

# **Doug Richards, PhD**

## **Abstract**

### **Parapsychology Research at the A.R.E. and Atlantic University**

The Association for Research and Enlightenment (A.R.E.) was founded in the early 1930s for the purpose of documenting the psychic readings of Edgar Cayce. In contrast to parapsychologists of the time (e.g., J. B. Rhine), Cayce's interest was in the practical application of psychic ability, especially in healing, not in proving the existence of psychic phenomena. Following Cayce's death in 1945, the A.R.E. continued to conduct research to determine the validity of the Cayce readings in areas ranging from health to archaeology. In the 1970s the research effort expanded with studies of dreams, meditation, and psychic experiences in A.R.E. members, a particularly interesting population for parapsychologists to study. In 1987, Atlantic University began a more formal research program, continuing to explore the psychic experiences and abilities of A.R.E. members, and the nature of psychic readings. When funding problems shut down this program, the work in alternative and complementary medicine was continued by Meridian Institute, which explored the practical applications of Cayce's health readings. Atlantic University is now poised to begin an expanded program of parapsychology research and study.

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### **Atlantic University's Principles of Parapsychology Course**

For many years the Atlantic University offerings in academic parapsychology have consisted of a single course, which has complemented other courses in intuitive and spiritual development. This course grew out of a residential course which took the approach of exploring the academic literature in parapsychology combined with an exploration of the students' own experiences and guest speakers who were practicing psychics and mediums. The distance version is a broad survey of the methods and results of a variety of areas in parapsychology. It includes modules focusing on the history of academic parapsychology, the personal experiences of the students, conducting simple forced-choice and free-response experiments, obtaining and evaluating a psychic reading, and conducting a field interview of a person with an experience relating to survival after death. The course also asks the students to evaluate the relevance of parapsychology to the transpersonal themes in the Atlantic University program and their own spiritual paths. It can now serve as an introduction to more in-depth courses on specific areas of parapsychology.

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**Doug Richards** been a faculty member at A.U. for more than thirteen years and has been an integral part of its growth and evolution. Dr. Richards has witnessed this evolution grow from just a few distance-learning courses to a comprehensive program in transpersonal studies. His particular interests include consciousness, parapsychology, and holistic health. Dr. Richards's courses explore such topics as the nature of psychic phenomena, the origin and destiny of consciousness, energy medicine, and the nature of reality.

As an active researcher, Dr. Richards has recent publications in journals ranging from the *Journal of Parapsychology* to the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine*. The titles of my articles include "Psi and the Spectrum of Consciousness," "A Study of the Correlations Between Subjective Psychic Experiences and Dissociative Experiences," "Meditation, Consciousness and Psychic Experience," and "Toward a Comprehensive Paradigm for Energy Medicine."

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