

Psych 404
Psychology of Religion
Term 1 2021
September 9-December 7, 2021

Course Website at canvas.ubc.ca

Section 001

Tuesdays self-directed learning

Thursdays 9:30-11:00

ORCH-4018

Section 002

Tuesdays self-directed learning

Thursdays 11:00-12:30 (Section 002)

ORCH-4018

Professor:

Dr. Ara Norenzayan (he/him)

Email: psyc.404@ubc.ca

Office hour: Mondays 1:30-2:30 and by appointment

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

Meeting ID: 651 9062 2367



Teaching Assistants:

Section 002 (11:00 am class)

Carmelle Bareket-Shavit

Email: carmelle.bareket.shavit@ubc.ca

Office hour: Wednesdays 3:00-4:00

<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/2385617843?pwd=WmFmOHVhRzF2TU52ZUxTbURVRW5KQT09>

Passcode 103166



Section 001 (9:30 am class)

Eric Mercadante

Email: eric.mercadante@psych.ubc.ca

Office hour: Fridays 1:00-2:00 PM

<https://ubc.zoom.us/j/69619618628?pwd=YVllcHhFQk1oYnE0VzVweEhvRWw0QT09>

Passcode: 861924



Read Before Proceeding

We are in this together during these times of a worldwide pandemic. Please show your respect for the health and well-being of your classmates, teaching assistants, your professor, and all of our loved ones by **wearing a mask over your mouth and nose for every in-person encounter this term, and do not come to class if you do have, or suspect that you have COVID19 or another infectious disease.**

If you anticipate missing class frequently, you are unlikely to do well in this course. See Dr. Norenzayan during his first Office Hour or by appointment to discuss potential accommodations (if possible) and determine whether you should remain in the course.

Course Description & Objectives

This advanced seminar introduces students to the psychology of religion, current debates, and controversies. Every known society has had religious beliefs and practices, which have a profound impact on peoples' lives. Religion is also a powerful lens through which we can better understand human nature, its commonalities across cultures, as well as its great 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, subjective well-being, the natural environment, cooperation and conflict, power and prejudice, and intergroup relations. We will also explore secularization trends in the world and within societies, and theories that explain these important changes. Although this is a psychology seminar, perspectives from anthropology, evolutionary biology, sociology, history, archeology, and religious studies, will also be touched on. By the end of the course you will (1) have an understanding of the psychological processes involved in religious thought and behavior (2) gain knowledge about how widely shared religious beliefs, practices, and experiences (as well as their relative absence) in turn shape human psychology, and (3) cultivate critical thinking regarding debates surrounding the role of religion and secularity in multicultural civil societies in Canada and around the world.

Seminar Format

This is an advanced undergraduate seminar. Course time will be divided between self-directed, independent learning on Tuesdays, and in-person classroom learning on Thursdays 9:30-11:00 am (Section 1), 11-12:30pm (Section 2) in ORCH Room 4018. We will use a "flipped classroom" approach in order to offer the best of independent, self-directed learning and interactive in-person learning. During a typical week, you will watch brief lecture videos, as well as reading 1-2 articles from academic journals and other sources; because this material is posted online, you can learn it at your own pace and in your own space. Then, on Thursday, you will come to class in-person and have the opportunity to apply and extend what you have learned that week, through discussions, hands-on activities, and team work.

Please stick with the section you're registered in. I will sometimes do very short (10-15 minutes) in-class lectures to put the readings in context or provide additional information in order to spur discussion. This lecture

material will be made available to the course on Canvas after class. Most of class time will consist of in-depth discussion of the readings and concepts, and other 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. 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 in the Self-Directed Learning component of the course. This course has a demanding reading load, 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 Paper (25%) (**Due on Oct 21**)

Questions and Reflections (10%) (**Throughout the term**)

Oral Presentation (25%)

Cumulative take-home exam (40%) (**Questions on NOV 23; due: Dec 7**)

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

Film 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 paper reporting your reflections and thoughts about the film, grounding them in the concepts, theories, and findings from the psychology of religion.

Questions and Reflections

To help facilitate discussion, students are to submit one short paragraph (100-200 words) 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 19 inclusive, and 2 after, to ensure a fair distribution of submissions across the term). These should *not* be summaries of the readings, but rather your reflections on the readings, questions that warrant discussion, interpretations and how they might relate to other concepts, events in the world, etc. These reflections for a particular week are to be submitted on Canvas by Tuesday afternoon by 5pm sharp (Canvas will not accept late submissions on a given week, and there will be no exceptions made. You can choose which weeks to submit your paragraph but be sure to be on time on those weeks!) You will receive 2 points for each properly done assignment you submit, up to 10 points total.

Oral Presentation

Every student will do a 15-minute 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, or deepens our understanding of psychology. Freely draw on readings and lectures from the course, your own interviews, online and library research as material for your presentation. Students will sign up to a Group of 4-5 students.

