



*Southwest Baptist University is a Christ-centered, caring academic community preparing students to be servant leaders in a global society.*

### **Soc/Psy 4953-1 Agape Love and Altruism: Perspectives of Science and Faith**

3 Hour lecture course in sociology or psychology

Instructor: Shelley Kilpatrick  
 Summer Session I, June, 2005  
 Monday –Thursday, 10:00-12:50 GEC 280

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 Office Hours: M-TH 1-2pm  
 or by appointment

*Extraordinary acts of goodness and love are all around us.* Think about the heroes of September 11, 2001 who sacrificed their lives to help others get out of burning buildings. Think about the CNN reporter who gave up her career to help the people of Afghanistan rebuild their communities. Think about those firefighters, police officers, social workers, and others who choose careers that are designed specifically to help others in need. Think about those who work in volunteer service filling needs in local communities like taking meals to shut-ins and new mothers, working through organizations like the Red Cross and Doctors Without Borders, serving on charitable mission trips, and working for social justice with the poor and disenfranchised – all giving of themselves to help those around them. This course will look at the many ways that people choose acts of goodness and love (sometimes called altruism or agape). We will explore explanations for why people do these things. The explorations will take us into the realms of religion, philosophy, biology, psychology, and sociology. Finally, throughout the course we will have an emphasis on life application of the ideas we explore. How can we recognize agape and altruism vs. hypocrisy and deception for personal gain? What do the things we learn mean for ourselves, for our families, and for our communities? How can we promote acts of agape and altruism in our communities and in individual lives?

#### **College of Education and Social Sciences Scripture Theme:**

Note that **GOODNESS** is the key virtue for the 2004-2005 school year, very appropriate for this course. We'll primarily be discussing the theory and application of love. We will also address several other virtues in this course.

"For this very reason, make every effort to add to your FAITH, **GOODNESS**; and to **GOODNESS**, KNOWLEDGE; and to KNOWLEDGE, SELF-CONTROL; and to SELF-CONTROL, PERSEVERANCE; and to PERSEVERANCE, GODLINESS; and to GODLINESS, BROTHERLY KINDNESS; and to BROTHERLY KINDNESS, LOVE." 2

Peter 1:5-7

**Catalog Description:** Special Topics course for upper-level students focusing on an interdisciplinary approach to the examination of Agape and Altruistic love. Perspectives from the social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, philosophy, and religion will be brought to discussion of agape love, unconditional love, altruism, prosocial behavior, emergency helping, and benevolence.

**Required Text:**

Readings for this course will be available either in the Department of Behavioral Sciences or at the reserve desk in the library. A list of readings for each class session appears in the course schedule below. Students will divide readings for class discussion and/or presentation.

**Course Goals & Objectives:** The goal of this course is to explore the classic and modern theories of altruism and agape from a multidisciplinary perspective. Kurt Lewin said, “There is nothing so practical as a good theory.” Following in his footsteps, we will go beyond the exploration of theory to practical implications for individuals, communities, and public policy.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Students will learn the major theories, theorists, and perspectives surrounding the study of altruism and agape.
- Students will become familiar with research methods used in studying unlimited love as it is manifest in altruism.
- Students will be able to explain how physical, psychological, and spiritual factors guide altruistic behavior and how situations influence expression of agape.
- Students will be able to explain how altruistic and agape motives and behavior influence physical, mental, and social health.
- Students will reflect on their own motives, attitudes, and behavior as they relate to agape and altruism.
- Students will learn how to develop and promote agape and altruism at the individual, faith, community, and societal levels.

**Course Requirements:****Attendance:**

Your individual interpretations, experiences, and insights are of highest importance to the success of a seminar-style class. Therefore, students are expected to attend all class sessions. Furthermore, in a summer session, each class is equivalent to one week in a regular semester. By common department policy, if 20% (3) or more of class sessions are missed the final grade may be dropped by 10% of the student's total accumulated points. For each subsequent absence, the final grade may be reduced by an additional 10%. All absences count toward the total number of absences. Late work will be penalized.

**Reading assignments:**

Reading assignments are listed on the syllabus below. Students are responsible for reading each assignment **before** each class session. In some class sessions the readings will be split among students, with the responsibility for teaching their classmates about what they have read. Since discussion of readings is an integral part of this seminar-style course, whether students are prepared for class will be taken into consideration in determining the final grade.

**Class Participation:** This class will consist of lectures, discussions, demonstrations, and activities. This material will appear on your exams. Therefore, class attendance and participation is strongly encouraged. Asking questions on the material in class and contributing to discussion is also strongly encouraged. Together, class attendance, preparation of reading assignments, and participation in class discussion or activities will be worth 25 points.

