

Sociology of Religion

Rel/Soc 265; meets LinC M3 Requirement
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:10 – 2:20; PPHAC 330

Professor Daniel Jasper

PPHAC 316

Office Hours: Posted on blackboard and by office door

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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.

A note on reading: For many of you, the readings for this course will be more complex and more difficult than you are used to reading. It has been my experience that this proves

incredibly frustrating for many students, especially at the beginning of the semester. I am happy to work with all students in order to help you find effective reading strategies. The most important thing, however, is that you must be willing to put in the time, concentration, and seriousness necessary with these texts. Again, this is especially true at the beginning of the term.

A note on Academic Honesty: All members of this course should read, re-read, and familiarize themselves 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.

A note on Accommodations: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Elaine Mara, assistant director of learning services for academic and disability support at 1307 Main Street, or by calling 610-861-1510. Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the Academic Support Center.

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 assignments** 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:

In Class Work (including quizzes and participation)	20% of final grade
Out of Class Work (including informal assignments and Blackboard discussions)	20% of final grade
3 Reflection Essays (10 points each)	30% of final grade
Group Research Project and Presentation	15% of final grade
Final Essay (Take Home Exam)	15% of final grade
Final Grade	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: There are no assigned texts for purchase. All texts for this course will be available through internet resources, posted on Blackboard, or made available through Reeves Library. Students should have a folder where they keep all of the course readings, along with their notes on these reading, together.

The Blackboard site for this course will be the primary place where course readings and links will be posted. Announcements, assignment guidelines, and supplemental resources will also be posted to the site. Students are expected to check the site regularly. Students may self enroll in Blackboard for this course; the access code is 'SocReligion'.

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

Week 1: (January 15th & 17th) 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 22nd & 24th) 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*

Week 3: (January 29th & 31st) Other Approaches and Critiques

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 (chapters 4 & 5) (available at:

<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/jhamlin/1095/The%20Protestant%20Ethic%20and%20the%20Spirit%20of%20Capitalism.pdf> and <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/weber/cover.html>)

Talal Asad, "Anthropological Conceptions of Religion: Reflections on Geertz" from *Man (NS)*.(Blackboard)

Week 4: (February 5th & 7th) Religion in the World Today

Read: Pew Report on Global Religious Landscape (Blackboard)

Week 5: (February 12th & 14th) Asking Sociological Questions about Religion

Read: Linda Woodhead, "Gender Differences in Religious Practice and Significance" from *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Blackboard).

Peter Kvisto, "Rethinking the Relationship between Ethnicity and Religion" from *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Blackboard).

Week 6: (February 19th & 21st) Making Sense of Religious Diversity

Read: Nancy Ammerman "The Challenges of Pluralism: Locating Religion in a World of Diversity". *Social Compass* 57 (2), 2010, 154-167. (Online Access available through Reeves)

Zain Abdullah "Sufis on Parade" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, June 2009, Vol. 77, No. 2, pp. 199-237. (Online Access available through Reeves)

Week 7: (February 26th & 28th) Is there an American 'Religion'?

Read: Madsen, Richard "The Archipelago of Faith" *American Journal of Sociology* (March 2009) 114: 5, 1263-1301.

Week 8: (March 5th & 7th) Spring Break
No Class Meetings

Week 9: (March 12th & 14th) 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 19th & 21st) 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 26th & 28th) 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 2nd & 4th) Spiritual and Faith Tourism
Read: Eloisa Martin, “From Popular Religion to Practices of Sacralization: Approaches for a Conceptual Discussion” *Social Compass* (2009) 56.

Week 13: (April 9th & 11th) Should we speak of religion?
Read: Martin Riesebrodt, *The Promise of Salvation*. (U. Chicago Press, 2009) (Selection posted to Blackboard)

Week 14: (April 16th & 18th) Student Presentations

Week 15: (April 23rd & 25th) Thinking about Religion and Society 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.

Scheduled Final Exam Time: Thursday, May 2nd @ 8:30 am.