

**840:424—SEMINAR ON RELIGION AND SCIENCE:
NEUROSCIENCE AND CONTEMPLATIVE EXPERIENCE IN
CHRISTIANITY AND BUDDHISM**

Spring 2014

Dr. James W. Jones

Office hours: M 1:30-3:00, Loree 118

Purpose: This seminar will critically explore and evaluate contemporary neuroscience accounts of religious experience. Topics will include: the neurophysiology of meditative experience in Buddhism and Christianity, contemporary scientific and religious theories of human nature and several relevant and controversial areas in contemporary psychology, psycho-physiology, and religion.

Instructor: Dr. Jones has earned doctorates in both Religious Studies and Clinical Psychology, as well as an honorary doctorate in theology from the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He is professor of Religion and adjunct professor of Clinical Psychology at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He has been a lecturer in Psychiatry and Religion at Union Theological Seminary in New York; visiting Professor of Medical Humanities at the Graduate School of Drew University, and a visiting professor at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association and in 1993 at their annual convention, he received an award for his contributions to the psychology of religion. For six years he was co-chair of the Religion and Social Sciences Section of the American Academy of Religion. He is the vice-president of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion. He also maintains a private practice as a clinical psychologist.

Requirements

There are three main requirements for this seminar: (1) Readings, (2) Papers (3) Class Participation.

1. Readings.

M. Laird, *Into the Silent Land*. 2006, NY: Oxford University Press,

B. Alan Wallace, *Contemplative Science*, 2007, NY: Columbia University Press,

Newberg, E. D'Aquilli, V. Rause, 2001, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*. NY: Ballantine Books.

All additional readings are on electronic reserve thru the Rutgers Library System under the instructor's name. Additional journal articles may be assigned throughout the term.

2. Weekly Papers. To facilitate discussion, each week, starting with the second, each student is to bring a one page reaction paper to class. The first paragraph should summarize what you see as the most important points of the assigned reading and the second paragraph should offer a critical evaluation of the reading in a way that raises

some questions or issues for discussion. Papers will be graded and returned to you. All the papers are to be saved and handed in together on Friday 5/2/14 along with your final paper.

2. Term papers & presentations. Each student is required to write a 10 page paper on a topic relevant to this seminar. Each paper must contain at least the following three elements: (1) it must start with a paragraph or two clearly stating the topic and thesis of your paper; (2) it must clearly describe the religious claims and neuropsychological findings you are focusing on; (3) it must then contain your own analysis and reflections comparing and contrasting the relevant religious and scientific claims. A brief (one paragraph) description of your proposed topic is due to the instructor no later than class on 2/11/14. A first draft of the completed essay is due the beginning of class on the Tuesday before spring break (3/11). No extensions will be given. Papers with comments will be returned to you. During the final weeks of class each student will present his or her paper to the class. By noon on the Monday after the last seminar (5/5), students are to hand in both the final version of this essay taking account of the instructor's feedback on the first draft and the comments during the class presentation and the first draft with the instructor's comments. At this time they are also to hand in all of their weekly papers.

Note: No extensions will be given on any of the written assignments.

3. Class participation: Since this is a seminar, there will be a minimum of lectures after the first day and so class participation will be the major determinant of the final grade. No one will receive a passing grade who does not make a regular contribution to the class discussion.

Note: All cell phones, pagers, etc. must be turned off in class. Anyone whose device goes off during class will be asked to leave for the remainder of that period.

COURSE OUTLINE

1/21, 1/28 Engaging the Religion and Science Discussion

Reading: J. W. Jones. *The Texture of Knowledge*, chapters 1- 6 (electronic reserve).

J. W. Jones, *Waking From Newton's Sleep: Dialogues on Spirituality in an Age Of Science*

[First weekly paper due 1/28]

2/4 Meditation and Contemplation in the Buddhist Religion

Reading: B. Alan Wallace, *Contemplative Science*, Chapters 1, 6, 7

2/11 Meditation and Contemplation in the Christian Religion

Reading: M. Laird, *Into the Silent Land*, chapters 1, 2, 3, 4

J. W. Jones, *The Mirror of God*, Chapter 1 [E-Reserve]

2/18 The experience of Meditation in Buddhism and Christianity

Reading: M. Laird, *Into the Silent Land*, 5, 7
 B. Alan Wallace, *Contemplative Science*, chapters 1, 6 & 7 (review)

2/25 **Meditation, Psychology and Psychophysiology**

Reading: Davidson, et.al., “Alterations in Brain and Immune Function Produced by Mindfulness Meditation” 2003, *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 65: 564-570
 A. Lutz, et.al., “Long-term Meditators self-induce high-amplitude gamma synchrony during mental practice” *Proceed. Nat’l Acad. Of Sci.*, 2004, 101/46: 16369-16373
 K. W. Brown & R. Ryan, “The Benefits of Being Present: Mindfulness and its Role in Psychological Well-Being,” *Personality and Social Psychology*, 2003, 84/4:822-848
 R. Walsh and S. Shapiro, “The Meeting of Meditative Disciplines and Western Psychology”, *American Psychologist*, 2006, 61/3: 227-239.
 [Note: all articles are on E-Reserve]

3/4 **Neuro-imaging and Contemplative Experience**

Reading:
 Newberg , D’Aquilli, Rause, *Why God Won’t Go Away*, chapters 1-3, 6-9.
 S. Lazar, et. al, “Functioning Brain Mapping of the Relaxation Response and Meditation” *Neuroreport*, 2000, 11/7: 1581-1585 [E-Reserve]
 J. Maselko, “The Neurophysiology of Religious Experience” [E-Reserve]

3/11 **Meditation, Psychotherapy, and Behavioral Medicine**

Reading:
 J. Andresen, “Meditation Meets Behavioural Medicine,” *Consciousness Studies*, 2000, 7: 17-73.
 J. Schwartz, “A Role for Volition and Attention in the Generation of New Brain Circuitry,” *Consciousness Studies*, 1999, 6:115-142.
 S. Shapiro, G. Schwartz, G. Bonner, “Effects of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction on Medical and pre-Medical Students,” *Jr. of Behavioral Medicine*, 1998, 21/6: 581-599.
 A. Wachhotz, “Contemporary Spiritual Meditation,”
 [Note: all articles are on E-Reserve]

[Note: No Class 3/18-Spring Break and 3/25-Instructor away]

4/1—4/8 **Physicalism and its Trials**

Reading: W. Brown, N. Murphy, H.. N. Malony, *Whatever Happened to the Soul?*
 Chapters 4, 5, 6 [E-Reserve]
 J. W. Jones, “Mind, Brain and Spirit – a Clinician’s Perspective; or Why I am not afraid of dualism” [E-Reserve]
 B. Alan Wallace, *Contemplative Science*, Chapter 2

4/15 **Meditation and Ultimate Reality in Buddhism and Christianity**

[Last weekly paper 4/15]

Reading: J. W. Jones, *The Mirror of God*, chapters 2 & 3 [E-Reserve]
B. Alan Wallace, *Contemplative Science*, Chapter 3, 5, 7
M. Laird, *Into the Silent Land*, chapters 4, 5

4/22—4/29 **Student Presentations**

5/5 Monday: Final Drafts of Papers and all other written work are due by noon in the Religion Dept. Office, Loree 140. No late papers will be accepted.