

How Psychic Course Came To OU

By JEANEANE HAVSTAD
Special Writer

An associate professor of philosophy at Oakland University has his students doing psychic research of their own choosing, in a course entitled "Mediums, Mystics and Mountebanks."

"It was just three years ago that this parapsychology course came into being," recalls the instructor, Dr. Richard Brooks, whose normal field of specialization is Indian philosophy.

"The philosophy club here at the university got together to decide what topic they wanted to use for the year."

"One of my colleagues came up with the idea of 'Esoteric Pretenders to Knowledge,' and it really agitated me. He was making a value judgment with his use of the word 'pretenders.'"

"Well, we ended up changing the title to 'Esoteric Knowledge Claims' and the topic was chosen by the students."

"AT THE NEXT meeting of the philosophy club, two of my colleagues gave a talk on the subject. It was obvious that they knew nothing about it, and at the end of the evening, it was admitted that they had never even read any psychic literature."

"Knowing that the student interest was there, I brought my request to teach a course on parapsychology before the appropriate people. After some reluctance on their part, I was given the chance. I added 'Mountebanks' to the title because I wanted to cover the frauds, too."

The accredited course is offered to senior undergraduates through a programmed curriculum deviation called Senior Colloquia. A Senior Colloquium course does not fit into the regular curriculum, but is one that an instructor, or students, want to teach and or learn from. Non-violence and civil disobedience, Indian mythology, the literature of alienation, ecology, and the new morality are some other examples of offerings through Senior Colloquia.

Wayne State University offers a parapsychology course through its adult education program. The University of Michigan has a doctoral researcher within its psychology department. But according to Dr. Brooks, Oakland is the only university in Michigan — perhaps in the nation — that offers such a course, for credit, to undergraduates.

Even at Duke University where parapsychology was researched for more than 35 years, no such course was ever offered, Dr. Brooks pointed out.

"Mediums, Mystics and Mountebanks" is popular at Oakland University. The class had a capacity enrollment after a half-hour on the first day of student registration this fall.

STARTING WITH a basic textbook called "Parapsychology: A Scientific Approach," by Milan Ryzl, students research material, conduct tests that interest them, and get a feel for the difficulties of psi (extrasensory perception) and the types of controls.

To prove the existence of psi phenomena, a statistical average of chance is first established. If the subject averages scores significantly above the mean chance expectation, he or she has psychic ability.

One of the better known test procedures was developed by parapsychology researchers at Duke University in the 1930s. Special decks of 25 cards each, with stars, circles, crosses, squares and waves, were used to test for both telepathy (where a mental image or thought of an object is exchanged between agent and sender) and for clairvoyance (extrasensory perception of objective events or things).

The average score expected on the basis of chance alone would run five in 25. If the subject averaged scores more than five guesses in multiple runs of 25, he or she was said to have extrasensory perception.

In a typical class of "Mediums, Mystics and Mountebanks" held this month, student reports were given on telepathy, dowsing, aura and the psychokinesis of radioactivity. Loose interpretations of their testing procedures and resulting data were explained to the class by each student reporter. In turn, they were subjected to careful questioning by their peers. Only the first names of the students will be used here.

DIANE RESEARCHED "aura." "Aura" is defined in parapsychology literature as "the luminous, sometimes colored, radiation or halo reported to surround the physical body, and capable of being seen by some sensitives."

Chris used her four children, all boys, as subjects. When she began, she could see no aura, but because she believes in telepathy she knew the aura exists. With further reading, she discovered that she would have chosen female subjects because there is a more contrasting aura.

Through meditation and techniques of hypnosis, Diane was unable to see the aura surrounding her children, but she has taught herself to see the aura she exists. With the palms facing away from her, and to each side, she slowly brings them toward each other. A light must be behind her, and a black background beyond her hands.

Diane, as happens with many people who go through psychic experiences, was very frightened the first time she saw the aura. It was blue-grey in color.

The discussion that followed brought up a parallel: Doctors use infrared rays to detect illnesses; the ill part of the body throws off more heat and this radiation technique makes it observable. It was suggested by the class that this was a form of "aura" from the body.

GARY'S TOPIC was "The Psychokinesis of Radioactivity."



"What about the person who sees ghosts? We don't allow that. We place restrictions on perceptions."

-Richard Brooks

Psychokinesis is defined by parapsychologists as "the direct influence exerted over a physical system by a subject without any known intermediate physical energy or instrumentation."

Using a standard trial of 100, Gary measured 60.6 as the number of disintegrations on a Geiger counter. When his subject consciously tried to increase the radioactive decay, Gary found a 10 percent shift in distribution, to 67.9, which shows psi phenomena.

Chris worked with dowsing experiments. He arranged a pendulum over water, trying to seek out hidden objects in the water. He made pendulums of different materials, copper, a variety of metals. His statistical interpretations showed nothing. But in class discussion, it was discovered that he had misinterpreted the data, and there was significance in his findings.

