Syllabus for Psychology 498.001 – Psychology and the Paranormal

Fall 2018

Instructor: Dr. Robert Polewan
Office: MCKB 215K
Email: polewanrj@sfasu.edu
Phone #: 936-468-4402
Office Hours (subject to change): Monday & Wednesday: 10:00-11:30am, Tuesday & Thursday: 11:00am-12:00pm, and by appointment. Emails and phone calls will be answered within 24 hours except on weekends and holidays.

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Kenocha Epperson
Office: MCKB 251
Email: eppersonkk1@jacks.sfasu.edu
Office Hours: TBA

Class: Tuesday & Thursday 2:00-3:15 pm, MCKB 257

Required Textbooks:

Suggested Textbooks:

Course Description:
This course will examine the various paranormal beliefs — ESP, UFOs, alien abduction, hauntings, Bigfoot, etc.—and the psychology behind these beliefs. In this course, we will explore these popular theories and claims for a psychological perspective. One focus will be to teach scientific thinking and how to critically evaluate the paranormal and other unproven claims, and the nature of the evidence for these beliefs. A second focus will be on the psychology of belief – what causes people to believe, often very strongly, in a claim of phenomenon that, the evidence shows, is false. In addition to text readings, students will be presented with articles and videos of paranormal phenomenon for discussion.

Course Objectives:
1. Students should learn the characteristics of pseudoscientific/paranormal claims and how to critically examine such claims. This will involve an understanding of basic logic and scientific methods, as well as some statistical reasoning (basic).
2. The student should come away from the course knowing the psychological factors that lead to acceptance of claims and ideas which the evidence shows are incorrect (basic).
3. Students will learn the facts about the various topics covered in the class and the readings and become conversant with the arguments for and against the reality of the phenomena that will be covered (advanced).

**Point Distribution:**
- Midterm Exam: 100 Points
- Final Exam: 100 Points
- Reaction Papers: 10 points each (100 points total)
- Discussions Posts: 10 points each (100 points total)
- Assignments/Projects: 50 points

**Total Points: 450 Points**

**Grade Distribution:** There is no curving for any grade in this course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Point Range</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>403 – 450</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>358 – 402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>313 – 357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>268 – 312</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0 – 267</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**Exams:** There will be a midterm and final for this class. Both exams will be essay exams and you will be able to work on it outside of class. The exams will be submitted to D2L, as a MS Word document.

**Reaction Papers:** Reaction papers will cover topics discussed in class. They will be completed in class and should be roughly a half of page to a page (hand written) in length. The purpose of the reaction papers are (1) to assure that you are keeping up with the readings, (2) to help you assess your understanding of the material, and (3) to give you practice writing using terminology. The dates of the reaction papers will NOT be given in advance. Students who have notified me in advance of missing class will have the opportunity to make a reaction paper. If you are unable to notify me before the class, you MUST provide me with documentation regarding your absence before you will be allowed to make-up your work.

**Discussion Posts:** Attendance and participation will be required through discussions. These will occur throughout the semester. You will participate in weekly (10 total) discussions with your peers. First, you will be asked to comment on a topic or question and post on the D2L discussion board. Second, you will respond to at least two of your peers’ posted messages. You will not be able to see peer’s messages until after you have posted on the board. You must thoroughly answer the questions for each discussion to earn points. Discussions will close on the Sunday at 5:00PM of each week assigned. Missed discussions cannot be made up without documentation of a medical emergency and will result in a grade of zero for that discussion.

**Assignments/Projects:** Assignments/Projects will consist of individual or group work turned into the instructor. The nature of the Assignments/Projects will vary depending on the topic discussed in class at the time the Assignment/Project is given.
Extra Credit: None

Honor Projects: Dr. Polewan will NOT be supervising any honor projects for this class.

Lecture Notes: The PowerPoint slides are posted on D2L at the discretion of the instructor. PowerPoint slides that are presented in class may have slides that are added or removed from the slides posted on D2L. I will not reposted the PowerPoint slides if I make changes before class, it is your responsibility to get the new notes in class.

Electronic Device Policy: Only laptops are permitted in class and ONLY for the purpose of taking notes and in-class work on assignments. Recording of lectures is strictly prohibited unless approved in advance by the instructor. Cell phones and ipods must be turned off during class. The use of an unauthorized electronic device during class will result in a 2-point penalty deduction from the final grade for each infraction by that individual.

