

[draft syllabus 5/25/11]

840: 424 – SEMINAR ON RELIGION AND SCIENCE: MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION IN RELIGION & SCIENCE

Spring 2011

Dr. James W. Jones

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

This seminar will critically explore and evaluate contemporary scientific research into meditative and contemplative practices and experiences.

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

1. Readings.

S. Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, 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.

J. W. Jones, *Waking From Newton's Sleep: Dialogues on Spirituality in an Age of Science*, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers

Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land*, NY: Oxford University Press

All additional readings are on electronic reserve thru the Rutgers Library System under the instructor's name and many are also available from the Rutgers Library Data Base.

2. Essays. One of the purposes of this course to help students learn to think critically about the relationships between religion and science. There will be three brief (approximately 8-10 pages) essays due, as marked on the syllabus, on 10/3 & 11/14. The topic for the final essay will be given out the last day of class. It will be due one week after the last day of class, by noon on December 19, 2011. No extensions will be given on any assignments. The essays will require students to critically evaluate and discuss various aspects of this relationship. Each of the three required essays must contain at least three components: (1) reference to the specifics of the texts that you are evaluating, and not a just report of general conclusions; (2) discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the argument made there; and (3) discussion of the implications of this article for the

relationship between science and religion. No readings or references beyond the course material should be consulted. Students are required to do their own analysis and evaluation of the material. Essays are to be submitted in two forms: a hard copy at the beginning of class on the assigned day and thru the Turn-it-in portal on Sakai. Violations of the university policy on academic integrity will be dealt with severely. The University Policy can be found at <http://TeachX.rutgers.edu/integrity/index.html>. These essays will be graded according to the enclosed FAS Grading Template. This means, among other things, that no particular credit will be given for simply repeating the contents of the readings.

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, constructive contribution to the class discussion.

4. Weekly Papers. To facilitate class discussion, each student is to bring to class, starting on 9/12, two questions or topics for discussion based on the readings for that day accompanied by a brief paragraph for each question/topic stating the significance or importance of each question/topic. These papers will be collected, graded and returned. Students must retain the copies of these weekly papers with the comments and grades and hand all of them in together along with their final essay on 12/19. These brief papers are only brought to class and are not also submitted to Sakai.

Please 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

9/8, 9/12 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*

9/19, 9/26 Cognitive-Evolutionary Explanations of Religious Experiences

Reading: S. Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, chapters 3, 4, 5, 6, 10

J. Barrett, "Cognition, Evolution, and Religion." This unpublished chapter is not to be reproduced beyond this course. It will be published in the forthcoming *Handbook of Religion and Spirituality*, Ed. K. Pargament, J. Exline, J. Jones, published by the American Psychological Association. This paper will be handed out and must be returned at the end of the semester.

L. Kirkpatrick, "Evolutionary Approaches to Religion." This unpublished chapter is not to be reproduced beyond this course. It will be published in the forthcoming *Handbook of Religion and Spirituality*, Ed. K. Pargament, J. Exline, J. Jones, published

by the American Psychological Association. This paper will be handed out and must be returned at the end of the semester.

10/3 Meditation and Contemplation in the Buddhist Religion

Note: First essay due at the beginning of class today. Topic: Using the material from the first section of the course, write an essay evaluating what you see as the strengths and weaknesses of the main arguments about the origin and function of religion from the evolutionary psychology paradigm. To what extent do you find them convincing and why or why not?

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

10/10 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]

10/17 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)

10/24 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]

10/31 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]
S. Atran, *In Gods We Trust*, chapters, chapter 7
J. Maselko, "The Neurophysiology of Religious Experience," This unpublished chapter is not to be reproduced beyond this course. It will be published in the forthcoming *Handbook of Religion and Spirituality*, Ed. K. Pargament, Exline, J. Jones, published by the American Psychological Association. This paper will be handed out and must be returned at the end of the semester.

11/7 **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.

[Note: all articles are on E-Reserve]

A. Wachhotz, "Contemporary Spiritual Meditation," This unpublished chapter is not to be reproduced beyond this course. It will be published in the forthcoming *Handbook of Religion and Spirituality*, Ed. K. Pargament, J. Exline, J. Jones, published by the American Psychological Association. This paper will be handed out and must be returned at the end of the semester.

[Note: No Class 11/21]

11/14—11/28 **Physicalism and its Trials**

Note: Second Essay is due at the beginning of class 11/14, Topic: Using the Walsh and Shapiro article (2006) as a summary and drawing on other material from the course, write a critical essay on what you see as the scientific and religious strengths and weaknesses of the current empirical research on meditative and contemplative practices and experiences. What are the implications of your essay for understanding religion?

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

12/5--12/12 **Meditation and Ultimate Reality in Buddhism and Christianity**

[Last weekly paper 12/5]

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

[Note: Topic for Third Essay will be handed out at the end of class on 12/12]

12/19 Third Essay Due not later than noon today in the Religion Department Office, Loree 140. Late essays will not be accepted.