

**College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Fall 2021**

RELS 450: Senior Seminar on Spirituality
Mon and Wed 4-5:15 in Maybank 119

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler

Email: sieglere@cofc.edu Office phone: **953-3910**

Office: 4 Glebe St., 2nd Floor; "virtual office": <https://cofc.zoom.us/my/elijahsiegler>

Office Hours: **MW 11:30-1:00, or by appointment**

How does one study spirituality? Where does it come from? Why do so many people say they are "spiritual but not religious"? What is spirituality anyway? This class will be an investigation of spirituality through the lenses of phenomenology, history, and critical theory. We will be looking at a variety of examples, mostly from the United States, including in depth studies of globalized yoga and of the National Park Service. We will also visit, if possible, a spiritual retreat center in Myrtle Beach. Students will research and present papers in their own area of interest. This class will be conducted as a seminar, modeled on those found at religious studies graduate programs.

Required Texts (available for purchase at the C of C bookstore):

American Spiritualities: A Reader edited by Catherine L. **Albanese**

Peace Love Yoga by Andrea **Jain**

Spirituality and the State by Kerry **Mitchell**

Spirituality: A Very Short Introduction by Philip **Sheldrake**

Dream Trippers by David **Palmer** and Elijah Siegler

There are also required short readings on OAKS. Print these out. Please bring the relevant book or printout to class.

Course Requirements:

* Participation and attendance including in-class writing assignments and serving as discussion leader for one class (those marked with a *): **20%**

* Presentation of primary source from Albanese: **5%**

* 4-5 pp. reflection paper based on visit to Meher Baba Center: **10%**

* 4-5 pp. critical book review, due 10/15, plus in-class presentation: **15%**

* 12-15 pp. original research paper, due 12/8 including proposal, first draft, and in-class presentation of such: **50%**

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below.

Class Policies

C of C policy requires we come to class fully masked. If you are unvaccinated: please get vaccinated now. Remember it takes 5 or 6 weeks from your first dose to be considered fully vaxxed. You can find info about how to get vaxxed on campus [here](#).

In-person attendance is required, this is not a hybrid course. Under certain circumstances, I will allow students to Zoom in to class on my personal link, but in general if you are going to miss class, you should get notes from a classmate. More than two unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade, more than four and you will receive an “F”.

We may be required to change tactics and move the course fully online. This may include a shift in course requirements and due dates, but we will do what we need to ensure the safety of students and instructor and you will be given all necessary information in a timely fashion. We will remain flexible and vigilant—we got this!

Schedule of Classes:

Wed 8/25— **What is spirituality?**

Read: Sheldrake 1-23

Mon 8/30— **Are there types of spirituality?**

Read: Sheldrake 24-41, 60-77; Albanese 1-13, 179-182

Wed 9/1—**What does spirituality have to do with ritual and embodiment?**

(Case study: The Sun Dance) Special Guest: Dr. Brennan Keegan

Read: Albanese 19-22, 130-155

Mon 9/6— **What does spirituality have to do with experience, mysticism, and Interfaith Dialogue?***

Read: Sheldrake 42-59, 78-122; Albanese 431-439

Wed 9/8— **How did “metaphysical” spirituality develop in 19th c. America?***

Read: Schimdt (OAKS); Albanese 385-389, 411-424

Mon 9/13— **Does “New Age” spirituality have a history?***

Read: Albanese 391-406, 481-488

Wed 9/15— **What does spirituality have to do with feminism?**

(Student presentations, part 1)

Read: Albanese Ch 6, 8, 9 and 15 (can skim)

Mon 9/20— **What does spirituality have to do with prophecy and social action? (Student presentations text, part 2)**

Read: Sheldrake 78-96; Albanese 289-292; Albanese Ch 14, 16, 17 and 18 (can skim)

Wed 9/22—**What is “SBNR?”**

Read: Bloomberg (OAKS); Parsons (OAKS)