**Assignments:**

**Critical Thinking Journal:** For each day of class, you are required to write a 1-2 page entry in your Critical Thinking Journal, for a total of 15 entries. Entries should be based on the readings assigned and the class discussion for that day. The purpose of the critical thinking journal is to allow you to demonstrate your active involvement in the course readings and class material. This journal will be an open-ended reading and reflections log. Your job is to respond to the readings and class discussion by connecting them to your personal experiences, arguing with them, analyzing them, and evaluating them. Your journal will describe your emotional, intellectual, or philosophical responses to the readings and class discussions. You may also record acts of agape, altruism, and benevolence that you see in everyday life, that you participate in yourself, or that you find in media reports. Journal entries may either be typewritten and placed in a folder, handwritten and kept in a bound notebook, or typed and uploaded to the digital drop box on Blackboard – choose the method you prefer. I will review and evaluate your journal entries at three points in the term (see due dates below).

**Homework:** Short homework assignments may be given in class to enrich classroom discussion or application of concepts to the real world. Typically these assignments can be completed in less than 30 minutes. They may include things like – thinking about an example from a TV show or movie that illustrates the concept we talked about in class, look up a resource on the web, or talking with friends about altruism and agape. While not graded, whether students have completed homework before class will be part of the class participation grade.

**Altruism & Agape Paper and Presentation Project:** You will work with a partner to learn about an altruism or agape theory, construct, problem, or application. Potential topics include, but are not limited to: How the different types of love manifest themselves in the relationships between individuals or in society; The similarities and differences between the variety of religious and non-religious viewpoints on altruism; How public policy affects citizens willingness to help others; Agape displayed in caregiving of the elderly or infirm; or How a specific personality trait affects the individual's approach to agape or altruism. Your exploration of the topic should go beyond the readings and discussion we have in class. You will need to do research in the library, reading original journal articles and book chapters. You will then work individually to write an 8-10 page paper describing what you have learned about the topic. Papers should include a description of the topic, a review of the professional literature on that topic, and implications of what you have learned.

The paper is worth 50 points. High quality papers will be thorough in their coverage - including classic and contemporary literature on the topic. High quality papers will provide “book-ends” of presentation of the topic/problem at the beginning and presentation of implications, applications, and solutions at the end. However, the best papers will be also concise in presentation of those ideas. Finally, students will ensure their papers have the highest quality writing (well-organized thoughts, good grammar, correct spelling).

Each set of partners will be asked to present their work to the class on June 28 or 29. The presentation is worth 25 points. This will be a 15-minute oral presentation. Students should describe what they have learned and provide for the class an application of that topic to the real world. For example, if you studied how nonprofit organizations promote volunteerism, you might suggest ways that campus organizations can use the same principals for their charitable work. Presentations will be graded on having a clear, complete, and concise presentation of the ideas discovered in the research and writing of your papers. Your classmates should go away well informed on your topic. Presentations should be presented in an engaging and professional manner. You may use visual aids, PowerPoint, examples from current events, and/or class activities to make your points. Be sure to include action items. That is, your audience should know what they and

others can do to improve the expression of Agape or Altruism based on your topic. Finally, be prepared to answer questions from the class on your topic and propose two questions for discussion following your presentation.

**Due Dates for Altruism/Agape Papers and Presentations**

- Paper topic - Wednesday, June 8
- Five references on topic - Thursday, June 9
- Outline of paper with references - Wednesday, June 15
- Final paper - Thursday, June 23
- Class presentations - Tuesday and Wednesday, June 28-29

**LATE papers/projects will result in a loss of points.**

**Exams:**

Two exams will be given -- a midterm and a final. Exams may contain multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching, short answer, and short essay questions. Tentative dates for exams are listed on the course outline. Make-up exams will only be given for excused absences. Instructor must be notified prior to exam time if the student will need to make up an exam and all **make-up exams must be taken within one week of the scheduled date.**

**Altruism/Agape Practice:** Can you do something that will help someone in need? Can you do something for the benefit of the community? Can you work for the good of your faith community or school? Among the things we study in this course are volunteering for charitable work and behaving altruistically toward others. This is your opportunity to put into practice what you are learning by giving of yourself. Consider going out of your way to do good during the time you are learning about agape and altruism. You can choose to be part of an organized community event, help at an established charitable organization, write letters to public officials or representatives addressing some need in the community, or simply respond to the need of an individual. You could also do acts of kindness and social good that might go unnoticed by others, such as picking up litter or recycling found cans, oiling a squeaky door or other small repair work, leaving anonymous words of encouragement for public servants (Have you ever thought of saying thank you to the people who collect your garbage?). As opportunities become available, the instructor and your classmates may post the details on the course web page.

Writing about personal experiences with volunteer work and other prosocial behaviors are good fodder for your journal. They also give you an opportunity to apply your learning as you are studying it. This makes for a more meaningful and significant learning experience.