Class Attendance Policy: I will cover a lot of material not in the book that I will expect you to know for the exams. You are responsible for ALL material covered in the lectures and in the posted readings/book. Also, announcements are made at the beginning of the class. These announcements cover due dates, changes in scheduling, and changes in exams. If a class lecture is missed, it is the student’s responsibility to obtain missed lecture materials and announcements from classmates. If a student misses a course meeting, the student should contact a classmate to get a copy of the announcements and notes covered during that course meeting.

Missed Work Policy: You must take exams/reaction papers/assignments at their scheduled times, unless circumstances, such as a religious observance, serious illness, or death in the family.

Excused Absences: Students who know in advance that they will miss an exam/reaction paper/assignment and/or have an excused absence must contact Prof. Polewan BEFORE the day of the exam/reaction paper/assignment (NOT ON the day of the exam) in order to be allowed to make up the missed exam/reaction paper/assignment and to schedule a make-up time and date. In addition, you MUST PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION regarding your absence. Students with excused absences will have two weeks from the date of the exam to make it up, failure to do so will result in a score of zero (0) on that exam/reaction paper/assignment.

Unexcused Absences: Students with unexcused absences MUST provide Prof. Polewan with proper documentation regarding your absence in order to make up missed exams/reaction papers/assignments and will have two weeks from the date of the exam to make it up. If you miss an exam/reaction paper/assignment and fail to provide proper documentation, you will NOT be allowed to make it up and you will receive a score of zero (0) on that exam/reaction paper/assignment. Proper documentation must include your name, the date(s) of your absence, and the reason(s) of your absence. Documentation must be received within 2 class periods of your return. Make-up exams/reaction papers/assignments must be completed BEFORE finals week.
All make up work must be completed **BEFORE** the last day of class and **BEFORE** the day of the final. There will be no make-up exams/reaction papers/assignments allowed during and after the final.

**SFA Excused Absences Policy:**
(http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/class_attendance_excused_abs.asp)

Students may be excused from attendance for reasons such as health, family emergencies, or student participation in approved university-sponsored events. However, students are responsible for notifying their instructors in advance, when possible, for excusable absences.

Students are responsible for providing satisfactory documentation in a timely manner to the instructor for each absence. Whether absences are excused or unexcused, a student is still responsible for all course content and assignments. Students with acceptable excuses may be permitted to make up work for a maximum of three weeks’ worth of absences during a semester or one week of a summer term, depending on the nature of the missed work. **Make up work must be completed as soon as possible after returning from an absence in accordance with the course syllabus.**

In the case of absences caused by participation in university-sponsored events, announcement via mySFA will constitute official notification. Faculty members sponsoring activities that require their students to be absent from other classes must submit to the provost and vice president for academic affairs an explanation of the absence, including the date, time and an alphabetical listing of all attending students. If approved by the provost and vice president for academic affairs, this information will be posted on mySFA.

**Acceptable Student Behavior:** Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program (see the Student Conduct Code, policy 10.4). Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom.

Students who do not attend class regularly or who perform poorly on class projects/exams may be referred to the iCare Early Alert Program. This program provides students with recommendations for resources or other assistance that is available to help SFA students succeed.

I define appropriate behavior as attending lecture/lab on time, having your cell phone turned to silent and stowed away for the duration of the class, taking turns when speaking in class, being respectful to your peers and your instructor, and trying to avoid leaving class early if at all possible. All blatant actions of disrespect will lead to the individual responsible being asked to leave the class. If the actions do not cease permanently, the individual will be asked to drop the class. During lecture/lab times, if you are using the computer, you may not check your email, look at facebook, or have any page open that is not directly relevant to the lab activity that day. I will expect that all students will arrive promptly to class. Please do not be tardy since it disrupts both the instructor and your fellow students. Since attendance will be taken at the beginning of class, tardy students will be marked as having an unexcused absence. During class there should be no private conversations.
Academic Integrity (A-9.1): Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

Definition of Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes, but is not limited to: (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assignment; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to: (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from the Internet or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper or presentation without giving the author due credit.

