

Sociology of Religion

Rel/Soc 265; meets LinC M3 Requirement
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:10 – 2:20; PPHAC 335

Professor Daniel Jasper

PPHAC 316

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00 – 1:00, Fridays 1:00 – 2:00; 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. **In-class quizzes and essays** are 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. **Essays and group 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:

2 Essays (10 points each)	_____/20
In class Quizzes and Essays	_____/50
Group Project	_____/10
Course Participation	_____/20
Total Points	_____/100

Final Grades

	87-89.9 = B+	77-79.9 = C+	67-69.9 = D+
93-100 = A	83-86.9 = B	73-76.9 = C	63-66.9 = D
90-92.9 = A-	80-82.9 = B-	70-72.9 = C-	60-62.9 = D-
Below 60 points = F			

Texts:

Guest, Kenneth. 2003. *God in Chinatown*. New York: New York University Press. Additional 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 18th & 20th) What is this course about?

Read: Syllabus, Student Handbook, The Ethnographic Field Research Paper, Meredith McGuire, ‘Observing Local Religious Groups’ (available at <http://religionthesocialcontext.net/Guides/Observe.htm>)

Week 2 (January 25th & 27th) How do Sociologists understand Religion?

Read: Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Book 1, ch. 1, Book 2, ch. 7, Conclusion

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

Week 3 (February 1st & 3rd) Are there other perspectives?

Read: Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Introduction (available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>)

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Part II (available at: http://www.ne.jp/asahi/moriyuki/abukuma/weber/world/ethic/pro_eth_frame.html)

Week 4 (February 8th & 10th) How does social science inform studies of religion?

Read: Guest, Introduction, chs. 1-2

Week 5 (February 15th & 17th) How can we analyze other’s lives and religions?

Read: Guest, Introduction, chs. 3-4

Week 6 (February 22nd & 24th) How do we make sense of religious diversity?

Read: Zain Abdullah “Sufis on Parade” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, June 2009, Vol. 77, No. 2, pp. 199–237.

Due: Observation Essay

Week 7 (March 1st & 3rd) What is the role of religion in diverse societies?

Read: Guest, chs. 5-7

Nancy Ammerman “The Challenges of Pluralism: Locating Religion in a World of Diversity”. *Social Compass* 57 (2), 2010, 154-167.

Week 8 (March 8th & 10th) **No Class – Spring Break**

Week 9 (March 15th & 17th) How does religion relate to the social?

Secularism/Secularization

Read: Jose Casanova “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective” *The Hedgehog Review* Spring and Summer, 2006.

Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular*, Introduction (Reeves E-Book).

Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, “Times Like These”, Introduction to *Secularisms*, Duke University Press.

Eisenstadt, S.N. 2000. “Multiple Modernities.” *Daedalus*. Winter, 129(1): 1-29

Week 10 (March 22nd & 24th) How does religion relate to the state?

Secularism/Secularization part II

Read: Thomas Jefferson, “A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom”

Al Stepan, "Religion, Democracy and 'The Twin Tolerations'" *Journal of Democracy* 11,4 October 2000

Rajeev Bhargava "States, Religious Diversity, and the Crisis of Secularism" *The Hedgehog Review*, Fall 2010.

Week 11 (March 29th & 31st) Is there a 'secular' religion?

Secularism/Secularization part III

Read: Peter van der Veer, "Spirituality in Modern Society". MMG Working Paper 09-10. Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Gottingen.

Bellah, Robert. 1967. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus*. 96 (Winter). Pp. 1-21

Craig Calhoun, "Rethinking Secularism" *The Hedgehog Review*, Fall 2010.

Charles Taylor "The Meaning of Secularism" *The Hedgehog Review*, Fall 2010.

Week 12 (April 5th & 7th) What are some contemporary debates about religion in our society?

Due: Group Projects

Week 13 (April 12th & 14th) What can India teach the US about religious pluralism?

Read: TBA

Week 14 (April 19th & 21st) What is happening in the Sociology of Religion today?

Read: David Smilde and Matthew May, "The Emerging Strong Program in the Sociology of Religion" SSRC Working Paper.

Christian Smith. 2008. "Future Directions in the Sociology of Religion." *Social Forces*, 86(4): 1561-1590.

Due: Second Essay

Week 15 (April 26th & 28th) What have we learned about religion in our world?

Scheduled Final Exam Time: Tuesday, May 3, 2011, 1:30PM: Exams for courses which normally meet TR 5th period.