



Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Religious Studies and Theology

Syllabus

Religious and Other Anomalous Experiences: Theories, Types, and Functions

Course Code:	REGUPP
Course Title:	Religious and Other Anomalous Experiences: Theories, Types, and Functions <i>Religiösa och andra exceptionella upplevelser: teorier, typer och funktioner</i>
Credits:	7.5
Degree Level:	Undergraduate level
Progressive Specialisation:	First cycle, has at least 60 credits in first-cycle course/s as entry requirements (G2F)

Major Field of Study:
RKA (Religious Studies)

Course Approval

The syllabus was approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 2025-09-15, and is valid from the Spring semester 2026 at Karlstad University.

Prerequisites

At least 60 ECTS credits, with 30 ECTS credits or more at the G1F level or higher, or equivalent

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students should be able to:

1. give an account of basic concepts in the psychology and philosophy of religion concerning religious and other types of anomalous experiences,
2. identify different types of religious and other anomalous experiences, their distinctive features, and the challenges they pose to particular worldviews and life orientations,
3. give an account of various scientific explanatory theories about religious and other anomalous experiences,
4. explain how context and the interpretative process influence the formation of religious and other anomalous experiences, as well as how they relate to mental health, and
5. apply theoretical frameworks on religious and other anomalous experiences to concrete contemporary examples.

Content

The course addresses religious and other types of anomalous experiences, such as mystical, psychedelic, paranormal, out-of-body, and near-death experiences, from psychological and philosophical perspectives on religion. Using a range of contemporary examples selected from various religious and non-religious contexts, the course presents several types of anomalous experiences and discusses how their context and interpretative processes influence their formation. The relationship between these experiences and mental health is also examined. Special attention is given to analysing religious experiences associated with South Asian religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The course introduces several scientific theories concerning religious and other anomalous experiences, explores recurring consequences of these life-changing experiences for those who have them, and provides examples of the challenges they pose to certain worldviews and life orientations.

Reading List

See separate document.

Examination

Assessment is based on individual written hand-in assignments that are presented and discussed in seminars.

The examiner may decide that a student who is very close to a passing grade can complete a supplementary assignment to receive a passing grade for a specific examination. If this is a possibility, the examiner must specify when and how such a supplementary assignment may be permitted.

If students have a decision from Karlstad University entitling them to Targeted Study Support due to a documented disability, the examiner has the right to give such students an adapted examination or to examine them in a different manner.

Grades

One of the grades Distinction (VG), Pass (G), or Fail (U) is awarded in the examination of the course.

Quality Assurance

Follow-up relating to learning conditions and goal-fulfilment takes place both during and upon completion of the course in order to ensure continuous improvement. Course evaluation is partly based on student views and experiences obtained in accordance with current regulations and partly on other data and documentation. Students will be informed of the result of the evaluation and of any measures to be taken.

Course Certificate

A course certificate will be provided upon request.

Additional information

The local regulations for studies at the Bachelor and Master levels at Karlstad University stipulate the obligations and rights of students and staff.