

Religion 4100/Psychology 4900
Fall 2005
9:45 – 11:00 am

**Three Approaches to Love:
Scientific, Christian, and Buddhist**

Instructors:

- Dr. Patricia Bruininks (Assistant Professor of Psychology)
- Dr. Jay McDaniel (Professor of Religion)

Purpose of Course: To consider ways in which Buddhists and Christians might enter into dialogue with the natural sciences in order to better understand the nature of the love to which they are committed, and to assess the limits and possibilities of love as an ideal by which to live.

Course Will be Taught: First Semester, 2005.

Overall Structure of Course:

- Buddhism and Christianity on Love (*first four weeks*)
- Science on Love (*next four weeks*)
- Science on Hate (*next two weeks*)
- Process Theology as an Attempt at Synthesis (*one week*)
- The Limits and Possibilities of Living a Loving Life (*final three weeks*)

Three Pedagogical Components:

- *Classroom lectures and discussions* led by Dr. Patricia Bruininks (Psychology) and Dr. Jay McDaniel (Religious Studies).
- Participation in the *Hendrix-Lilly conference* on Psychology and Faith held at Hendrix College in the Fall of 2005, featuring Dr. David G. Myers, John Derk Wirkman Professor of Psychology, Hope College
- Presentation of *Poster Session* on research paper during Global Awareness Day held at Hendrix in the Fall of 2006 (optional)

Additional Pedagogical Opportunities:

- Prior to the course, several students may attend the Seventh International Conference on Buddhist-Christian Dialogue held at Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles) in early June of 2005. Scholarships for this participation will be made available by the Odyssey Initiative, depending on funds available in the Spring of 2005.
- Students who wish may participate in the second annual Buddhist-Christian meditation retreat led by Dr. Conrad Shumacher (University of Central Arkansas) in October 2005 at St. Peter's Episcopal Church.

Historical Significance of Course: The course builds upon two movements in contemporary thought. The first is an ongoing dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity as described by Michael von Bruck and Whalen Lai in Christianity and Buddhism: A Multicultural History of Their Dialogue (Orbis Press). The second is an emerging body of knowledge concerning science and love (empathy, forgiveness, altruism, and pity) as presented by Stephen Post Altruism and Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy, and Religion in Dialogue (Oxford University Press, 2002). Heretofore

these two movements have unfolded in relative isolation from one another; participants in the Christianity-Buddhism dialogue have not been versed in scientific approaches to love; and researchers in science-and-love inquiries have not been involved in Christian-Buddhist dialogue. With the expertise brought by its two professors, as well as the material read in the course, this course seeks to bring these two traditions together.

Provisional Definition of Love: As the schedule of readings makes clear, the course begins with a book that lays out the general parameters of the science-and-love research, showing how it is connected with treatments of love in the world religions. The book is Thomas Oord's in The Science of Love: Wisdom and Well-Being. Oord's definition of love serves as a point of departure and frame of reference for the course's considerations.

To love is to act intentionally, in sympathetic response to others (including God), to promote overall well-being. Love acts are influenced by previous actions and executed in the hope of attaining a high degree good for all.

One purpose of the course is to consider whether treatments of love (and related activities) in the sciences are consistent with this definition of love, with the aim of discerning not only the adequacy of their treatments but also the adequacy of this definition. The professors realize that "love" is a multi-valent term that can be defined in many ways, some prescriptive and normative, and some descriptive and non-normative.

Five Key Questions: Using Oord's definition as a starting point, five questions emerge that bear upon Buddhist-Christian dialogue. One aim of the course is to see if and how science might help us respond to these questions.

Is Love a form of attachment? If so, how might we distinguish between healthy attachment and unhealthy attachment? Does unhealthy attachment pertain mostly to intentions? Or might it also pertain to the quality of sympathetic response? Evolutionary psychology has often treated love as a form of attachment. When we love our neighbors, we are attached to them even as we seek their well-being. By contrast Buddhism proposes that authentic love requires a certain kind of non-attached mindfulness: that is, a capacity to listen to others -- in Oord's language, sympathetically respond to them -- without being attached to needs for approval or recognition, and without being overly shaped by pre-determined projections of who and what they are, and, still more deeply, without wanting to "own them" or "control them" as if they were objects of possession. This description of non-attachment goes beyond intention to the realm of sympathy. Does such non-attached sympathy ever truly occur? If so, what kinds of attachments are relinquished and what, if any, remain, as it unfolds? How might science illuminate human potentialities for non-attached sympathy? What are the neuropsychological dimensions of such sympathy? Is it evolutionarily adaptive? How might specific practices such as Buddhist meditation facilitate capacities for non-attached sympathy? What cultural or theological commitments need to be in place for this kind of love to make sense? Does Christianity, too, point to non-attachment as a dimension of love?