If all the good you are doing is not sufficient motive, you may write a 3-page reaction paper about your experience for 10 extra credit points. Reaction papers should include about a page on each of the following:

- A description of your volunteer or prosocial experience (When, where, how long, who did you benefit, was it an organized experience or not, etc.).
- A description of how you feel about your experience (Did you enjoy it? Would you do it again? What were your motives? Did it feel like a sacrifice? Any other reactions you had.)
- A description of how your experience ties in with one or more theories/concepts we talked about in class. Take about a page to define the concept or theory and connect it with your experience.

**Grading:**

A = 90-100%  
 B = 80-89%  
 C = 70-79%  
 D = 60-69%  
 F = 59% or less

**Possible Points:**

Midterm Exam 1	100 pts
Journal	25 pts
Attendance, Participation, Readings, and Homework	25 pts
Altruism Paper	50 pts
Altruism Presentation	25 pts
<u>Final</u>	<u>100 pts</u>
Total	325 pts

**Disability Statement:**

It is the desire of Southwest Baptist University to provide all students with optimum learning experiences. If there are circumstances, due to disability, that may impact your learning in this course, it is necessary for you to inform your instructor on or before the end of the first week of classes. If you do not notify your instructor, it will be assumed that you do not require special assistance.

**Weather:**

Students should never endanger themselves in order to attend class in severe weather. Students should check the university website/phone line or local TV/radio stations for notice of university closing. If the university is open, assume class will be held.

**Department of Behavioral Sciences Mission Statement:**

The Mission of the Department of Behavioral Sciences is to provide students the educational opportunity to scientifically investigate human behavior at the individual, social, and spiritual levels, while seeking to develop ways of thinking about people and assisting them in coping with their problems.

**Department of Behavioral Sciences Vision Statement:**

The Vision of the DBS is to develop within students an understanding of the human being as a thinking and behaving person with a knowledge of the methodology that permits such a scientific inquiry by:

- providing academic and practical experiences in the areas of psychology, sociology, human services, and criminal justice
- challenging students to seek academic and scholarly excellence
- encouraging students to increase self-awareness and individual development, while integrating Christian faith within their chosen field
- increasing the students' sensitivity to gender, racial, and cultural diversity issues, and ethical and professional concerns

Further, the department has the unique vision of helping the academic community in their own personal lives as situations merit special attention in counseling and assessment.

**Altruism Class Integrity Statement:**

Below is listed the academic integrity statement of the university with all its attendant policies on plagiarism and cheating. High quality students will demonstrate high character in these areas. However, this class has an even higher standard of behavior and character. It would be inconsistent to study love of our fellow person and not show one another highest levels of respect, even if we disagree on ideas. It is inconsistent to study altruism and not be helpful to classmates and in teacher-student relationships. Respect, helpfulness, caring, and interpersonal responsibility are qualities we will strive for and hold one another accountable for in this course.

**Academic Integrity Policy:**

Class C violations consist of unacceptable moral or ethical behavior; serious law violation(s); serious damage to property; or behavior that is harmful (or potentially harmful) to self, others, or the university. Therefore, the following class C violations are considered potentially dismissible offenses, depending on the severity of the incident.

1. Violation of federal, state, or local laws.
2. All forms of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism, cheating, and violation of the computing resources policy. The computing resources policy appears in the Student Handbook under "Services for Students."
  - a. Plagiarism: (1) Using the ideas or writings of another as one's own; (2) Appropriating passages or ideas from another and using them as one's own, as defined in the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, New College Edition published by Houghton-Mifflin, 1980.
    - i. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:
      - (1) Using ideas, words or phrases, and/or wholesale scripts from another's work without proper acknowledgment.
      - (2) Submitting the same work in two courses without the written permission of each instructor.
    - ii. Additional examples of plagiarism may be found in the textbooks for English Composition I and II.
  - b. Cheating: (1) To deceive by trickery; (2) To mislead; (3) To practice fraud; and/or (4) To act dishonestly, as defined in the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, New College Edition published by Houghton-Mifflin, 1980.
 Examples of cheating include, but are not limited to:
    - i. Collaborating without authorization
    - ii. Presenting work done by another as one's own, either in part or in whole.
    - iii. Altering a paper or other evaluation instrument after the grade has been assigned for the purpose of misrepresenting the student's performance.
    - iv. Enlisting another person to take one's evaluation procedure.
    - v. Using prohibited sources of information for examinations or other testing procedures.
    - vi. Knowingly providing any unauthorized assistance to other students.
    - vii. Falsifying or changing information concerning academic achievement.
    - viii. Facilitating any act that promotes academic dishonesty including the withholding of information concerning the academically dishonest conduct of another.