Please read the complete policy and the appeals process at http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp and http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_appeals_students.asp

Procedure for Addressing Student Academic Dishonesty:
A faculty member who has evidence and/or suspects that academic dishonesty has occurred shall gather all pertinent information, approach the student(s) involved, and initiate the following procedure:

- The faculty member shall review all evidence of cheating or plagiarism and discuss it directly with the student(s) involved. The faculty member shall inform the student(s) of the procedure for addressing academic dishonesty, as well as the appeals process.
- After hearing the student(s)’ explanation or defense, the faculty member will determine whether or not academic dishonesty has occurred and will inform the student(s) what action will be taken. Penalties may include reprimand, no credit for the assignment or exam, re-submission of the work, make-up exam, or failure of the course. The faculty member may consult with the academic unit chair/director and dean in making these decisions.
- After a determination of academic dishonesty, the faculty member shall notify the office of the dean of the student's major by submitting a Report of Academic Dishonesty, along with supporting documentation as noted on the form. This report shall be made part of the student's record and shall remain on file with the dean's office for at least four years.
- Upon second or subsequent offenses, the dean of the student’s major will determine a course of action, which may include dismissal from the university. The dean may refer the case to the college council for review and recommendations before making this determination. A student's record of academic dishonesty will not be available to faculty members. The purpose of the record is for the dean to track a pattern of academic dishonesty during a student's academic career at Stephen F. Austin State University. Students who are found to have demonstrated academic dishonesty and have withdrawn prior to the award of a grade will continue to have the determination of the infraction within their student records.

Student Appeals
These steps are to be followed when making an academic appeal:
1. In the event of course-related disputes, the student must first appeal to the instructor within thirty (30) calendar days after the first class day of the next long semester. Given extenuating circumstances, exceptions to this deadline may be granted by the academic unit chair/director.
2. If the dispute is not resolved, the student may appeal in writing, stating the specific issues, to the instructor’s academic unit chair/director. The academic unit chair/director shall request a written statement from the faculty member. The academic unit chair/director shall provide both parties with a written recommendation for resolution.

3. If the dispute is still unresolved after appeal to the academic unit chair/director, the student or faculty member may appeal in writing to the instructor’s dean. The dean will notify the other party of the continuation of the appeal and provide all parties with a written recommendation after reviewing all documentation.

4. If the dispute is still unresolved after appeal to the dean, the dean may refer the appeal to the college council. If the college council has no student members, the dean will ask the president of the Student Government Association to recommend no more than two students from that college to be appointed as voting members. The college council will review all documentation and submit its recommendation to the dean.

5. If a resolution of the matter is still not reached, the student or the faculty member may appeal in writing to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The dean's written recommendation in addition to all documentation will be submitted to the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The college council may serve as an advisory body to the provost and vice president for academic affairs in the appeal process. The provost and vice president for academic affairs will evaluate all documentation and any additional oral presentations from the student and faculty member.

6. The provost and vice president for academic affairs will inform the student and all persons involved in the appeal process of the final recommendation. A student or faculty member shall have ten (10) business days from the conclusion of each step in which to appeal to the next level. A faculty member, after considering the outcome of the appeals process, shall retain complete academic freedom, including the right to assign semester grades.

Cheating & Plagiarism Policy: Please make yourself familiar with the Academic Integrity Policy (see above). There will be zero tolerance for cheating and plagiarism. Copying and pasting from the Internet or paraphrasing a few words in not an acceptable practice in college. Not knowing the rules for plagiarism will not be an acceptable excuse. If you are unsure of plagiarism, you should go to the writing center/library. The penalty for cheating and plagiarism is an F on that particular exam/paper/assignment.

Withheld Grades Semester Grades Policy (A-54): At the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future semesters, the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Students with Disabilities:
To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building, and Room 325, 468-3004 / 468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For additional information, go to http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices/.
## Tentative Course Schedule

(Subject to change)

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Psychics</td>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Laboratory Parapsychology</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pseudo-psychology</td>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Astrology</td>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>UFOs I</td>
<td>Chapter 7</td>
<td>Midterm</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>UFOs II</td>
<td>Chapter 8</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Aliens</td>
<td>Chapter 9</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ghosts &amp; Poltergeists</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Near-Death &amp; Out-of-Body</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Faith Healing</td>
<td>Chapter 10</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Alternative Medicine</td>
<td>Chapter 11</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Bigfoot &amp; Cryptozoology</td>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td>Discussion Post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Other Topics</td>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Midterm and Final Dates

The Midterm Essay will be due to D2L on **October 12, 5:00PM**

The Final Essay will be due to D2L on **December 12, 5:00PM**

This syllabus is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion.

**Contacting me:** The best way to contact me is via email. When sending an email, it should be professional, include your name, the class and/or lab that you are in, and what the email is in regards to. Note that I will NOT open emails that are missing a subject line. I will respond to your email within 24 hours, excluding weekends and holidays.

Note that I will only reply to emails via your official SFASU email or D2L email. I will **NOT** respond to personal emails (Gmail, Yahoo email, Hotmail, etc.).

By being enrolled in this class (PSY498.001: Fall 2018) you are agreeing to the policies, terms, conditions, and due dates stated in this syllabus.