

# Primate Religion & Human Consciousness

UH 300 Section 016

Spring 2015, Seminar

Dr. Christopher Lynn

## Office Hours and Contact Information

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## Prerequisites

### UA Course Catalog Prerequisites

No prerequisites or none listed.

## Course Description

### UA Course Catalog Information

These courses provide an opportunity for Honors College students to engage in discussion and exploration of various topics that change each semester. Satisfies W core curriculum designation.

#### **Core Designations:**

University Honors

Writing

Human consciousness is often held aloft as one of the distinguishing characteristics of humanity with higher consciousness, self-awareness, and truth generally considered worthwhile lifelong pursuits. But at what cost? Have evolutionary mechanisms propelled humans toward “analysis paralysis”? Do cultural

and psychological adaptations maintain the blinders of blissful ignorance? We will consider these questions in reading about the 'religious' behavior of non-human primates and altered states of consciousness, and engage in activities to expand and limit our own consciousnesses. Additionally, you will participate in original research as part of the Religious Ecology Study, which will involve establishing relationships and collecting data among a local group of your choice. The course will consist of a series of readings, discussions, and activities to explore human consciousness from psychological, biological, and cultural aspects with a focus on operationalizing it for a practical research agenda.

## Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to

- Define a complex system like human consciousness in operationalizable terms—that is, define it by the parts that comprise it and how to test for them
- Provide examples for elaborated culture (such as religious behavior) in non-humans and humans and examples of behavior that does not require consciousness in human behavior.
- Summarize technical material and communicate it experientially or in lay terms to a group of peers.
- Collaborate with a group to design and conduct a pilot study, write up the results as a scientific paper, and give a presentation to an educated audience.
- Recognize the synergistic outcomes of mind/body processes in behavior and culture.

## Required Texts

### UA Supply Store Textbook Information

Textbook data from the Supply Store not found for this course

## Other Course Materials

### Blackboard

Readings will be posted to Blackboard, and I will use this avenue to contact the class about syllabus changes. The syllabus is likely to be altered slightly over the course of the semester. I will not reprint it, but you can download and print the most current version from the link on Blackboard at any time. I will contact you when it has been substantively revised. Access Blackboard via myBama. There is a box called Blackboard on the Academics tab that should list your courses that are currently let up with Blackboard.

### Facebook

This course has a Facebook group for sharing information relative to the course. Please join us for

online discussions at <http://www.facebook.com/groups/uh300.37/>.

## Outline of Topics

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignments/Activities
Thurs 1/8	Intro to syllabus	Guest: "What is Anthropology"	
Tues 1/13	Neuroanthropology of religion: What is anthropology?	Stanford: "Human Variation"	
Thurs 1/15		Stanford: "The Primates"	
Tues 1/20		Beauregard: "Transcendent Experiences & Brain Mechanisms"	
Thurs 1/22	What is transcendence?	Ustinova: "Consciousness Alteration Practices in the West from Prehistory to Late Antiquity"	
Tues 1/27	Cognitive science of religion	Whitehouse: "Cognitive Evolution & Religion"	Split into groups
Thurs 1/29		Boyer "Religion: Bound to Believe"	
Tues 2/3	Diversity	Storm & Wilson: "Liberal & Conservative Protestant Denominations as Different Socioecological Strategies"	Group research topic due
Thurs 2/5		Wilson: "The Secular Utility of Religion-Historical Examples"	
Tues 2/10		Kohn: "Reflections, Dreams & a Search for Consciousness in Anthropological Method"	

	Consciousness		
Thurs 2/12		James: "The Self, the Group & the Category"	
Tues 2/17	Research development		Discuss literature review & research plan
Thurs 2/19	Consciousness	Damasio: "Stepping into the Light"	
Tues 2/24	Self-awareness & theory of mind	Gallup, Anderson, & Platek: "Self-awareness, Social Intelligence, & Schizophrenia"	Literature Review due
Thurs 2/26		Leary & Buttermore: "The Evolution of the Human Self"	
Tues 3/3		Nystrom: "The Primate Brain & Complex Behavior"	de Waal lecture
Thurs 3/5	Primatological cognitive studies	Povinelli & Cant: "Arboreal Clambering & the Evolution of Self-Conception"	
Tues 3/10	Dissociative family of experiences	Luhrmann, et al.: "The Absorption Hypothesis"	
Thurs 3/12		Snodgrass, et al.: "Magical Flight & Monstrous Stress"	
Tues 3/17	SPRING BREAK		
Thurs 3/19			
Tues 3/24	Trance states & social functions of dissociation	Lynn: "The Wrong Holy Ghost"	
Thurs		Boddy: "Spirit Possession"	

