# The Role of Campus Religious Ministries in the Formation of Young Adults: Psychological, Social, and Organizational Factors

## Project Details

### Team meetings

TBD (Fall 2016)

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## Team Members

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## Course Description

"The Role of Campus Religious Ministries in the Formation of Young Adults" is a multidisciplinary project whose aim is to identify the impact of campus ministry on the lives of college students. As part of the Bass Connections program, the project brings together Duke students with researchers from multiple fields to conduct real research on contemporary questions. Students will take part and gain skills in several aspects of the research project: theoretical development, methodological design, administration, and analysis. The course might best be described as an applied research methods course.

Research about religion among college students is well-established. However, significantly less research has asked what role campus ministries play in student religious formation, social network development, attitude change, and psychological health. This project aims to fill that gap by conducting a panel study of Catholic students at multiple universities. Motivated by members of the Duke Catholic Center and professors in the social sciences, team members will work towards providing practical knowledge for campus ministers and college administrators as well as theoretical knowledge that furthers research agendas in several disciplines.

The fall is organized into four four-week segments. First, the course focuses on the existing literature that will eventually frame the survey. Second, the course investigates question design, combining theoretical motivation and psychometrics. Third, we consider the design and organization of the entire survey. The last four weeks are devoted to finalizing the survey and IRB submission. Students will also consider supplemental data collection methods.

## Learning Outcomes

* Students will be able to discuss relevant psychological and sociological literature that motivates our research questions, in the form of a ten-minute presentation.
* Students will be able to design and survey questions that measure specific concepts and test them using cognitive pretests.
* Students will be able to design a survey.
* Students will be able to design survey recruitment materials.
* Students will be able to design the survey administration process to conform to the ethical requirements of the IRB.

## Course Format

The course consists of formal weekly team meetings as well as informal meetings throughout the year when necessary. Weekly team meetings are designed to maintain progress on project goals and provide a regular time to receive feedback from other team members discuss new ideas. Some team meetings will be focused on presenting major project deliverables (such as the literature reviews). Others team meetings will provide an opportunity to discuss our work with experts in the field in order to get feedback. Still others will be focused on making major project decisions.

A majority of the course work will be done outside of team meetings. Students should come prepared to team meetings having read any assigned readings and completed any task that are due. If students are unclear about those tasks or come across an unexpected problem during the week, they should contact the other team members and, if necessary, meet to work on a solution.

## Project overview

### Project goals

"The Role of Catholic Campus Ministries in the Formation of Young Adults" has several project goals associated with a) Bass Connections program goals, b) Duke Catholic Center program evaluation, and c) individual research agendas.

Bass Connections aims to, "[apply] classroom learning to pressing global problems, to create a distinctive new model for education."[1](https://bassconnections.duke.edu/content/about-bass-connections) Through this project, you will contribute to academic research on how various college experiences, including religious participation in campus ministries, contribute to individual development. The project aims to explain the predictors of student social engagement, mental health, and academic success.

The Duke Catholic Center (DCC), "serve[s] and support[s] the spiritual development of countless students during critical transitional times in their lives," and, "fosters the formation of future Catholic leaders and promotes the integration of [students'] spiritual, intellectual, and social lives."[2](http://catholic.duke.edu/about/) While the DCC collects its own data on its members, they are limited by their ability to reach non-participants. The project aims to help the DCC and Catholic ministries generally understand how to successfully recruit and engage students and foster their spiritual growth.

Finally, this class is designed to allow each of you to investigate original research questions that you are interested in. The outcome of that research is up to you. You may be able to use the data or your experiences to write term papers, captstone/thesis papers, or original research papers. You will need to make arrangements with your professors or departments if you would like to use your research on this project for other requirements. This syllabus will be a helpful reference point to discuss those arrangements, and we are happy to discuss the project with an adviser if requested.

These goals will be achieved primarily through a panel survey in which students are survey repeatedly in order to track change over time and identify possible causal mechanisms. Students will be surveyed prior to attending Duke before the fall of their freshmen year (the "pre-college survey"). We will follow up with two more waves of data collection at the end of their first semester ("first-semester survey") and second semester ("second-semester survey").

### Where we are

The project has ambitious goals. The *most* ambitious among them is to track students from before they enter college to a year or two after they graduate. But a research project of that scale does not appear without significant planning and pretesting. For that reason, the 2016-2017 school year will be focused soley on Duke students to pretest our research design. This will help us improve the quality of our surveys before we expand the sample to other universities. Further, our experiences and successes this year will improve the odds that funding agencies, whether Bass or otherwise, will support our project.

Work towards this goal has already started. During the summer of 2016, project members created a survey to be administered in August 2016 to incoming Duke freshmen who identify as Catholic. The survey is the first of many surveys designed to track Duke students' religious beliefs and behaviors, social and political attitudes, social networks, mental health, and other behaviors. As of the writing of this syllabus (August 11th, 2016), we have submitted the first survey to Duke's institutional review board (IRB) for approval. Upon their approval, we will distribute the survey to the students.

