

Anxiety: Religious and Theological Perspectives
Religion 3559 & 5559

Fall 2022
Wednesdays 3:30 – 6:00
Nau Hall 142

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Anxiety is the affliction of most striving college students and the most common mental health disorder of our time. What are its religious and theological meanings, causes, and consolations?

This seminar considers these questions in view of three purposes:

1. To understand anxiety, its causes and meanings, through religious and theological perspectives, asking how certain religious modalities and doctrines influence the psychological formation of persons.
2. To explore and analyze anxiety in its existential, conceptual, and pathogenic forms, by way of key theological and psychoanalytical texts and through works of literature, film, and memoir, in order to develop a multi-genred account that contributes to our general knowledge of causes and treatment.
3. To engage, through in-person or virtual class visits, scholars of religion and mental health professionals whose expertise deepen our understandings of anxiety and its remedies.

There are no prerequisites for this seminar other than genuine interest and a fondness for books.

Course Requirements

1. Graduate students: one 17-20 page research paper (3,500-4,000 words); undergraduates: two 6-8 page

essays (1500-1800 words) each worth 40% of your final grade; the first is due on **Wednesday Oct 19, the second on Wednesday, December 7**. No extensions will be granted on these assignments.

2. A weekly 250-word written response circulated to the class via the “Discussions” tab on Collab by midnight on Tuesdays (20% of course grade).
3. Completion of either (a) review essay of a scholarly book on any aspect of the course; or (b) a final exam in the form of a five-page annotated outline of the seminar as a whole. The final exam counts for 25% of the final course grade.
4. Active involvement in the weekly seminar (15% of course grade).

Please note: Students with more than two unexcused classes will be penalized one half grade on the final grade. Students who miss more than three classes will be penalized one full grade on the final grade.

Required Books

Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Anxiety and the Christian* (Ignatius Press, paper)

Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (Harper, paper)

Sigmund Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (Norton, paperback)

Barbara A. Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable. The Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* (Fortress Press, 2nd edition, paper)

Charles Marsh, *Evangelical Anxiety: A Memoir* (HarperOne, cloth)

Ottessa Moshfegh, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation* (Penguin Press, paperback)

Claire Weekes, *Self-Help for Your Nerves. Learn to Relax and Enjoy Life Again by Overcoming Stress and Fear* (Harper Collins, reprint 2000, paper)

Recommended, not required to purchase

Donald Capps, *The Child's Song: The Religious Abuse of Children*

Allan V. Horwitz, *Anxiety. A Short History*

Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*

Schedule

The Lay of the Land

Wednesday, August 24 ~ Logistics/Clarifications/Hopes and Dreams

Wednesday, August 31 ~ Religion and Anxiety ~ It's Complicated

Reading: USC Study on Religion and Mental Health (12 pages), and excerpts from Donald Capps, *The Child's Song: On the Religious Abuse of Children* (pp. 37-58), and Britt Way, *Generation Dread: Finding Purpose in an Age of Climate Crisis* (pp. 1-11).

Part One

Some Important Religious, Theological and Philosophical Perspectives

Wednesday, September, 7 ~ Lessons from Thomas Aquinas for the Practice of Clinical Psychiatry

Readings ~ Warren Kinghorn, MD. Articles and Interviews [Collab]

Also:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mfpfVCJda4w&ab_channel=DukeDivinityTheology%2CMedicine%2CandCulture/

With Guest Speaker: Warren Kinghorn, MD; Duke University Medical School and Divinity School

Wednesday, September 14 – Anxiety, Christian Fundamentalism, and Bodily Life (after Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

Reading. Charles Marsh, *Evangelical Anxiety. A Memoir*

Wednesday, September 21. Anxiety and the Dizziness of Freedom

Reading: Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*

With guest Speaker: Dr. Clare Carlisle, King's College, University of London,
and author of *Philosopher of the Heart: The Restless Life of Søren Kierkegaard*

Wednesday, September 28. Three European Roman Catholics on Anxiety and Death

Readings. Martin Heidegger, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Julia Kristeva

Part Two
Clinical Accounts, Treatments and the Role of Religion

Wednesday, October 5 – Anxiety and Repression. The Psychoanalytic Treatment
Readings. Sigmund Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptom, and Anxiety*

Wednesday, October 12 – Heal Thyself!
Readings. Claire Weekes, *Self-Help for Your Nerves Learn to Relax and Enjoy Life Again by Overcoming Stress and Fear*

Wednesday, October 19. Case Study. Martin Luther on the Couch.
Reading: *Young Man Luther*, Erik Erikson
With guest speaker Carlos Eire, Professor of Religious Studies, Yale University

October 26. The Christian Counseling Movement
Readings: Jay Adams, excerpts from *Competent to Counsel*

Part Three
Representations of Anxiety in Religion and Culture

Wednesday, November 2. The Anxiety of Sadness and Loss
Reading. *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, by Ottessa Moshfegh

Wednesday, November 9. The Anxious Search for One Real Thing
Watching. Michaelangelo Antonioni's "Blow Up"
Reading. Excerpts from William Arrowsmith, *Antonioni: Poet of Images*

Wednesday, November 16. Anxiety and the Built Environment
Reading, Excerpts from *The Architecture of Fear*

Wednesday, November 23 ~ Thanksgiving Break

Part Four
Frameworks for Healing
Being with Others/Becoming Oneself

Wednesday, November 30. The Beloved Community
Reading, Barbara A. Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable. The Contemplative Practices of the Black Church*

Wednesday, December 7. Final Class Period.

Professor Marsh's Home: 1841 University Circle

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Office hours ~ arranged at your convenience