

HPRS5045/HPRS6045

Shamans, Visions and Ghosts: Exploring Spiritual and Religious Experiences

Prof Bettina Schmidt

**Module Information for the Academic year 2022/2023
Block 5
Lampeter campus**

CONTENT OF THE MODULE

The module provides insights into the study of religious and spiritual experience and enables students to assess different approaches to the study of these experiences.

This module will incorporate lectures, seminars as well as discussion sessions and video viewings.

Credits: 20

Lecturer: Prof Bettina Schmidt, Arts Building A45, b.schmidt@uwtsd.ac.uk

AIM(S)

- To present students with insights into the study of religious and spiritual experiences
- To enable students to contextualise religious and spiritual experience

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- Demonstrate understanding of a range of different experiences deemed religious or spiritual
- Assess spiritual and religious experiences within an academic framework
- Present and discuss some of the major debates in the study of religious experience

ASSESSMENT

Portfolio consisting of three parts (100%):

Choose one example of a spiritual or religious experience (to be agreed in assessment workshop)

1. A **short assessment** (up to 1000 words, 25% of the portfolio) about an Occasional Paper, Series 2, of the RERC to be submitted via **Turnitin on 26 February 2023**.

The Papers can be downloaded from this website:

<https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/alister-hardy-religious-experience-research-centre/occasional-papers/>

Select one which is linked to your research interest. You need to summarise and reflect on its content. Take also the author into consideration (e.g., academic background).

Students of Creative Writing:

Write a creative response to one of the Occasional Papers Series 2, of the RERC. You may choose any form for your creative work (e.g. poem, monologue, flash fiction), up to a limit 1000 words to be submitted via Turnitin on 26 February 2023.

2. One of the following to be submitted via **Turnitin on 5 March 2023**.
 - a. A **Poster presentation** of your selected case study and its significance (25%), including a bibliography of used material

OR

 - b. A **video presentation** of your selected case study and its significance (25%), including a bibliography of used material
3. A **critical assessment** (essay) of 3000 words (50%) of the selected case study within the academic framework that reflects debates in the field of the study of religious and spiritual experiences – to be submitted via **Turnitin on 19 March 2023**.

Students of Creative Writing:

A short story and accompanying **critical** essay. The combined word count should be 3000 words (50% of the portfolio). The critical essay should reflect upon the process of researching and writing your creative piece and should include substantial reference to research in the field of the study of religious and spiritual experiences – to be submitted via **Turnitin on 19 March 2023**.

All three parts are contributing towards ONE research project: the investigation of one case study of a spiritual or religious experience. There will be time to discuss your selection in class.

The Faculty Marking Criteria will be applied relevant to your level.

Please be aware that it is Faculty policy to submit all assignments via TurnItIn.

Syllabus: [the order of topics might change]

Block 5, Room Tucker 2 (apart from 24 Feb when we are in Arts 3)

Date	Title	Readings or other information
<u>Week 0</u>	Preparation Read the Occasional Paper by Marianne Rankin that will give an introduction into the topic	Marianne Rankin, AN INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE (RERC Occasional Paper third series, 2) Lampeter: RERC, 2005
<u>Week 1</u>	Introduction	
Mo	Welcome The field of religious and spiritual experiences	
Tue	Religious Experience Research Centre	Discussion: Which case study to select?
Thu	The beginning of the study of spiritual and religions experience: Rudolf Otto	
Fri	Methodological challenges in the study of religious experience Discussion of differences between anecdotal account and empirical evidence Discussion of Video "Knowing	<u>Reading:</u> Russell McCutcheon, Introduction (on Moodle) Submission of assignment 1

	God through Experience”	
<u>Week 2</u>	The Study of Religious and Spiritual Experience	
Mo	Scholars in the field of spiritual and religions experience: William James and Ann Taves	
Tue	The Academic study of Religious Experience Discussion of text by Peter Antes	<u>Reading:</u> Article by Peter Antes (on Moodle)
Thu	Is there a gender division with regard to experience? Possessed Women	
Fri	The relevance of the study of spiritual and religious experience today (When God talks back)	<u>Reading:</u> Interview whether scientists should take UFOs and Ghosts more seriously (uploaded on Moodle)
<u>Week 3</u>	Examples of religious and spiritual experience	
Mo	Poster Presentations	Submission of poster or video via TurnItIn on Sunday and presenting in class on Monday
Tue	Guest lecture about Sufism by Dr Husam Al-Mallak	Discussion of chapter on Sufism by Aaron Hughes from his book <i>Muslim Identities, An Introduction to Islam</i> (2013)
Thu	Shamanism as example of spiritual and religious experience	Discussion of article “Speaking to people who found god after taking psychedelics” (uploaded on Moodle)

Fri	Can one create a spiritual or religious experience with Ayahuasca or other ingrediencies?	
<u>Week 4</u>	Boundaries of religious and spiritual experience	
Mo	After Death Communication	Discussion of Research paper on After Death communication by Evelyn Elsaesser, Chris A. Roe, Callum E. Cooper, David Lorimer (uploaded on Moodle)
Tue	Mental illness or religious experience?	Discussion of position paper on mental health and spirituality by the Spiritual Companions Trust (uploaded on Moodle)
Thu	Perception of experience	Discussion of article by Ann Corwin and Cordelia Erickson-Davis on "Experiencing presence: An interactive model of perception" (HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory 10 (1): 166–182, uploaded on Moodle)
Fri	Anthropology of Religious Experience	Submission of essay via TurnItIn on Sunday (feedback will be sent via Moodle)

Reading list

Essential

Martin, Craig & Russell T. McCutcheon (eds.), <i>Religious Experience, A Reader</i> . (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012)
Rankin, Marianne, <i>An Introduction to Religious Experience</i> (London: Continuum, 2008)
Schmidt, Bettina E. (ed.), <i>The Study of Religious Experience: Approaches and Methodologies</i> . (Sheffield: Equinox, 2016)

Recommended

Davis, Caroline Franks, <i>The Evidential Force of Religious Experience</i> (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)
Hardy, Alister, <i>The Spiritual Nature of Man</i> (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979)
Hay, David, <i>Religious Experience Today: Studying the Facts</i> (London: Mowbray, 1990)
James, William <i>The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature</i> (New York: Random House, 1902)
Schmidt, Bettina E. <i>Spirits and Trance in Brazil: Anthropology of Religious Experience</i> . (London: Bloomsbury, 2016)
Smart, Ninian, <i>The Religious Experience of Mankind</i> (London: Fontana, 1971)
Sutcliffe, Steven (ed.), <i>Religion: Empirical Studies</i> (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004)