

MIND, HABIT, CHANGE & CONVERSION

PSST 4298 – Spring 2007

Instructors

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Location: PSR, Mudd 101
Time: Thursday, 9:40-12:40

Course Description

Crossing fields of neuroscience, cognition, human development, depth psychology, social psychology, philosophy, and theology, this course offers students an in-depth exploration of human experiences of habit formation, behavioral change, and conversion of thought and motivation as ways of understanding religious experience and transformation.

Course Requirements

1. **Readings and class participation.**
2. **Presentation.** Students will present to the class on their research topic.
3. **Final paper.** A research paper is due by 5pm on Thursday, May 17. The paper should be 15-25 pages double-spaced in *Turabian* or *Chicago Manual of Style*. (APA format okay, if appropriate to student's program.) Students are encouraged to discuss their topic with an instructor prior to March 22 and required to submit a written description by April 19. In lieu of final paper, students may substitute a substantial final project with written description and approval of instructor(s).

If you have any unique learning needs, please consult with one of the instructors, and we will make every reasonable effort to accommodate you.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students in this course will develop the following knowledge and skills:

- Greater understanding of current research on religious and spiritual change and habit formation
- Familiarity with recent advances in scientific research on the brain-mind system
- The ability to correlate ideas and findings in theology, religious studies, and cognitive and social sciences
- Improved critical resources for evaluating the social power of science in contemporary society
- Practical insights for pastoral care and counseling, particular with people who have experienced trauma, seek change, or desire to develop or strengthen habits

Schedule

2/1 Introduction

2/8 Historical & Philosophical Foundations

Short readings on mind and spirit from Augustine, Descartes, Nietzsche, John Searle, Gregory Bateson, Charles S. Peirce

Chapter 1, Mind, from Graves, Mark, *Mind, Brain, and the Elusive Soul: Emerging Systems of Cognitive Science and Religion* (Ashgate, in prep).

2/15 David Gortner.: Developmental perspectives on habit and change

Readings highlighting genetic, intrinsic, and environmental influences on developmental trajectories; change and constancy; and constraints, pliability, and resiliency.

2/22 Religious Experience

First half: Readings (William James and others)

Second half: GTU/UCB working group on cognitive science and religion presentation by Fr. Thomas Keating on Contemplation and Science, CDSP, Tuscon Common Room

3/1 Mark Graves.: Neural processes involved in habit and change

Readings in neurobiology, neuropsychology, memory & learning

3/8 Kelly Bulkeley.: Religion and cognitive science

Read: Bulkeley, Kelly. *The Wondering Brain : Thinking About Religion with and Beyond Cognitive Neuroscience*. New York: Routledge, 2004.

3/16 Social and Cultural Mind

Archie Smith.: Social psychology

David Gortner

3/22 Jim Emerson and Student Led Presentations

Clinical focus: Forgiveness; Trauma, euphoria, and religion

3/29 NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

4/5 First half: Kelly Bulkeley.: Neuroplasticity and the placebo effect

Second half: Student presentations of project

4/12 Lewis Rambo: Conversion

4/19 David Gortner: Leadership & Organizational Change

Mark Graves: Pragmatism & Systems

Readings in organizational behavior, change theory, family and other systems, culture formation

Readings about habit and change in pragmatism (Peirce, Royce) and mind in systems theory (Bateson).

4/26 Eleanor Rosch, Psychology Dept, UC Berkeley and Student Led Presentations

Cognitive Science and Buddhism

5/3 Herb Anderson: Mourning and healing
Peter Yuichi Clark: Habits and transformation of pastoral practice (i.e., our habitual ways of doing ministry and how we change them).
Reading: Wimberly, Edward P. *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), chs. 1, 2, and 4.
Additional readings, TBD

5/10 Student presentations

5/17 Finals week: Student presentations

Other relevant dates:

- Area meetings: 2/21, 3/21, 4/18, 5/16
- WESCOR/AAR/SBL at GTU: 3/25-26
- Cognitive Science-Religion working group meetings: 2/22, 2/27, March, April

Additional readings will be distributed in class and/or made available electronically on GTU Blackboard web site.

Core Questions

MIND

- What is mind? (mind, brain, spirit, soul; etc.)
- How do mind & nature relate? (dualism/monism, evolution, "Mind-like quality of nature")
- What structures & processes form mind? (mind/body)
- Is mind set or emergent? (e.g., placebo effect, neuroplasticity)

HABIT

- How do habits form?
- How does psychology inform the theological and psychological construct of *habitus*?
- What role does "practice" play in forming habits? (religious practice, spiritual formation)?
- What role does intentionality (or unintentionality) play in habit formation? (Buddhism)

CHANGE

- What are the inputs to change, blocks to change?
- What is the role of intention and personal effort in change?
- What are processes of change in individuals, groups, and organizations?
- What connections between thought, feeling, and behavior really matter in change?
- What is the role of imagination?

CONVERSION

- What constitutes a transforming moment?
- What is the relationship between *metanoia* and *habitus*?
- Is enlightenment like or unlike conversion?
- What are the social implications of conversion (e.g., shifting allegiance)?