, and 2 after). These should *not* be summaries of the readings, but rather your reflections on the readings, their interpretations, and how they might relate to other material, events in the world, etc. These reading assignments for a particular week are to be submitted on Canvas by Wednesday afternoon by 5pm sharp before class meets that week (Canvas will not accept late submissions so be on time!) You will receive 2 points for each properly done assignment you submit, up to 10 points total.

## **Oral Presentation**

Every student will do an oral presentation on a particular religious group, movement, or tradition, either contemporary or historical, followed by Q&A. Pick a case that raises interesting questions for the psychology of religion. Freely draw on readings and lectures from the course, your own interviews, online and library research as material for your presentation. More detailed instructions will be provided for this assignment. Students will sign up to a Group of 5-6 students and present to their group. Oral presentations should be recorded, and then submitted on Canvas for evaluation by your Professor/TA.

## **Class Participation**

Class participation credit will be based on evidence of regular attendance and taking active part in class discussions and activities. There will be ample discussion opportunities within the entire class as well as in breakout rooms on Zoom. Be prepared with questions and comments before coming to class. Classroom participation and discussion is an important part of this course and your grade. Please share your ideas, experiences, and opinions. Please be punctual in signing in for class. You could participate with audio or video on (turning on video is optional).

## **E-mail Etiquette**

Students are encouraged to use e-mail if they have an easy question that can be answered quickly. Individual tutoring cannot be done over e-mail. For tutoring or questions that require more time, please set up an online meeting with your TA or professor during office hours or by appointment. We will make an effort to respond to your email within 48 hours excluding evenings, weekends, and holidays. Be sure to include a meaningful subject line (including the course number and section). Always include your full name, and student number. Use standard spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Do not use text message spelling/lingo.

## Office Hours

For tutoring or issues/questions requiring more time and attention, take advantage of office hours by your professor and your TA on Zoom (see Office Hour Zoom link and times at the top of the syllabus). Email ahead of time to schedule an appointment, even if you want to meet during office hours, and specify the amount of time needed. This will help us manage the office hours and minimize wait times.

**The COVID-19 pandemic has created several challenges with respect to online and remote learning. The course schedule and format may be tweaked as the term progresses and as we discover what works best and what does not. Feel free to reach out to your professor and TA with your questions or concerns, as all of us at the university adjust to new teaching modalities and new realities a result of the global pandemic.**

### For UBC Students who are Studying from Abroad Remotely

*The challenges that the pandemic has created are particularly pronounced for many international students who will not be residing in Canada this fall. During this pandemic, the shift to online learning has greatly altered teaching and studying at UBC, including changes to health and safety considerations. Keep in mind that some UBC courses might cover topics that are censored or considered illegal by non-Canadian governments. This may include, but is not limited to, human rights, representative government, defamation, obscenity, gender or sexuality, and historical or current geopolitical controversies. If you are a student living abroad, you will be subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction, and your local authorities might limit your access to course material or take punitive action against you. UBC is strongly committed to academic freedom, but has no control over foreign authorities (please visit <http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,33,86,0> for an articulation of the values of the University conveyed in the Senate Statement on Academic Freedom). Thus, we recognize that students will have legitimate reason to exercise caution in studying certain subjects. If you have concerns regarding your personal situation, consider postponing taking a course with manifest risks, until you are back on campus or reach out to your academic advisor to find substitute courses. For further information and support, please visit: <http://academic.ubc.ca/support-resources/freedom-expression>*

### ADJUSTED DEPARTMENTAL SCALING POLICY FOR 2020W

In order to reduce grade inflation and maintain equity across multiple course sections, all psychology classes are required to comply with departmental norms regarding grade distributions. **However, in the spirit of flexibility and compassion in light of COVID-19 and the associated pivoting to online teaching, those departmental norms have been adjusted upwards by 5% for only 2020W.** According to these adjusted norms, the average grade in 100- and 200-level Psychology classes will be 72 for an exceptionally strong class, 70 for an average class, and 68 for a weak class, with a standard deviation of 14. The corresponding figures for 300- and 400-level classes will be 75, 73, and 71, with a standard deviation of 13. Scaling may be used in order to comply with these norms; grades may be scaled up or down as necessary by an instructor or the

department. Grades are not official until they appear on a student's academic record. You will receive both a percent and a letter grade for this course. At UBC, they convert according to the key below:

A+	90-100%	C+	64-67%
A	85-89%	C	60-63%
A-	80-84%	C-	55-59%
B+	76-79%	D	50-54%
B	72-75%	F	0-49%
B-	68-71%		

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### Academic Integrity

Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct are very serious concerns of the University, and the Department of Psychology has taken steps to alleviate them. In the first place, the Department has implemented software that, can reliably detect cheating on multiple-choice exams by analyzing the patterns of students' responses. In addition, the Department subscribes to *TurnItIn*--a service designed to detect and deter plagiarism. All materials (term papers, lab reports, etc.) that students submit for grading will be scanned and compared to over 5 billion pages of content located on the Internet or in TurnItIn's own proprietary databases. The results of these comparisons are compiled into customized "Originality Reports" containing several, sensitive measures of plagiarism; instructors receive copies of these reports for every student in their class.

In all cases of suspected academic misconduct, the parties involved will be pursued to the fullest extent dictated by the guidelines of the University. Strong evidence of cheating or plagiarism may result in a zero credit for the work in question. According to the University Act (section 61), the President of UBC has the right to impose harsher penalties including (but not limited to) a failing grade for the course, suspension from the University, cancellation of scholarships, or a notation added to a student's transcript.

All graded work in this course, unless otherwise specified, is to be original work done independently by individuals. **Do** use any of the indexes and databases listed under Indexes and Databases, Subject Resources, OneSearch or Metasearch on the Library's website at <http://www.library.ubc.ca>. (Not sure which index to use? Click HELP on the library homepage at [www.library.ubc.ca](http://www.library.ubc.ca) or try Subject Resources.)

If you have any questions as to whether or not what you are doing is even a borderline case of academic misconduct, please consult your instructor. For details on pertinent University policies and procedures, please see Chapter 5 in the UBC Calendar (<http://students.ubc.ca/calendar>).