

Dreaming: Religious and Scientific Approaches

Institution: Santa Clara University

Instructor: Kelly Bulkeley

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First Meeting: Introduction.

Reading: Ian Barbour, *Religion in an Age of Science*, Chapter 1.

Topics for discussion:

- The study of religion and science
- Barbour's 4 models of the relationship between science and religion
- What are dreams?
- Basic facts about mammalian sleep patterns
- Overview of the course
- Instructions on keeping sleep and dream journals

Second Meeting: Historical/Theological Unit #1

Readings: The Bible: Genesis 28, 32, 37, 40-41; Numbers 12; Deuteronomy 13; I Kings 3; I Samuel 3; Job 7, 33; Jeremiah 23, 29; Daniel 2, 4; Matthew 1-2, 27.

Topics for discussion:

- Ancient Near Eastern beliefs about dreams
- Dreams as a source of divine revelation
- Nightmares
- Prophetic dreams
- Symbols and interpretation

Third Meeting: Historical/Theological Unit #2

Readings: Aristotle, "On Dreams," "On Prophesizing by Dreams"; *Artemidorus, Oneirocriticon*, Chapter 1; Morton Kelsey, *God, Dreams, and Revelation*, Chapter 6.

Topics for discussion:

- Greek philosophical views of dreams
- Aristotle's naturalistic explanation
- Artemidorus's dream taxonomy
- Early scientific methods of dream study
- Dreaming, thought, and symbolism
- Dreams and sexual desire

- “Folk” beliefs about dreams
- Christian skepticism toward dreams

Written assignment: 3-4 page essay examining the historical/theological theories regarding one of the following questions: the meaning of nightmares; the nature of prophetic dreams; the practice of dream interpretation; the physical causes of dreaming.

Fourth Meeting: Psychological Unit #1

Readings: “Sigmund Freud Discovers the Secret of Dreams” (Chapter 2, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Dreaming*, Kelly Bulkeley).

Topics for discussion:

- Freud’s training as a scientist
- Freud’s religious background
- Consciousness and the unconscious
- Wish-fulfillment
- Symbols and interpretation
- Psychoanalysis and the “fantasy” of religion
- Psychoanalysis as a science

Fifth Meeting: Psychological Unit #2

Reading: “Carl Jung Descends into the Collective Unconscious” (Chapter 3, *An Introduction to the Psychology of Dreaming*, Kelly Bulkeley).

Topics for discussion:

- The Freud-Jung relationship
- Jung’s training as a scientist
- Jung’s religious background
- Archetypes, the collective unconscious, and individuation
- Psychology as a kind of “secular religion”
- Jungian psychology as a science

Written assignment: 3-4 page essay testing Freudian and Jungian methods of interpretation by applying them to either a) a sample dream provided by the instructor, or b) one of the students’ own dreams.

Sixth Meeting: Cross-Cultural Unit #1

Reading: Lee Irwin, *The Dream Seekers: Native American Visionary Traditions of the Great Plains*, Chapters 1-7.

Topics for discussion:

- Dreaming and cultural context
- Native American religious beliefs and practices
- Physical and emotional healing
- Dream rituals
- Basic Native American observations of dream phenomenology
- Comparisons with Western theories

Seventh Meeting: Cross-Cultural Unit #2

Reading: Serinity Young, *Dreaming in the Lotus: Buddhist Dream Narrative, Imagery, Practice*, Chapters 1, 5-10.

Topics for discussion:

- Buddhist religious beliefs and practices
- Theories of the soul
- Medical uses of dream interpretation
- Dream rituals
- Basic Buddhist observations of dream phenomenology
- Comparisons with Western and Native American theories

Eighth Meeting: Cross-Cultural Unit #3

Reading: Marcia Hermansen, “The Study of Dreams and Vision in Islam” (Special issue of the journal *Religion* (1997; Vol. 27, no. 1, pp. 1-64)).

Topics for discussion:

- Islamic religious beliefs and practices
- The influence of the Bible, Aristotle, and Artemidorus
- Classifications of dreaming
- Mystical visions
- Dream rituals
- Basic Islamic observations of dream phenomenology

Written Assignment: 3-4 page essay taking two non-Western cultures and carefully analyzing and comparing their basic theories about the origin, function, and meaning of dreams.

Ninth Meeting: Cognitive Neurological Unit #1

Reading: “Sleep Laboratories, REM Sleep, and Dreaming” and “Experimental Psychology and Dreaming” (Chapters 5 and 6 of *An Introduction to the Psychology of Dreaming*, Kelly Bulkeley).

Topics for discussion:

- Aserinsky and Kleitman's discovery of REM sleep
- REM and nonREM sleep
- Evolutionary benefits of REM sleep
- Hobson's activation-synthesis model
- Crick and Mitchison's reverse-learning model
- The Hobson-Solms debate: are dreaming and REM sleep isomorphic?
- Bottom-up vs. top-down theories of dream formation

Tenth Meeting: Cognitive Neurological Unit #2

Reading: Tracey Kahan and Stephen LaBerge, "Lucid Dreaming as Metacognition: Implications for Cognitive Science."

