



Teaching the Psychology of Religion
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Participant Idea Exchange, NITOP 2020, St. Petersburg Beach, Florida

Religion plays an extremely important role in the lives of many people, yet there are relatively few courses offered on the subject of the psychology of religion, particularly at the undergraduate level. The presenter has taught the course three times as an elective, experimental course and notes some advantages and disadvantages of teaching the course.

Topics for discussion:

- 1. What topics to cover in the course?**
 - a. Religious behaviors and spirituality?
 - b. Religious and spiritual development across the lifespan?
 - c. The role of prayer?
 - d. Impact of religion on morality and prejudice?
 - e. Religious choices in different religions?

- 2. Textbook and other source materials?**
- 3. Best practices in teaching course content?**
 - a. Lecture, discussion, other formats?
 - b. Assessment?

- 4. How to deal with controversial content?**
 - a. Atheism?
 - b. Role of religion in violent behavior?
 - c. Students with different belief systems?

Some Resource Materials

Books

Hood, R.W., Hill, P.C., & Spilka, B. (2018). *The psychology of religion* (5th ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.

Pargament, K. I. (2013). *APA handbook of psychology, religion, and spirituality*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Putnam, R.D. & Campbell, D.E. (2012). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Websites

APA Division 36: Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality:
<https://www.apa.org/about/division/div36>

International Association for the Psychology of Religion: <https://www.iaprweb.org>

Pew Research Center: <https://www.pewforum.org>

Recommended Articles

Brandt, M. J., & Van Tongeren, D. R. (2017). People both high and low on religious fundamentalism are prejudiced toward dissimilar groups. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 112*, 1, 76-97.

Critcher, C.R., & Lee, C. J. (2018). Feeling is believing: Inspiration encourages belief in God. *Psychological Science, 29*, 5, 723-737.

Gervais, W.M., Shariff, A.F., & Norenzayan, A. (2011). Do you believe in atheists? Distrust is central to anti-atheist prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 101*, 6, 1189-1206.

Harris, K.A., Howell, D.S., & Spurgeon, D. W. (2018). Faith concepts in psychology: Three 30-year definitional content analyses. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 10*, 1, 1-29.

McKay, R., & Whitehouse, H. (2015). Religion and morality. *Psychological Bulletin, 141*, 2, 447-473.