

Sociology of Religion

REL/SOC 265; meets LinC M3 Requirement

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:35-3:45; 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. This course is organized around three central sociological themes: (1) *secularization* -- a term that emphasizes the relationship between state, society, and religion; (2) *pluralism* -- a term meant to highlight the ways that different religious communities can exist within the same social space; and (3) *implicit religion* -- a term that highlights the variety of places where religion is present and practiced.

Student Learning Outcomes: This course is designed so that students are able to meet the following learning outcomes.

As a 200 level sociology course, students will:

- Develop their Sociological Imaginations
- Develop their ability to apply sociological perspectives to better understand social institutions, in this case, religion.
- Further develop their ability to construct and analyze academic arguments.

In terms of the content of this course, students will:

- Learn how religion is shaped by and, in turn, shapes the larger social field in which it exists.
- Become familiar with the dynamics of secularization, religious pluralism, and implicit religion.
- Use digital storytelling to present their ideas.

As a LinC course, fulfilling the M3 category, students will also:

- Develop their ability to think and write about 'ultimate questions'.

- Develop their understanding of the relevance and importance of “ultimate questions” to individuals and to society.
- Enhance their ability to critically evaluate their own and others’ answers to “ultimate questions”

Course Requirements and Expectations: This course is structured as a collaborative, inquiry-based learning environment. There will be a few brief lectures, but the majority of course time will be spent in active learning and discussion. Therefore, it is expected that all students will have thoroughly and thoughtfully completed the weekly readings and assignments. 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 and tasks. 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.

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 Workload: This course is the equivalent of four credit hours. In order to meet this requirement, Moravian College expects students to complete 174 hours of work for the course. Each week, students should plan on 8-12 hours of work outside of class (this will vary a bit from week to week).

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 Tutoring and Accommodations: The Academic Support Center houses Disability Support and Greyhound Tutoring on the first floor of Monocacy Hall and can be reached at 610-861-1401. Greyhound Tutoring provides course-specific tutors to Moravian students, free

of charge. If you would like to work with a Greyhound Tutor to boost your academic success, please request a tutor through <http://bit.ly/NeedTutorMC> (case-sensitive). Plan ahead! It takes 2-3 business days to connect you with a tutor. Please email Dana Wilson (wilsond@moravian.edu), Tutor Coordinator, for more information about tutoring. Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Laurie Roth (rothl@moravian.edu; 610.861.1401), Director of Academic and Disability Support, for more information about disability support. 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. **Assignments, Informal Writing, and Quizzes** 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. **Reflection Essays and group digital storytelling projects** assess how well students can pose, research, and answer sociological questions about religion, and how they communicate this information to others. **In-class activities and participation in discussions** 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:

Reading Responses and Quizzes	15% of final grade
Weekly Informal Writing Journal	15% of final grade
Participation (discussions and activities)	15% of final grade
3 Reflection Essays (12% each)	36% of final grade
Group Research Project and Presentation	19% 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:

Required: Bender, Courtney. 2003. *Heaven’s Kitchen: Living Religion at God’s Love We Deliver*. University of Chicago Press. ISBN: 0226042820 (HK in schedule below.)

Recommended: Karen Armstrong. 2014. *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*. NY: Alfred A. Knopf. ISBN:9780307957047 (Armstrong will deliver the Cohen Convocation Lecture on September 24th.)

Course Communication: Course documents, including the course schedule below, as well as guides for all assignments, will be shared via Google Drive. A link to the course folder will be posted to Blackboard. Updates and announcements will be posted to Blackboard and/or sent via email. Students should be sure to check blackboard and their Moravian email account regularly. If you need to contact me, the best method is email. Please include an appropriate subject heading on emails (e.g. Soc 265 Question).

Course Schedule: Please note, the outline below is merely a guide. Changes are likely as the semester progresses. The detailed course schedule linked through Blackboard will contain the most up-to-date course schedule.

Week 1 (September 1st & 3rd) An Introduction to the Course

Tuesday: Closely read article distributed in class. You should also familiarize yourself with the course syllabus and the college policies on Academic Honesty included in the student handbook.

Thursday: In addition to the items listed above, be sure to closely read Meredith McGuire's piece on "[Observing Local Religious Groups](#)"; also read Nancy Ammerman's [Guide to Observing Congregations](#). (Quiz)

Week 2 (September 8th & 10th) During this week, we will begin to think about two central themes of this course: the interplay between religion and ethnicity; and the comparison of academic writing and digital storytelling.

Tuesday: Read: Bender, ch. 1 and Appendix; **Read:** Randal Hepner, "The House That Rasta Built: Church-Building and Fundamentalism Among New York Rastafarians" in *Gatherings in Diaspora*, Warner and Wittner (Eds.), Temple University Press, 1998.