3/26		and Gender Complementarity"
Tues 3/31		Crick & Koch: "A Framework for Consciousness"
Thurs 4/2	Neural correlates of consciousness	Seligman & Kirmayer: "Dissociative Experience & Cultural Neuroscience"
Tues 4/7		Ludwig: "The Psychobiological Functions of Dissociation"
Thurs 4/9	Behavioral allostasis	Schaller: "The Behavioural Immune System & the Psychology of Human Sociality"
Tues 4/14		Winkelman: "Shamanism & Cognitive Evolution"
Thurs 4/16	Primate religion	Rossano: "Good Ritual Make Good Friends"
Tues 4/21	PRESENTATIONS	
Thurs 4/23		
	FINAL EXAM	FINAL PAPER DUE

## Exams and Assignments

**Blogging:** You will be expected to write every week via our course blog. The blog is at [www.anthropology.ua.edu/blogs/primatereligion](http://www.anthropology.ua.edu/blogs/primatereligion). You will be given a discussion question relevant to the reading and required to compose your thoughts, drawing on the assigned reading and the resources at your disposal. Posts for each article should be 250-500 words and are due by the end of the day for which they are assigned. This means, you can post your thoughts after our class discussion, but you **MUST** post them by the end of that date. This is a major part of your grade, so **DO NOT GET BEHIND**. This is a writing course, so I expect your writing to be coherent. This means you should watch

your spelling and grammar, though stylistically blog post tend to be somewhat 'looser' than other academic writing. I will give you feedback on your writing periodically, at least once before the midterm and at least once again before the end of the term.

**Reading Presentations:** You will be responsible for generating discussion related to the article. Each Thursday, 1-2 students will be assigned to (1) generate AN ACTIVITY for group work and (2) generate discussion. The activity should be related to the reading and enable us to engage the material experientially. Examples include finding the questionnaires used in articles we read so that we can take them and generate class data, as well as discuss study methodologies based on firsthand experience, or developing games that draw on material in the article.

**Group Research:** The class will be divided into 3-5 groups. Each group will collect and present data as part of the Belongingness Ecology Study Tuscaloosa (BEST). This is a systematic study of local group life from an ecological perspective. Each group will choose or be assigned a group to work with and study. Instructions and materials to conduct this project will be provided.

Journaling: When this project begins, you will be assigned periodic journaling activities. Journaling will be done in a private forum on Blackboard that will be visible only to me. Journal entries will be assessed in terms of your process on the project and not evaluated for writing. This is where you get to be completely honest with no penalty.

Group Presentation: Each group will give a 15-20 minute presentation on their project at the end of the semester. Instructions and expectations for this presentation will be provided.

Group Research Paper: Research papers should be 10-12 pages and use a scholarly style guide. Every scholarly journal published its "author guidelines," which include a style guide. Here is an example from *Ethos*, the journal for the Society for Psychological Society: <http://www.wiley.com/bw/submit.asp?ref=0091-2131>. These guidelines will give you the required manuscript style of the respective scholarly journal (obviously, the page count specified here supercede those of your respective style guide). When you turn in your report, you will include a professional cover letter that indicates what journal's style you are using for your report and the roles taken by each group member in your collaboration. I recommend you use RefWorks bibliographic software, as it will drastically improve your efficiency and accuracy and is free through the UA library (<http://refworks.ua.edu/>). In using RefWorks, I also recommend choosing a journal style that is loaded in RefWorks.

I recommend preparing your paper before your group presentation, as you will use the same material in the presentation. You will then use the constructive feedback you receive the presentation to improve the report. For writing projects, your group will spend about a third of the time researching your topic and the rest composing and revising your presentation and report. The process of writing should inevitably send you back to your sources to clarify points so there is some additional research time folded into writing time. Research papers usually represent approximately 4-8 hours of research and 8-16 hours of writing. You will use primary sources for theoretical background and discussion. This means that, while being integrative and creative, your project will build on research that has come before. This will provide your validity. Reports must be grammatically and carefully proofread and, therefore, not suffer the flawed organization and logical gaps that first and second drafts almost always do. In writing,

keep in mind your audience. Papers written “for the instructor” often make unwarranted assumptions about the expertise of the reader. The result is that you may assume the reader “knows what you mean” and you may fall into the trap of obscuring an otherwise good (or hiding poor) results and implications with jargon. Despite all these restrictions in terms of format that have the tendency to suck the life out of an otherwise fun project, I want you to convey the excitement of your results. Given the limited potential for interpreting pilot data from a small, biased sample, I want you to go out on a limb and be more speculative than you otherwise would for a true scholarly publication. Let me know how neat and fun this study or its results are. Finally, you will be evaluated using the following rubric:

