

UnCommon Read – Neurotheology: Our Brain on Spirituality
IDH 2930 Class #30025
University of Florida Honors Program

Wednesdays 5:10 – 6pm (Period 10)
Honors Village 114
CREDIT: 1 Semester Hour

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Course Overview:

This course is based on the book *Neurotheology: How Science Can Enlighten Us About Spirituality* by Dr. Andrew Newberg. The book presents a synopsis of scientific research regarding the role of the brain in religious and spiritual experiences. The class has an expansive list of topics including: brain cortical anatomy and function; neurotheological considerations of religion and spirituality; role of psychology in religion and spirituality; role of brain pathology in religion and spirituality; myths and rituals in religion; spiritual and religious practices; free will; and mysticism and transcendent experiences.

The class will be structured around weekly student-centered discussions of the book. Students will be evaluated based on class participation and two 1200-word papers.

Requirements, Assessment, and Grades:

I – Attendance and Participation: 20%

- You are expected to complete assigned readings prior to each class.
- Attendance will be taken each class. You may miss 1 class without penalty; each additional unexcused absence will incur a reduction of one letter grade. Please plan your Wednesday afternoons accordingly.
- The course is a semester-long, student-centered conversation, facilitated by the Course Directors, about numerous topics covered in the book.

II - There will be two 4-page papers (1200 words), each worth 40% (80% total).

- The papers are based on an integration of your reflections, understanding, and insights of our readings and classroom discussions.
- Papers must be emailed to Dr. Ritz by the due date. Late papers will be penalized with a letter grade deduction.

UF Class Attendance Policies:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, dso.ufl.edu/drc) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

UF Grading Policies:

Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations via email, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

Class Culture:

- 1) This is a paperless course. All discussion materials, other than the book, will be sent to the students as a PDF. Reflection papers will be emailed to Iritz@ufl.edu by the deadline as a Word document (.doc or .docx only).
- 2) Out of respect for each student's contributions to our discussions, we will give everyone our full attention. Please do not check your cell phone or computer (other than class notes) during class time.
- 3) All religious, spiritual, psychological, and scientific perspectives of the class participants will be honored.
- 4) Dr. Ritz is available to meet with students for Krishna Lunch or in his office within the McKnight Brain Institute.

Required Reading:

Newberg, A. 2018. Neurotheology: How Science Can Enlighten Us About Spirituality.

Columbia University Press

Students are expected to purchase or share the book – new, used, or electronic.

Course Schedule

Jan 10 (class 1) – Introduction; Chapter 1

Jan 17 (class 2) – Chapter 2

Jan 24 (class 3) – Chapter 3; Primer on Neuroanatomy

Jan 31 (class 4) – Chapter 4

Feb 7 (class 5) – Chapter 5

Feb 14 (class 6) - Chapter 6

Feb 21 (class 7) – Chapter 7

Feb 28 (class 8) – Chapter 8

Mar 6 (class 9) – Chapter 9

First paper – Due 4PM on March 6, assigned February 28

Mar 20 (class 10) – Chapter 10

Mar 27 (class 11) – Chapter 11

Apr 3 (class 12) – Chapter 12

Apr 10 (class 13) – Chapter 13

Apr 17 (class 14) – Chapter 14

Apr 24 (class 15) – Chapter 15

Apr 25 (optional) – Class visit to Temple of the Universe, 7pm – 9:30pm

Second paper – Due 4PM on May 1, assigned April 24