Thursday: Watch: [Dollars and Dreams: West Africans in New York](#); **Read:** Pyong Gap Min, "[The Structure and Social Functions of Korean Immigrant Churches in the United States](#)", *International Migration Review* 26: 4, 1370-1394.

Week 3 (September 15th & 17th) During this week, we will focus on **how** sociologists make sense of religion.

Tuesday: Read: Bender, HK, chs. 2-3

Thursday: Read: Clifford Geertz "Religion as a Cultural System" in *The Interpretation of Culture*.

Week 4 (September 22nd & 24th) This week, we will capitalize on Karen Armstrong's visit to think about the place of religion in a modern, globalized world.

Tuesday: Overview of Religion and Secularism in the modern world. **Read:** Casanova, "Cosmopolitanism, the Clash of Civilizations, and Multiple Modernities" *Current Sociology*, 2011.

First Essay Due: Before the beginning of class.

Thursday: Read: Armstrong, ch. 11 "Religion Fights Back"

Karen Armstrong on Thursday September 24th in Johnston Hall

Week 5 (September 29th & October 1st) Our focus this week will be Bender's monograph on God's Love we Deliver.

Tuesday: Read: Bender, HK chs. 4-5.

Thursday: Read: Bender, HK ch. 6 & Conclusion

Week 6 (October 6th & 8th): 'Seeing' Religion Sociologically

Tuesday: Read: Nancy Ammerman, "[Finding Religion in Everyday Life](#)" *Sociology of Religion*, 75:2 (2014), 189-207. **Read:** Peter Kvisto, "Rethinking the Relationship between Ethnicity and Religion" from *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*.

Thursday: Essay 2 is due today before the beginning of class

Week 7 (October 13th & 15th) Religion and the foundations of Sociology

Tuesday: Fall Break - No class meeting

Thursday: The Foundational Influences - Marx, Durkheim, Weber. **Read:** Karl Marx, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, [Introduction](#); Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Book 1, ch. 1. (Focus especially on sections 3 and 4); and Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, [chapter 5](#).

Week 8 (October 20th & 22nd) Mapping Religion--our focus this week will be reports on national and global religious dynamics.

Tuesday: Skim: Pew Research Center, [America's Changing Religious Landscape](#); and [The Global Religious Landscape](#).

Thursday: Skim: Pew Research Center, [The Future of World Religions](#).

Week 9 (October 27th & 29th) Managing Religious Differences

Tuesday: Watch: [New Muslim Cool](#). **Read:** Pew Research Center, [How Americans Feel about Religious Groups](#).

Lecture by Irshad Manji @ 7:00 pm

Thursday: Read: James T. Richardson, "[Managing Religion and the Judicialization of Religious Freedom](#)", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54:1, 1-19; **Read:** Roger Finke

and Robert Martin, "[Ensuring Liberties: Understanding State Restrictions on Religious Freedoms](#)", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 53: 4, 687-705.

Week 10 (November 3rd & 5th) Civil Religion

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

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

Week 11 (November 10th and 12th) Group Work Week--our work for this week will be determined by the needs of each working group. Details will be provided as the date approaches.

Tuesday

Thursday

Week 12 (November 17th & 19th): Religion in the US: Pluralism and Secularism.

Tuesday: Read: Kenneth W. Thompson, "Religion and Politics in the United States: An Overview" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, January 1986.

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);

Thursday: Read: Thomas Jefferson, "A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom";

Read: Al Stepan, "Religion, Democracy and 'The Twin Tolerations'" *Journal of Democracy* 11, 4 October 2000; **Review:** Pew Research Forum, [Latest Trends in Religious Restrictions and Hostilities](#).

Week 13 (November 24th & 26th)

Tuesday: Digital Storytelling Research Projects Due

Thursday: Thanksgiving -- No course meeting

Week 14 (December 1st & 3rd) Where is the Sociology of Religion Headed?

Tuesday: Read: Helen Rose Ebaugh, "[The Return of the Sacred: Reintegrating Religion in the Social Sciences](#)" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41: 3, 385-395; **Read:** David Smilde and Matthew May, "[The Emerging Strong Program in the Sociology of Religion](#)" SSRC Working Paper

Thursday: Read: Christian Smith, et. Al. "[Twenty-Three Theses on the Status of Religion in American Sociology](#)-A Mellon Working Group Reflection" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 2013 ; **Read:** Christian Smith. 2008. "Future Directions in the Sociology of Religion." *Social Forces*, 86(4): 1561-1590.

Week 15 (December 8th & 10th): Summing up our understanding of Religion in Society

Tuesday: Essay 3 Due

Thursday: Final Course Meeting

Scheduled Final Exam time: Wednesday, December 16th at 8:30.