Terri conducted a telepathic experiment with her friend of 17 years, Joan. Terri explained that she and Joan used relaxation techniques learned from hypnotists and made the additional requirement that each of them had to be in a good mood for the tests, which were conducted by telephone between Lake Orion and Ann Arbor.

Terri acted as the sender at first, but results were insignificant. She and Joan switched roles.

Joan would concentrate on something in her room, and Terri would draw a picture of it. The first picture Terri drew was

Terri described this as tubular columns. Joan replied that she had been concentrating on a leaf of a spider plant, which has big, dark veins.

For the last, Terri drew

Terri told Joan that she had drawn a triangle laying on its side with one line missing. Joan had been looking at her watch. The hands showed the time to be 10 minutes after three.

Terri made the conclusions that her descriptions of what she saw were unreliable. She then confided that the accuracy of the line images she made "really spooked" her.

THERE ARE difficulties in the statistical approach for

testing psi phenomena, because more emphasis is placed on the statistics than on the phenomena itself. But parapsychologists have been forced into this position: To somehow prove unconscious phenomena with scientifically valid proofs. They are not accepted as scientists or as psychologists, and are looked upon with suspicion by the academic community as a whole.

When this writer was first trying to track down, by phone, the teacher of the course on parapsychology at Oakland University, she was mistakenly switched to the psychology department by the university's information operator. The psychologist who answered the phone repeated at least three times, in a very firm voice, that the psychology department had "absolutely nothing to do with parapsychology."

Dr. Brooks himself, will admit that the psychologists at Oakland ridicule the parapsychology course.

Even at Duke University, where psychic research of the highest quality possible within the confines of today's culture was conducted for more than 35 years, the parapsychologists were finally forced out of the university, and now occupy a building across the street.

Some progress is noted. ESP experiments have been recorded as far back as 1882. By 1940, a total 148 experimental and original reports of psi phenomena had been collected by psychic investigators. Since that time, 1,000 of the same are acknowledged, which means that more people are now involving themselves in psychic research.

More important, in 1969, the

Parapsychological Assn. was accepted as an affiliate to the Council of the American Assn. for the Advancement of Science.

PSI CAPACITIES are nonphysical and part of man's subconscious mind, but still unanswered is the nature of psi ability itself. Is it dormant in all people? Can one acquire the ability for it and if so, how?

One of the more interesting theories regarding psi phenomena is the belief that this sixth sense was a form of communication for prehistoric man.

In the ruins found with Peking man, for example, who lived more than a half-million years ago, archeologists recovered bones of large game, which suggests that hunting was probably a cooperative effort. Therefore, some form of communication between members of the group was necessary, but were these fossil man and women capable of articulate speech?

Then, the theory continues, in the process of evolution and with the development of language, this sixth sense was no longer required of relied upon for survival. So the ability, through misuse, has been suppressed.

Nevertheless, it is estimated by psychic researchers, that one in every 10 persons has psychic ability.

"How do we know what the nature of the world is?" muses Oakland's Dr. Brooks. "What about the person who sees ghosts? We don't allow that. We place restrictions on perceptions."

Yes, indeed. Restrictions on perceptions. Restrictions on feelings. Restrictions on all things extraordinary.

SC Non-Credit Classes Offered

Schoolcraft College's community services non-credit classes for the winter term include low cholesterol dieting, Lamaze childbirth education, how to start your own business and advanced wine appreciation.

"We think we've found something to interest nearly everyone," Ron Griffith said in describing the more than 60 classes for which registrations are being accepted through Jan. 26.

Griffith directs the program which last fall attracted more than 1,100 participants. He's expecting nearly that many during the winter as well.

A booklet has been prepared for delivery to all residents in the college district during the week of Jan. 8. It lists the classes available and a description of their content, dates, time and place of class meetings, and tuition and lab fees charged.

The booklet also contains mail-in registration forms which make enrolling in any class both convenient and uncomplicated. Registrations are also accepted on campus, mornings, in the registrar's office.

Persons wishing additional registration forms or information of any kind should call the community services office.

SC Continues Registration

Schoolcraft College is accepting late registration for the winter semester through Wednesday, Jan. 17.

Day students may register from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and evening students from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Student Affairs Building on campus. The college is located at 18600 Haggerty, south of Seven Mile in Livonia.

All persons who register must first have been admitted to the College, or if that has been completed must have

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Democratic Conventions Are Stated

Observerland Democrats will hold district conventions on Saturday, Jan. 13, to elect delegates for their state convention in February.

Democrats in the 15th Congressional District, which includes Garden City, Westland and Canton Township, will meet at 8 p.m. in the Region 12 United Auto Workers hall, 8440 Telegraph, south of Wick, Taylor.

The 17th District, which includes Redford Township, Farmington, Southfield, Lathrup Village and northwest Detroit, will meet at 1 p.m. in St. Gerard Catholic Church hall, 19900 Evergreen, Detroit.

Democrats from the 2nd District, including Livonia and Plymouth, met on Jan. 6.

A total of 10 delegates will be elected from the 17th district while 119 will be elected from the 15th. Local senators and representatives will also be delegates.

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