

Sociology of Religion
Soc 265; meets LinC M3 Requirement
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:20 – 11:30; PPHAC 103

Professor Daniel Jasper
PPHAC 316

Office Hours: T, R, F 9:00-10:00; other times by appointment

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Course Overview: From the beginning of the sociological endeavor, the study of religion has been central to the understanding of modern societies. Early sociologists such as Max Weber and Emile Durkheim made inquiries into religion the foundations of their larger research agendas. This course will continue in this tradition by surveying the interactions between religion and society while developing the sociological approach to the study of religion as a social institution. Two concerns will guide this course. First, how different religious communities interact. Second, the relationship between state, society, and religion.

Course Goals: By the end of the course students will:

- learn how religion is shaped by and, in turn, shapes the larger social field in which it exists.
- be able to apply the sociological perspective to better understand religion.
- become familiar with the dynamics of secularization, new religious movements, and other developments.
- develop an understanding of the ways in which religion interacts with other social institutions such as the state and economy, and culture.
- analyze the changing nature of religious pluralism in the United States and around the world.
- further develop their sociological imaginations, with particular reference to religion.
- improve their ability to construct and analyze academic arguments

Course Requirements and Expectations: It is expected that all students will have thoroughly and thoughtfully completed the weekly readings, and be prepared to discuss these, by our first meeting of each week. Students are expected to regularly contribute to in-class discussions with reactions and responses that deal directly with the issues and texts being considered. Reading the required texts and participating in class discussions is not a sufficient amount of work for this course. For students to do well in this course, they will need to read and think systematically about religion over the course of the semester.

It is expected that all students conduct themselves as professional scholars in this course. This means that students will arrive for class on time, having thoroughly and thoughtfully completed the assigned readings. Students will bring all of the necessary materials with them to class—including texts under discussion, questions and comments on these texts, and the energy to participate actively in the collective work of the course. Unnecessary distractions (such as cell phones) should not be brought to class.

Students must abide by the conventions of scholarly work, most importantly, the conventions of citation. All students should read and be familiar with the college policy on Academic Honesty included in the student handbook. All written work must include full and

proper citations. There are no exceptions, including ignorance. Cheating and plagiarism will result in failing this course.

There is a blackboard site for this course. Assignment guidelines, supplemental readings, and course announcements will be posted to the site. Students are expected to check the site regularly.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Assessment: Student learning will be assessed through a variety of means during the course of the semester, including written work, class presentations, research projects, and active course participation. **Written work** is designed to assess the thoroughness and depth of students regular engagement with course materials, and their ability to observe social life, conduct research, and develop scholarly arguments, including the ability to synthesize, analyze, and apply course material. **Class Presentations** are designed to assess how well students can communicate their ideas to their peers. **Research projects** assess how well student can pose, research, and answer sociological questions about religion. **Participation** assesses the degree to which students have actively contributed to the collective work of the class. Students will be evaluated on the quality as well as the quantity of their participation. It is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for an assignment or for the course

Grading:

4 Observation Essays (10 points each)	____/40
In class writing	____/15
Research Project	____/30
-includes presenting to class	
Course Participation	____/15
Total Points	____/100

Final Grades

	87-89.9 = B+	77-79.9 = C+	67-69.9 = D+
94-100 = A	83-86.9 = B	73-76.9 = C	63-66.9 = D
90-93.9 = A-	80-82.9 = B-	70-72.9 = C-	60-62.9 = D-
Below 60 points = F			

Texts:

McGuire, Meredith. 2002. *Religion: The Social Context 5E*. Waveland Press.

Goldschmidt, Henry. 2006. *Race and Religion Among the Chosen Peoples of Crown Heights*. Rutgers University Press.

Supplemental texts will be available through Blackboard or Reeves Library.

Course Schedule: Please note, the outline below is merely a guide. Changes are possible as the semester progresses.

Week 1 (January 19th & 21st) Defining religion Sociologically

Read: McGuire ch. 1

Week 2 (January 26th & 28th) Debating Social Scientific Conceptions of Religion

Read: Clifford Geertz “Religion as a Cultural System” in *The Interpretation of Culture*; Talal Asad, “Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz” from *Man (NS)*.

Week 3 (February 2nd & 4th) Case Study: Race and Religion in Crown Heights

Read: Goldschmidt, Prologue, Introduction, chs. 1-2

Week 4 (February 9th & 11th) Case Study, continued

Read: Goldschmidt, chs 3-5, Conclusion

Week 5 (February 16th & 18th) Setting the Agenda: Asking Questions about Religion and Society

Week 6 (February 23rd & 25th) Religion as Meaning

Read: McGuire, ch. 2

Week 7 (March 2nd & 4th) Religion and the Self

Read: McGuire, ch. 3

Week 8 (March 9th & 11th) No Class for Spring Break

Week 9 (March 16th & 18th) Religious Groups: Official and Popular

Read: McGuire, chs. 4-5

Week 10 (March 23rd & 25th) Religion in Society

Read: McGuire, chs. 6-7

Week 11 (March 30th & April 1st) The Future of the Sociology of Religion

Read: McGuire, ch. 8

Week 12 (April 6th & 8th) Religion, State, & Society in India

Read: TBA

Week 13 (April 13th & 15th) Student Presentations

Read: TBA

Week 14 (April 20th & 22nd) Student Presentations

Read: TBA

Week 15 (April 27th & 29th) Course Conclusion

Read: TBA

Scheduled Final Exam: Wednesday May 6th @ 8:30 am