### Where we are going

With the pre-college survey finalized, it's time to start thinking about the first-semester survey. Team members had limited time during the summer to thoroughly investigate research literatures, identify research questions rooted in that literature, design and test survey questions, and construct the survey. The fall 2016 semester affords us more time to do all of those in order to improve the first-semester survey.

## Required software, services, and readings

There are several pieces of software that are either required for the project, all of which are freely available to you. Likewise, all readings for the course are free, though some you will have to retrieve yourself (see "Readings" and "Adobe Digital Editions" below).

### Box

Box is a file syncing service freely available to you through Duke. We will use a shared Box folder to store our project documents. If you have not already accessed your box account, you can do so [here](https://box.duke.edu/). There is also a desktop sync client, which you can download [here](https://www.box.com/resources/downloads).

Once you download and login to Box Sync, you *may* have to manually indicate which folders you would like to sync to the desktop. To do so, login to the [web client](https://box.duke.edu/) and find the folder you want to sync. Click the "..." button to the right of the folder, select "Properties," and then, "Sync to Computer."

### Mendeley (*recommended*)

Mendeley [Mendeley](https://www.mendeley.com/) is a citation management program that we will be using to keep track of the academic articles that we need to reference. Similar programs include Zotero, EndNote, and ReadCube. While all of those programs have essentially the same functionality, we can share citations as a group if we are all invested in one of them. For that reason, we recommend that you use Mendeley for this project. Once you provide your account name, we will invite you to the project group. If you are already invested in another citation management program, we can discuss how to integrate Mendeley into you workflow without interrupting it.

### Qualtrics

[Qualtrics](duke.qualtrics.com) is an online survey-design, distribution, and analysis service that Duke gives you access to. We will be using it for our survey and, in fact, the pre-college survey is already in the Qualtrics system. You can login at <duke.qualtrics.com>. Later in the semester, you will receive training on how to use Qualtrics, and there are already instructional videos in the "Instructional Videos" folder in Box.

### Readings

Most readings are available in "Readings" folder in Box. *The Handbook of Survey Methodology for the Social Sciences* must be downloaded through the Duke library system because they are protected by digital rights management (DRM) software. Follow [this link](http://search.library.duke.edu/search?id=DUKE006264920) and click, "get it @Duke." You will be redirected to Springer's website and from there be able to download the Adobe Digital Editions file. All of the citations for the readings are available in the group Mendeley account.

### Adobe Digital Editions

*The Handbook of Survey Methodology for the Social Sciences* is available free to you through Duke's library system. However, it is protected by DRM and can only be accessed through [Adobe Digital Editions](http://www.adobe.com/solutions/ebook/digital-editions/download.html). You can download the *rights* to read it from the library system in the form of a .acsm file. If you open the .acsm file in Digital Editions, it will validate and download the book to be read on your computer.

### PDF reader

Most readings will be in .pdf format. You likely already use PDFs regularly or, if not, still likely have more than one piece of software on your computer that can read them. Dedicated readers include Adobe Acrobat and Reader, Foxit Reader, and Sumatra. Most internet browsers, including Google Chrome and Microsoft Edge, either have the ability to read PDF's built in can read them with a plugin. Finally, Mendeley (described above) can also read PDFs. If you do not currently use PDFs and need help, we will be happy to help you at the beginning of the semester.

## Deliverables

### Area literature reviews

We will begin the fall semester with an investigation of the substantive areas relevant to our project. Students will choose an area of personal interest with relevance to the project (e.g. religion and mental health) and conduct a thorough review of contemporary research in that area. The purpose of the literature reviews is to increase student understanding of the substantive areas, orient the project towards answering theoretical questions that are relevant to contemporary disciplines, and collect information about existing datasets and measures regarding religion and higher education. Literature reviews will be summarized in a report and a 10-minute presentation to be given September 22. These should include a) major theoretical approaches, b) current understanding of the area, c) unanswered questions, and d) commonly used data sources, measures, and methods.

### Survey questions

After surveying the existing research literature on your topic of choice, you will develop survey questions to address unanswered questions. Throughout weeks 5 through 8, you will learn how to write survey questions that are valid measures of the concepts they are designed to measure. Through this process, students will produce a final list of survey questions to be considered for inclusion in the first-semester survey. For each survey question, students should clearly state a) the exact phrasing of the prompt and response options, b) the concept being measured, c) the research question(s) it applies to, and d) any further notes gleaned from pretesting the question. The survey qusetions are due on October 20.

### Survey

Students will construct the first-semester survey (that is, the second wave of data collection). Students will use the pre-college survey, their literature reviews, and their original research questions to motivate the inclusion of the measures. Students will further use the knowledge gained during weeks 9 through 12 to account for issues related to question order and survey length. The survey is due on November 17.

### IRB Submission

Students will complete the documentation necessary to pass IRB approval. Those working over the summer will write the initial submission in order to collect data at the beginning of the semester. The original report was submitted on August 9th. Students will submit amendments in the fall by December 15.