Mon 9/27—**What is Neoliberalism? Special Guest: Dr. Briana McGinnis**

Read: Jain 1-11 (recommended: 11-16); 17-45

Watch: “How Neoliberalism Threatens Democracy” by Wendy Brown on YouTube

Wed 9/29—**Debating Authenticity, Appropriation, and Exoticism***

Read: Jain 47-99; Albanese 498-503

Mon 10/4—**What Are the Politics of Global Spirituality?**

Special Zoom Guest: Dr. Andrea Jain

Read: Jain 101-129, 157-174

Wed 10/6— **Student Books Reports**

Mon 10/11 — **Student Books Reports, continued.**

Wed 10/13— **Research Paper Workshop**

Mon 10/18— **Fall Break**

Wed 10/20—**Debating *Dream Trippers****

Read: Palmer 1-19 (recommended: 19-24), 25-46 (recommended: 46-59), 60-100; Albanese 504- 511

Mon 10/25— **Spirituality and the State in the US, India and China**

Read: Jain 131-156; Palmer 101-105, 114-119, 138-145; Mitchell 1-39, 53-54

Wed 10/27—**What Is Nature Spirituality?**

Read: Mitchell 89-129

Mon 11/1— **What Is Secularity? Special Zoom Guest: Dr. Kerry Mitchell**

Read: Mitchell 130-199

Wed 11/3—**Daoist Monastic Spirituality ***

Read: Palmer 105-114, 119-138, 145-149 (recommended 149-155), 155-161

Mon 11/8— **Academic Spirituality ***

Read: Palmer 178-221; Komjathy (OAKS)

Wed 11/10— **Three Possible Conclusions***
Read: Palmer 222-277

Mon 11/15— **Redescribing Spirituality**
Read: Herman (OAKS); TBD (OAKS)

Wed 11/17—**Research Paper Workshop Part Two**

Mon 11/22— **Writing Day**

Wed 11/24— **Thanksgiving Break**

Mon 11/29— **Research paper presentations**

Wed 12/1—**Research paper presentations, continued**

Mon 12/6—**Research paper presentations, continued/ Final Discussion**

Wed 12/8—**Final Draft of Research paper due in Religious Studies Office**

Fri 12/10 3:30-5:30- **“Final Exam” Optional Social Gathering**

Wed 12/15—**Deadline for submission** to AAR/SBL Southeastern 2022 conference (March 11-13, 2022) at FSU in Tallahassee FL.

&&&&

Note: Students with documented disabilities who have been approved to receive accommodation through SNAP should feel free to discuss this during office hours. For more information, contact Disability Services at 953-1431.

Help for writing papers

A good resource for how to write a religious studies paper:
<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/religious-studies/>

The Center for Student Learning on campus has writing labs and consultations:
<https://csl.cofc.edu/> (or 953-5635)

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook, available online.

If the College of Charleston closes and members of the community are evacuated due to inclement weather, students are responsible for taking course materials with them in order to continue with course assignments consistent with instructions provided by faculty.

&&&&

How to Act Like You're in Grad School

Come to every class, despite the absence of an attendance policy.

Don't text, email, surf the web etc., during class (in fact, put away all cell phones and laptops).

Do all the reading, despite the absence of quizzes, tests, or exams. Read carefully, and take notes while you read.

Participate in discussion (with high quality, informed comments that show engagement with the reading).

Continue the discussion outside of class, preferably over beer.

During discussion, don't be afraid to sharply (but respectfully) disagree with your classmates' and your professor's opinions.

Be especially alert and active when your classmates are presenting as well as when we have distinguished guest speakers.

During the four opportunities for more formal class presentations, be professional and prepared

Read the citations and bibliographic information of the required reading, and use it to track down sources for your paper. Grad students love footnotes!

Meet with the professor during office hours.

Write a really good, original research paper that you might want to present publicly and/or publish eventually.