Then students will take turns presenting to the group. Students will record their own oral presentations using Zoom or a similar platform, and then submit on Canvas for evaluation by your Professor/TA.

Cumulative Take-Home Exam

There is no scheduled Final Exam. Instead, there will be a cumulative (covering the entire course) take-home exam. 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 the lectures.

Communication with the Professor and the TA

If you have a question about the course material: Reach out to us if you have questions about course material). But *not* via email. Email is not an effective way to have a real conversation. (You shouldn't expect more than a one-sentence response to email inquiries. Nor should you expect any response on evenings or weekends.) If you do have a question about course material, you are very welcome to ask it during classroom time, or during office hours.

If you have an issue that is personal or specific to you: Sign up for office hour to arrange a time to talk individually with your professor or TA.

If you have a technical or logistical question about the course: We hope everything goes smoothly and that you'll have no problems accessing course materials, or submitting assignments on Canvas. But, unexpected glitches might arise. TAs or your professor are *not* information technology experts. So, if you do have a question about something technical or logistical related to the course, the best way to get help is this: Post your question on the **Course Discussion Board** so that everyone in the class can see it. You'll get help faster (and you'll be helping any other student who may be facing a similar technical/logistical issue). If this approach is not helpful, then contact your TA who can approach a UBC IT consultant who can offer solutions.

Office Hours

For tutoring or issues/questions requiring 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). [Sign up for an appointment on Canvas](#). This will ensure that the office hours go smoothly and minimize wait times.

To reiterate: students are encouraged to use e-mail if they have an easy question that can be answered quickly (in one sentence or two) during the weekdays. Individual tutoring or discussion of course concepts cannot be done over e-mail. For tutoring or questions that require more time, please sign up for an online meeting with your TA or professor during office hours or by appointment.

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Provincial Health Orders and UBC policy now mandate masks in all indoor public spaces on campus. These spaces include classrooms, residence halls, libraries, and common areas. Students who wish to request an exemption to the indoor mask mandate must do so based on one of the grounds for exemption detailed in [the PHO Order on Face Coverings \(COVID-19\)](#). Such requests must be made through the Center for Accessibility (Vancouver campus).

After review, students that are approved for this accommodation will be provided with a letter of accommodation to share with faculty members teaching courses in which they are registered. In the intervening time, these students are welcome in the class.

Mask wearing protects you as well as others in your environment. Let's do everything we can as a community to stop the spread of this virus.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to create several challenges with respect to learning and teaching. 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.

ACADEMIC CONCESSION

If you miss marked coursework (assignment, exam, presentation) and are an Arts student, review the Faculty of Arts' [academic concession page](#) and then complete Arts Academic Advising's [online academic concession form](#), so that an advisor can evaluate your concession case.

If you are a student in a different Faculty, please consult [your Faculty's webpage on academic concession](#), and then contact me where appropriate.

ADJUSTED DEPARTMENTAL SCALING POLICY FOR 2021W

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 return to in-person teaching, those departmental norms have been adjusted upwards by 5% for 2021W.** 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%		

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 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>).

Equity and Inclusion and Diversity and Respect:

University courses should be conducive to learning and rigorous intellectual inquiry within a context in which everyone feels included and respected—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, political or religious affiliations, ability, age, social status, etc. All students in this class are encouraged to express themselves thoughtfully when discussing course material; and, when you do express yourself, it's important that you do so in a manner that shows respect for every other member of this class. Therefore, please make sure that you're familiar with [UBC's policy on building and maintaining a respectful environment](#). You can find additional information about resources pertaining to equity, diversity, and inclusion on the Psychology Department's website: <https://psych.ubc.ca/about/equity-inclusion/>

Copyright and Intellectual Property

All readings for this course are copyrighted, and cannot be redistributed without permission of the copyright owner. Lecture videos and other course materials are the intellectual property of the instructor(s) and these also cannot be redistributed (e.g., posted on any other website, or shared in any other way) without instructor permission. Violation of these policies may lead to academic discipline.

Further information about academic regulations, course withdrawal dates and credits can be found in the [Academic Calendar](#).

Additional Useful Resources for Students

Additional resources may also be helpful as you contend with the challenges of taking university courses during a pandemic, and just dealing with life's challenges more broadly.

- Guidance for online classes: <https://keeplearning.ubc.ca/>
- Assistance with working remotely: <https://it.ubc.ca/ubc-it-guide-working-campus>
- Guidance on useful skills for students: <https://learningcommons.ubc.ca/student-toolkits/>
- Student's guide to Canvas: <https://students.canvas.ubc.ca/>
- COVID-19 health guidance: <https://covid19.ubc.ca/health-guidance/>
- Mental health support: <https://students.ubc.ca/covid19/mental-health-during-covid-19-outbreak>
- Counselling Services: <http://students.ubc.ca/livewell/services/counselling-services>
- Wellness Centre: <http://students.ubc.ca/livewell/services/wellness-centre>
- Student Health Services: <http://students.ubc.ca/livewell/services/student-health-service>