

The Psychology of Religion

Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi

This course will introduce students to the two main approaches in the psychology of religion, the personal and the social. The personalistic psychology of religion is tied to psychoanalysis, starting with Sigmund Freud. The social psychology of religion draws on academic social science research. While the personalistic psychology of religion uses analogies and insights from individual psychodynamics in asking about the content of religious beliefs, the social psychology of religion seeks the correlates of religious beliefs in social space and social behavior. Both approaches are equally important in this course.

TOPICS OF CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND PREPARATORY READINGS:

(Films and guest speakers to be added)

1.

Defining psychology and religion

Ch. 1 in Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997

2.

History and methodology of the psychological study of religion

Chs. 2, 3, 4, 5 in Beit-Hallahmi, 1989

Ch. 3 in Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997

3.

Psychoanalysis: Basic concepts

4.

Psychoanalysis: Basic concepts

5.

Explaining religious behavior: 16 hypotheses

Ch. 2 in Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997

6.

Explaining religious behavior: 16 hypotheses

Ch. 6 in Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997

Chs. 8, 9 of Beit-Hallahmi, 1989

7.

Predicting religious behavior

Ch. 8 in Argyle & Beit-Hallahmi

8.
Correlates of religiosity: individual level
Ch. 9, 10 in Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle
9.
Correlates of religiosity: group level
Ch. 11 in Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle
10.
The psychoanalytic interpretation of religion
Ch. 7 in Beit-Hallahmi, 1989
Freud- The Future of An Illusion
11.
Conversion
Ch. 7 in Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997
12.
Summing up- looking at the 16 hypotheses
Ch. 12 in Beit-Hallahmi & Argyle, 1997

REQUIRED READING:

Beit-Hallahmi, B. & Argyle, M. (1997). *The Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief and Experience*. London: Routledge.

Beit-Hallahmi, B. *Prolegomena to the Psychological Study of Religion*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1989.

Freud, S. In <The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud>. (J. Strachey, Ed.). London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1974.
1927 <The Future of an Illusion> 21, 1-56, 1961.

ADDITIONAL READINGS:

Beit-Hallahmi, B. *Psychoanalytic Studies of Religion: Critical Assessment and Annotated Bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996.

Freud, S. In <The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud>. (J. Strachey, Ed.). London: The Hogarth Press, 1953-1974.

1928 A religious experience. 21, 167-174, 1961.

1930 <Civilization and Its Discontents>. 21, 57-146,
1961.

James, W. *The varieties of religious experience: A study in human nature* (2nd ed.). New York: Longmans, Green, 1902.

La Barre, W. *The Ghost Dance: The Origins of Religion*. New York: Doubleday and Company, 1970.

La Barre, W. *Shadow of Childhood: Neoteny and the Biology of Religion*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

One take home exam; one term paper. Format and topic of term paper to be decided jointly by student and instructor. Students will have the option of presenting the paper in class.

Films: The Holy Ghost People, Marjoe

Guest speakers: from Jehovah's Witnesses, Benjamin Creme group.