What is Faith in God? Oord mentions God in his definition of love. Buddhists would not make reference to God. Given the non-theistic nature of Buddhism, another aim of the course is to consider the difference it makes -- in terms of a dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism, but also in terms of thinking about love in the first place -- to mention God as a possible subject to whom there might be sympathetic response. Toward the latter end, the part of the course dealing with God will present different ways of understanding God available in the modern world, including varieties of pan-en-theism (One Embracing Many), monism (One manifest as Many), and classical theism (One over Many). In light of the conference that occurs on the Hendrix campus as the course unfolds, the course will also address the questions: What is faith in God? Is it intellectual assent to doctrinal propositions, despite evidence to the contrary? Is it pre-reflective trust in something more? How clear and distinct must faith be? Can different people share in the same kind of faith, and yet have very different concepts of God? Is faith in God a form of attachment? Or is it a way in which people can release from unhealthy attachments?

Under what circumstances is faith in God conducive, or not conducive, to love? How does faith in God resemble or differ from faith in another person? How might evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology illuminate the nature of faith? To what extent are understandings of faith at work in the sciences – and for that matter love -- shaped by Abrahamic sensibilities? How might the relation of faith and love be understood by a Pure Land Buddhist, for whom faith in Amida requires trust without attachment? Is faith a holding on, or a letting go? Is love a holding on, or a letting go? Or both? Or neither?

What makes human beings hate others? What does science have to say about the biology and psychology of hatred? Granted that, from some points of view, hatred is close to love, because both reveal a concern for the other, how are the two differentiated? Can hatred ever be a healthy emotion? If so, how is “healthy” defined? Where does hatred fit into the fully loving life? Did Jesus hate? Did the Buddha hate? How is hatred connected to anger? To a sense of righteous indignation? To hopes for justice?

Is a life of love truly possible? Or are humans inherently limited, both by their genes and their environmental conditioning, such that the very ideal of a perfectly loving life is at odds with human nature? Is there a “human nature” in the first place? Or is the very idea of human nature a projection onto many ways of being human, which are themselves in flux over time? If the latter, can examples of “loving lives” – e.g. Jesus and the Buddha – be seen as leading edges of the history of human consciousness? Even if so, is it necessary for humans to strive toward such ideals, or should humans instead relax into finitude? Indeed, might such relaxation be, indirectly, an aid in the life of love, because it frees a person from pretenses to perfection?

Requirements for Course:

- Two take home exams – 45%
- One term paper – 20%
- Class participation – 15%
- Final Exam – 20%

Texts (under development):

- A Testament of Devotion, by Thomas Kelley
- Altruism and Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy, and Religion in Dialogue, by Stephen Post
- Cultivating the Mind of Love: The Practice of Looking Deeply in the Mahayana Buddhist Tradition, by Thich Nhat Hanh
- Cupid’s Arrow: The Course of Love through Time, by Robert Sternberg
- Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice, by McCullough, Pargament, and Thorescen
- Gandhi’s Hope, by Jay McDaniel
- Living Buddha/Living Christ, by Thich Nhat Hanh
- Psychology through the Eyes of Faith, by David Myers
- Soul Survivor, by Philip Yancey
- The handbook of emotions, 2nd Edition, by Michael Lewis & Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones
- The Psychology of Hate, Robert Sternberg
- Wisdom distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today, by Joan Chittister
- Healing Breath: Zen spirituality for a Wounded Earth, by Ruben Habito

Schedule of Readings and Topics

Week One: Introduction to Buddhist-Christian Dialogue (discussion led by McDaniel)

Two Case Studies -- Susan Postal on Being a Buddhist influenced by Christianity and Ruben Habito on Being a Christian influence by Buddhism.
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Tuesday: Susan Postal. Video of Susan Jion Postal (Zen Christian teacher in Rye, New York)
Reading: Healing Breath: Zen Spirituality for a Wounded Earth by Ruben Habito (Orbis Books, 1993) (pp.1-90)

Thursday: Ruben Habito. Video of Ruben Habito (Professor of World Religions at Perkins School of Theology in Dallas)
Reading: Healing Breath: Zen Spirituality for a Wounded Earth by Ruben Habito (Orbis Books, 1993) (pp. 90-148)

Week Two: Introduction to Issues at the Intersection of Psychology and Religion (discussion led by Bruininks)

Tuesday: Science and Religion: Different Levels of Explaining Human Behavior
Reading: Psychology through the Eyes of Faith by David Myers (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003) (selected chapters)

Thursday: Specific Issues in Psychology from a Christian Perspective
Reading: Psychology through the Eyes of Faith by David Myers (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2003) (selected chapters)

Week Three: Christian Images of the Loving Live (discussion led by McDaniel)

Tuesday: A Quaker Approach
Readings: A Testament of Devotion by Thomas Kelly (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1941) (selected chapters)

Thursday: A Benedictine Approach
Readings: Wisdom Distilled from the Daily : Living the Rule of St. Benedict Today by Joan Chittister (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990.)