### Final report

Students will write a final report describing the progress made toward achieving the original project goals and any new goals that arose during the year. The final report should reflect on the problems that arose during the project and solutions implemented. The final report has three purposes. First, it should describe the progress of the project and planned future work. This will be used for presentations and grant proposals. Second, it should disseminate current findings such that campus ministers, researchers, and the general public might benefit from our research. Third, it should provide the information necessary to prepare future team members to participate in the project. The final report will be due at the end of the spring 2017 semester. However, the team will take time at the end of the fall semester to consider the state of the project and outlook for the spring semester.

## Schedule

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Date | In-Class Topic | Readings | Deliverable Due |
| *The first four weeks are organized around investigating relevant literatures. Experts in these areas will be joining our team meetings (if available) to help orient students’ thinking around contemporary knowledge and questions in the disciplines. The segment culminates in the final week, when students present their findings to the team.* |
| September 01 | Introductions, recap of summer, and choosing literatures | Booth, Colomb, and Williams (2008) chapter 3 |  |
| September 08 | Workshop with area expert (proposed) | Readings for literature reviews (on your own) |  |
| September 15 | Workshop with area expert (proposed) | Readings for literature reviews (on your own) |  |
| September 22 | Literature review presentations | Readings for literature reviews (on your own) | Literature Reviews |
| *The second 4-week segment is organized around identifying key concepts and designing valid measures of them. By the end of this segment, students will have created a list of tested measures that cover the concepts they identified in the first four weeks.* |
| September 29 | Question wording | Singleton and Straits (2010) chapter 10**[Choose one below]**Bader and Finke (2014)O'Hara, Sinnott-Armstrong, and Sinnott-Armstrong (2010)Schuldt, Konrath, and Schwarz (2011) | \*Start recruiting pretest subjects |
| October 06 | Pretesting | Hughes (2004)Willis (1999) |  |
| October 13 |  |  |  |
| October 20 | Discuss question lists |  | List of survey questions |
| *The third 4-week segment is organized around designing the survey as one cohesive document. The team will consider issues related to survey length and non-response, survey framing, and question ordering. Using the measures they designed in weeks 5-8, students will complete a draft of the survey by the end of this segment.* |
| October 27 | Survey organization: warmup and priming | Stalans (2010)Rodriguez, Neighbors, and Foster (2014) |  |
| November 03 | Survey length and response rate | Bogen (1996) |  |
| November 10 | How often do we need to collect data? | George (2009) |  |
| November 17 | Discuss the survey |  | Complete survey |
| *The final four weeks are organized around survey administration. We will consider how to increase survey response rate and how to write recruitment materials. We will also complete the forms required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).* |
| November 24 | No Class (Thanksgiving) |  |  |
| December 01 | Getting subjects to respond | Albaum and Smith (2012)Toepoel (2012) |  |
| December 08 | The IRB | [New Protocol Form](https://ors.duke.edu/forms/request-protocol-approval)[Protocol Amendment Form](https://ors.duke.edu/forms/request-amend-approved-protocol)[IRB Checklist](https://ors.duke.edu/researcher/informed-consent) | Recruitment materials |
| December 15 | TBD (Finals Week) |  | IRB forms for wave 2 |

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## References in the syllabus

1"About Bass Connections." Bass Connections. Accessed August 11, 2016. "<https://bassconnections.duke.edu/content/about-bass-connections>"

2"About Us." Duke Catholic Center. Accessed August 11, 2016. "<http://catholic.duke.edu/about/>"

## References for readings

Albaum, Gerald, and Scott M. Smith. 2012. "Why People Agree to Participate in Surveys." Chapter 11 in *Handbook of Survey Methodology for the Social Sciences*, edited by Lior Gideon. New York: Springer.

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George, Linda K. 2009. "Conceptualizing and Measuring Trajectories." Chapter 8 in *The Craft of Life Course Research*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Hughes, Kristen Ann. 2004. "Comparing pretesting methods: cognitive interviews, respondent debriefing, and behavior coding." *Survey Methodology* 2004(2):1-20.

O'Hara, Ross E., Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, and Nicholas A. Sinnott-Armstrong. 2010. "Wording effects in moral judgments."" *Judgment and Decision Making* 5(7):547-554.

Pew Research Center. 2015. "U.S. Catholics Open to Non-Traditional Families."

Rodriguez, Lindsey M., Clayton Neighbors, and Dawn W. Foster. 2014. "Priming effects of self-reported drinking and religiosity." *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 28(1):1-9.

Schuldt, Jonathon P., Sara H. Konrath, and Norbert Schwarz. 2011. "'Global warming' or 'climate change'? Whether the planet is warming depends on question wording" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75(1):115-124.

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Smith, Christian, Kyle Longest, Jonathan Hill, and Kari Christoffersen. 2014. *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults In, Out Of, and Gone From the Church*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Stalans, Loretta J. 2012. "The Art of Question Phrasing." Chapter 6 in *Handbook of Survey Methodology for the Social Sciences*, edited by Lior Gideon. New York: Springer.

Toepoel. 2012. "Effects of Incentives in Surveys." Chapter 13 in *Handbook of Survey Methodology for the Social Sciences*, edited by Lior Gideon. New York: Springer.

Willis, Gordon B. "Cognitive interviewing: A 'how to' guide." Paper presented at the 1999 Meeting of the American Statistical Association.