

**EVOLUTION OF RELIGION: Anthropology 295**  
**School of Business 204**  
**TTh 2:00 – 3:15**

**Faculty:** Prof. Richard Sosis  
**Office Hrs:** 3:30-5:30 Th, by appt.  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course will provide an introduction to evolutionary studies of religion. The principal purpose of the class is to provide students with a broad, but deep, overview of the major theoretical issues in this emerging field and of the empirical data that have been brought to bear on those issues.

**CLASS FORMAT**

Classes will primarily consist of lectures. Questions during class on lectures and readings are encouraged, as are general discussions on class topics. The general tone of all discussions should be supportive of a free exchange of ideas. Lectures will often elaborate upon material covered in your readings, however lectures will not be a restatement of your readings.

**GRADES**

Final grades will be based on a midterm exam (30%; Tues. March 4), final exam (35%; check registrar), research project (20%), and attendance (15%). Exams will cover lecture and reading materials and consist of short answer questions.

*Make-up exams:* If you are unable to take an exam at the scheduled time, you must notify me **before** the exam. I can be contacted either by phone (I have an answering machine) or e-mail. If I am not contacted prior to the exam you will receive a failing grade for that exam. Make-ups will be permitted to students who contact me prior to the exam only if they have written documentation from a doctor, parent, advisor, dorm resident, or some other relevant authority. Otherwise, they will receive a failing grade on that exam.

*Tips on how to do well in this class:* Come to class regularly and do all of the readings. Regularly review your notes. If you miss class make sure you get the notes from someone who attended class. If you do not understand something make sure you ask me during class or office hours.

**READING MATERIALS**

All reading assignments will be announced in class. The required readings of the class will be drawn from the following books:

Slone, D.J. 2004. *Theological Incorrectness*

Bulbulia, J. et al. 2008. *The Evolution of Religion: Studies, Theories, Critiques*

**COURSE TOPICS:**

**Introduction to the Evolutionary Study of Religion**

**What is Religion?**

TI Introduction, Ch 1, Ch 2

**What People Believe**

TI Ch 3, Ch 4, Ch 5

**Modes of Religiosity**

ER Ch 2 Whitehouse

ER Ch 6 Sanderson

**Religious Concepts**

ER Ch 32 Alcorta

ER Ch 29 Guthrie

ER Ch 30 Cohen

**Adaptationist and By-product Accounts of Religion**

ER Ch 1 Wilson

ER Ch 5 Kirkpatrick

ER Ch 7 Richerson and Newson

ER Ch 8 Harris and McNamara

**Afterlife Beliefs**

Cognitive Psychology of Belief in the Supernatural, Bering  
ER Ch 28 Nahri

**Magic and Superstition**

TI Ch 6, Conclusion

**Supernatural Punishment and Human Sociality**

ER Ch 13 Shariff

ER Ch 17 Boehm

**Religious Communication**

ER Ch 4 Irons

ER Ch 18 Bulbulia

ER Ch 20 Soler

ER Ch 24 Schloss

**Religion, War, and Intolerance**

ER Ch 12 Johnson

**Do Evolutionary Theories of Religion Threaten Religion?**

ER Ch 45 Murray

ER Ch 46 Koch

ER Ch 49 Barrett