Week Four: Buddhist Images of the Loving Life (discussion led by McDaniel)

Tuesday: Love in the Mahayana Tradition
Reading: Cultivating the Mind of Love: The Practice of Looking Deeply in the Mahayana Buddhist Tradition (Berkeley, Caliph: Parallax Press, 1996)

Thursday: Love and Mindfulness in the Philosophy of Thich Nhat Hanh
Reading: Living Buddha/Living Christ (San Francisco: Harpercollins, 1996)

Week Five: The Psychology of Emotion (discussion led by Bruininks)

Tuesday: An Evolutionary Perspective
Reading: Cosmides, L., & Tooby, J. (2000). Evolutionary psychology and the emotions. In Michael Lewis & Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), The handbook of emotions, 2nd Edition, (pp. 91-115). New York: The Guildford Press.

Thursday: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

Reading: Shweder, R. A., & Haidt, J. (2000). The cultural psychology of the emotions: Ancient and new. In Michael Lewis & Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), The handbook of emotions, 2nd Edition, (pp. 397-416). New York: The Guildford Press.

Week Six: The Psychology of Love (discussion led by Bruininks)

Tuesday: Introduction to the Methods and Approaches of Love-and-Science Research

Readings: Cupid's Arrow: The Course of Love through Time by Robert Sternberg (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) (selected chapters)

Thursday: Introduction to the Methods and Approaches of Love-and-Science Research

Readings: Altruism and Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy, and Religion in Dialogue by Stephen Post (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Week Seven: The Psychology of Empathy and Sympathy (discussion led by Bruininks; attend conference on faith and psychology)

Tuesday: An Evolutionary Perspective

Reading: Cialdini, R. B., Schaller, M., Houlihan, D., Arps, K., Fultz, J., & Beaman, A. L. (1987). Empathy-based helping: Is it selflessly or selfishly motivated? Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 52, 749-758.

Thursday: Empathy and Love

Reading: Empathy, evolution, and altruism. Hurlbut, William B.; *In: Altruism & Altruistic Love: Science, Philosophy, & Religion in Dialogue*. Post, Stephen G.; Underwood, Lynn G.; (London: Oxford University Press, 2002.) (pp. 309-327)

Friday & Saturday: Attendance at Conference on Psychology and Faith, followed by evening discussion on *Psychology, Faith, Love, Buddhism, and Christianity* in light of conference, lectures, and readings. Led by Dr. Bruininks and Dr. McDaniel

Week Eight: Psychology of Forgiveness (discussion led by Bruininks)

Tuesday: The Psychology of Forgiveness

Reading: McCullough, M. E., Pargament, K. I., & Thoresen, C. E. (2000). The psychology of forgiveness: History, conceptual issues, and overview. In Michael E. McCullough, Kenneth I. Pargament, & Carl E. Thoresen (Eds.), Forgiveness: Theory, Research, and Practice (pp. 1-16). New York: The Guilford Press.

Thursday: FALL BREAK – No Class

Week Nine: Additional Scientific Approaches to Love (discussion led by McDaniel)

Tuesday: Lecture by Dr. Kelly Agnew on Evolutionary Biology and its understanding of Altruism.
Readings: selected by speaker

Tuesday: Lecture by Dr. Sandra Pope (University of Arkansas Medical School) on research linking mindfulness meditation, physical and psychological health, and compassion.
Readings: selected by speaker

Week Ten: The Psychology of Hate (discussion led by Bruininks)

Tuesday: The Psychology of Hate

Reading: The Psychology of Hate by Robert J. Sternberg (American Psychological Association, 2004) (selected chapters)

Thursday: The Psychology of Hate

Reading: The Psychology of Hate by Robert J. Sternberg (American Psychological Association, 2004) (selected chapters)

Week Eleven: The Psychology of Hate (discussion led by Bruininks)

Tuesday: The Psychology of Hate

Reading: The Psychology of Hate by Robert J. Sternberg (American Psychological Association, 2004) (selected chapters)

Thursday: The Psychology of Hate

Reading: The Psychology of Hate by Robert J. Sternberg (American Psychological Association, 2004) (selected chapters)

Week Twelve: Buddhism – Christianity – Science (discussion led by McDaniel)

Tuesday: Process Theology as an Attempt at Synthesis

Reading: Chapters One and Two of Gandhi's Hope (Orbis Press, forthcoming)

Thursday: Process Theology as Synthesis

Reading: Chapters Three and Four of Gandhi's Hope (Orbis Press, forthcoming)

Week Thirteen: How Loving Can Humans Be? (discussion led by Bruininks & McDaniel)

Tuesday: Limited Love by Exceptional People

Reading: Selected chapters from Soul Survivor by Philip Yancey (New York: Doubleday, 2001)

Thursday: Limited Love by Exceptional People

Reading: Selected chapters from Soul Survivor by Philip Yancey (New York: Doubleday, 2001)

Week Fourteen: How Loving Can Humans Be? (discussion led by Bruininks & McDaniel)

Tuesday: Exceptional Stories of Love

Reading: Selected chapters from Soul Survivor by Philip Yancey (New York: Doubleday, 2001)

Thursday: THANKSGIVING – No Class

Week Fifteen: Student Presentations on Term Papers