

**PSY 6930: Seminar in Evolutionary Psychology of Religion  
Spring 2010**

**Instructor**

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**Course Meeting Time and Location**

Friday, 1-3:50pm, ES 103

**Course Description**

This course provides an overview of historical and modern research and theory addressing religion and religious belief from an evolutionary psychological perspective. The instructor will introduce key concepts, issues, and areas of research, but in each case students are expected to take an active role in discussing and developing the topic under consideration.

**Required Texts**

1. Atran, S. (2002). *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. Paperback ISBN: 9780195178036.
2. Dennett, D. C. (2006). *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. New York: Penguin Press. Paperback ISBN: 9780143038337.
3. Zuckerman, P. (2008). *Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us About Contentment*. New York: New York University Press. Hardcover ISBN: 9780814797143.

**Course Requirements**

Class discussion will focus on readings assigned or selected for each class meeting. Students are expected to have read the material prior to the class meeting and to be prepared to discuss and critically evaluate the material. Following are more specific requirements:

First, students will prepare a review paper and associated research proposal designed to investigate an unresolved issue in any area addressing the evolutionary psychology of religion. This review paper/research proposal is due at the beginning of the class session on the date indicated. Second, students will lead, as part of a small group, one class discussion of readings assigned through March 19. Third, in consultation with the instructor, students will select and distribute via email to the class a PDF for a published peer-reviewed empirical journal article that addresses any area of the evolutionary psychology of religion. The PDF must be distributed via myFAU no later than one week before the class session during which the paper is to be discussed. The student selecting the article will lead a discussion of that article. These individual-led discussions will begin March 26, with 3-4 such discussions each class period. Finally, students will complete and turn in a brief (2 pages, typed and double-spaced) reaction paper at the beginning of each class session. These reactions papers may address either the reading or discussion of the previous class session. Additional details regarding these requirements will be presented in class.

Grades will be assigned according to the following weighted criteria:

Review paper/research proposal	25%
Group-led assigned reading discussion	25%
Individual-led article discussion	25%
Reaction papers	25%

## Class Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u>
Jan 15	Intro. to course, group discussion sign-up	None
Jan 22	In gods we trust, part 1	Atran: Preface, Ch. 1-3
Jan 29	In gods we trust, part 2	Atran: Ch. 4-6
Feb 5	In gods we trust, part 3	Atran: Ch. 7-10
Feb 12	Breaking the spell, part 1	Dennett: Preface, Ch. 1-3
Feb 19	Breaking the spell, part 2	Dennett: Ch. 4-6
Feb 26	Breaking the spell, part 3	Dennett: Ch. 7-8
March 5	Breaking the spell, part 4	Dennett: Ch. 9-11
March 12	No class (Spring Break)	None
March 19	Society without god	Zuckerman: All
March 26	Student selections	TBA
April 2	Student selections	TBA
April 9	Student selections	TBA
April 16	No class	None
April 23	Student selections	TBA
April 30	Student selections	TBA
May 3, Monday 10:30-1:00pm	<b>**Review paper/research proposal due</b>	None