	1=poor	2=fair	3=satisfactory	4=good	5=exceptional
<b>Coherence</b> (adherence to style, internal logic, organization, spelling/grammar, prose style)					
<b>Intellectual merit</b> (relevance to course, relevance to previous research)					
<b>Broader impacts</b> (importance or implications to discipline or society)					
<b>Source material</b> (choice of appropriate sources & comprehension of them)					
<b>Overall impression</b> (originality/creativity, collaboration, compelling/convincing, interesting)					

## Grading Policy

- 10% = Reading presentations
- 50% = Blogging
- 10% = Group presentation
- 15% = Group research paper
- 15% = BEST journaling

# Policy on Missed Exams & Coursework

**Blogging and Journaling:** You will be penalized for lateness on any of these.

**Presentations:** If you cannot attend class on a day you are scheduled to present, I expect you to have made arrangements with a classmate to switch slots in the schedule. I WILL NOT DO THIS FOR YOU. If you are sick on a day you are scheduled to present or have some other emergency, I expect documentation to justify the inconvenience it causes the rest of us. Without such documentation, you will receive a 0 for your presentation score. The course timetable has little flexibility, so presentations will not be rescheduled.

**Research Presentation:** If you miss your own presentation for any reason whatsoever, you can make it up by writing a 25-page research paper on a topic of my choosing using the same format outlined for the group research paper above. This will be due by exactly two weeks after the final exam date.

**Term Paper:** Collaboration is essential on this project. No excuses will be accepted. If any group members do not pull their weight, they will be penalized individually, but this will not be an acceptable excuse for not completing assignments as directed.

Late submissions will only be accepted by prior arrangement and/or with a very good reason. Otherwise, I will deduct 10% from each group member's paper grade for each day (or part of a day) they are late. Many assignments being due at the same time is *never* a good reason, and extensions will never be authorized on that basis, so please don't ask. No extensions will be authorized during the 3 days immediately prior to the due date except in the case of a legitimate medical emergency.

## Attendance Policy

As this course involves active participation and activities, attendance is expected and mandatory on days you are scheduled to present. If you are absent without a valid excuse on a day you are scheduled to present, you will receive a 0 for that portion of your presentation grade, regardless of the preparation you may have otherwise done for the presentation. If you are aware of a conflict in your presentation date, it is up to you to arrange with classmates to switch presentations with someone.

## Extra Credit Opportunities

I will offer extra credit for attending ALLELE lectures. Details will be announced thru the course of the semester.

## Undergraduate Research

The Anthropology Department offers several avenues for getting involved in undergraduate research. We offer a course in Undergraduate Research that you can take in conjunction with mentoring by a department faculty member. There is a portal on the department website that will help us guide you to



appropriate mentor and project: <http://anthropology.ua.edu/ugres.php>. Additionally, I take new students into the Human Behavioral Ecology Research Group (HBERG) every semester who are interested in getting involved in the kind of research I conduct and which is related to this course. Under some circumstances, I may offer extra credit for such participation, but you can also get involved without receiving credit, if you simply desire research experience. You can learn more about HBERG activities here: <http://anthropology.ua.edu/hberg/>. To apply to work with me, fill out the form at this portal: <http://anthropology.ua.edu/hberg/4/>.

## Severe Weather Guidelines

The guiding principle at The University of Alabama is to promote the personal safety of our students, faculty and staff during severe weather events. It is impossible to develop policies which anticipate every weather-related emergency. These guidelines are intended to provide additional assistance for responding to severe weather on campus.

UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate life saving actions.

When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the [National Weather Service](#) and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take.

**The Office of University Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways:**

- Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage
- Weather advisory sent out through UA Alerts to faculty, staff and students
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA-TV/WUOA-TV, and on the website at <http://wvuatv.com/content/weather>. WVUA-TV Home Team Weather provides a free service you can subscribe to which allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail or cell phone. Check <http://wvuatv.com/content/free-email-weather-alerts> for more details and to sign up for weather alerts.

In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has

expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains.

## **Disability Statement**

If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary.

If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability Services, please call (205) 348-4285 (Voice) or (205) 348-3081 (TTY) or visit 133-B Martha Parham Hall East to register for services. Students who may need course adaptations because of a disability are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, 133-B Martha Parham Hall East, before receiving academic adjustments.

## **Policy on Academic Misconduct**

All students in attendance at The University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University of Alabama expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. At the beginning of each semester and on examinations and projects, the professor, department, or division may require that each student sign the following Academic Honor Pledge: “I promise or affirm that I will not at any time be involved with cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, or misrepresentation while enrolled as a student at The University of Alabama. I have read the Academic Honor Code, which explains disciplinary procedure resulting from the aforementioned. I understand that violation of this code will result in penalties as severe as indefinite suspension from the University.”

See the [Code of Student Conduct](#) for more information.