(Prof. Kahan will give a guest lecture in this meeting.)

Topics for discussion:

- Historical and cross-cultural reports of dreaming metacognition
- Self-awareness in the dream state
- Dreaming and consciousness
- The metacognitive aspects of religious contemplative practices

Eleventh Meeting: Cognitive Neurological Unit #3

Field trip: The class will travel a few minutes north to Stanford University's Sleep Laboratory, administered by Dr. William Dement. Students will have the chance to see firsthand the methods and techniques used to conduct neuroscientific sleep and dream research.

Twelfth Meeting: Cognitive Neurological Unit #4

Reading: James Ashbrook and Carol Albright, *The Humanizing Brain: Where Religion and Neuroscience Meet*, Introduction and Chapters 1-3.

Topics for discussion:

- The current state of neuroscientific research
- Neurobiology and faith
- Instinctual drives to know, relate, and make meaning
- The brain as physical and relational
- Conceptual preparation for final essay project

Thirteenth Meeting: Cognitive Neurological Unit #5

Reading: James Ashbrook and Carol Albright, *The Humanizing Brain: Where Religion and Neuroscience Meet*, Chapters 4-7.

Topics for discussion:

- The reptilian brain, the mammalian brain, and REM sleep
- Memory in dreaming
- Right brain, left brain, and dream phenomenology
- The forebrain, empathy, and creative imagination
- Conceptual preparation for final essay project

Fourteenth Meeting: Final Review #1

Reading: G. William Domhoff, *Finding Meaning in Dreams: A Quantitative Approach*, Chapters 1 and 9.

(Prof. Domhoff will give a guest lecture in this meeting.)

Topics for discussion:

- The quantitative analysis of dream content
- Differences in the dreams of males and females
- Differences in the dreams of children and adults
- Differences in the dreams of people from different cultures
- The application of quantitative content analysis to the students' final essay project

Fifteenth Meeting: Final Review #2

No reading.

In this meeting students share the preliminary results of their research for their final essays and offer each other suggestions about new avenues to pursue and new conceptual models to apply. The basic assignment for the final essay is to make an original analysis of a subset of the 3000+ dreams provided by an anonymous research subject on G. William Domhoff's web site, www.dreamresearch.net. Students are required to use one key theme from Ashbrook and Albright's *The Humanizing Brain* (e.g., the neurobiology of faith, memory and meaning-making, the forebrain's role in empathy and goal-formation) to orient their analysis of the religious and scientific dimensions of the subject's dreams. Students are also required to make substantive use of material from the historical/theological, psychological, and cross-cultural units of the class. The essay will be graded according to the originality of the research, the quality of analysis, the clarity of writing, and the breadth of theoretical integration.

Recommended texts

In addition to the required texts, the following books will be on reserve at Santa Clara University's Orradre Library to supplement the students' investigations.

- Austin, J. 1998. *Zen and the Brain: Toward and Understanding of Meditation and Consciousness* (MIT Press).
- Barbour, I. 1974. *Myths, Models and Paradigms* (Harper & Row).
- _____. 1997. *Religion and Science* (HarperCollins).
- Barrett, D. (editor). 1996. *Trauma and Dreams* (Harvard University Press).
- Brown, W. and Murphy, N. (editors). 1998. *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature* (Fortress).
- Bulkeley, K. 2000. *Transforming Dreams* (John Wiley and Sons).
- _____. 1999. *Visions of the Night* (SUNY Press).
- Freud, S. 1965. *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Avon Books).
- Hartmann, E. 1998. *Dreams and Nightmares* (Plenum).
- Hobson, J. Allan. 1988. *The Dreaming Brain* (Basic Books).
- Hunt, H. 1989. *The Multiplicity of Dreams* (Yale University Press).
- Jedrej, M.C. and Shaw, R. 1993. *Dreams, Religion, and Society in Africa* (E.J. Brill).
- Jung, C.G. 1965. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (Vintage).
- Moffitt, A., Kramer, M., and Hoffmann, R. (editors). 1993. *The Functions of Dreaming* (SUNY Press).
- O'Flaherty, W.D. 1984. *Dreams, Illusion, and Other Realities* (University of Chicago Press).
- Russell, R.J. (editor). 1998. *Neuroscience and the Person* (University of Notre Dame Press).
- Solms, M. 1997. *The Neuropsychology of Dreams* (Lawrence Erlbaum).
- Shulman, D. and Stroumsa, G. 1999. *Dream Cultures* (Oxford University Press).
- Tilbey, A. 1992. *Soul: God, Self, and the New Cosmology* (Doubleday).
- Tedlock, B. (editor). 1987. *Dreaming: Anthropological and Psychological Investigations* (Cambridge University Press).