

Religion and Social Life

SOC / RELST 2330-101, Spring 2019

Instructor: Dr. Rick Moore

Office: Uris 382

Office Hours: Mondays 2:30-3:30p or by appointment

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Class Information:

M/W/F 1:25p - 2:15p

Uris 262

Course Prerequisite: None

Course Description:

Global conflicts, raising children, electing presidents, praying for a loved one: from the mundane to the extraordinary, religion plays a significant role in social life, regardless of whether or not one considers oneself “religious.” In this course we will investigate religion and its impacts in society from a sociological perspective. Questions we will ask include: How does religion “fit” into society? What are the contours of contemporary religion in the United States and around the world? How do religious identities interact with other aspects of social life, including gender, race and politics? In what ways have religions and religious life changed over time? As social scientists, how can we best study religion? The course will use examples from a variety of religious and secular traditions to help us understand religion’s sociological significance in the contemporary world.

Learning Objectives:

- 1) Differentiate the sociological study of religion from other ways of interacting with religion (e.g. theology, personal belief, psychology, etc.)
- 2) Explain the methods social scientists use to study religion
- 3) Identify and evaluate major theories of religion influential in sociology
- 4) Explain ways that “religion” is a socially constructed category
- 5) Compare varying explicit and implicit definitions of “religion”
- 6) Apply theories of religion influential in sociology to the analysis of contemporary issues in religion and society
- 7) Analyze how religion and religious identities interact with other aspects of social life, including gender, race and politics

Note on course environment:

Each of us comes to this course with our own religious identities, practices, opinions etc. (or lack thereof). For the purposes of this class, however, we are approaching the course topics as sociologists, not as religious or secular practitioners. Various theories and discussions may or may not align with your own personal ideas or beliefs, and that’s ok. We are also a group diverse across many other social categories, such as gender, race, class, politics, age, etc. Please be mindful of our diversity and always respectful towards others. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about our class environment anytime during the semester.

Required Texts

None. All required readings will be posted on Blackboard or available on e-reserve.

Please bring copies of the readings (paper or electronic) to class on the day that reading was assigned.

Course Requirements:

1. Class Participation (15%)

Active class participation is essential for our collective learning project. This means that attendance is mandatory. However, class participation is more than just attendance: *You must come to class having read the assigned readings for that day and be prepared to discuss them in detail.* Bring copies of the readings to class; we will refer to and discuss specific pages. Most days there will also be ungraded exercises to complete in class. In-class exercises cannot be made up at a later date. If for some reason you cannot come to class, please refer to the procedures in the course attendance policy located under the General Course Policies section of this syllabus.

2. Response Memos (15%)

Six times during the quarter you must submit a 500-600 word (approximately 1.5-2 double spaced pages) response to the readings. You can only complete 2 response paper per section of the course, so plan accordingly.

The purpose of the response memos is to aid you in your critical thinking about the readings, facilitate class discussion and help prepare you for your exams. The response papers do not need to be highly polished, but I expect that their style is closer to an academic paper than to more informal forms of communication (emails, etc.). The paper is to be turned in on Blackboard by 8:00am on the day of class and address the readings that are to be discussed on that day.

Your response memos should not be a summary of the readings, but rather your critical and analytical reaction to them. Issues you might consider include (but are not limited to): How do the readings relate to other selections we have read? How do the readings relate to other items we have read and the larger issues of the course? What is one of the key themes and what is your critical analysis (not summary) of it? Are you convinced by the arguments? Why or why not? What questions do you have about the readings? Of course, you cannot answer all of these questions in a single memo. The questions here are just possible suggestions to get you started. Feel free to go in your own direction as long as you do not simply summarize what we have read.

The memos will be graded with either a ✓, ✓+ or ✓-. Most likely you'll get a ✓ and that's ok. A ✓+ means that you developed some exceptionally interesting ideas in your response. A ✓- means that the response is either superficial or only summarizes the readings. (✓ = 100% credit; ✓- = 50% credit; ✓+ = 150% credit)

Response memos work best if everyone doesn't wait until the last chance to submit them. If this happens, I may have to assign individuals specific dates to write their papers.

3. Prelims (40%)

There will be two take-home prelim exams, each worth 20% of your final grade. Each exam will require you to respond to essay prompts related to the readings and class discussions. Further details will be distributed near the prelim dates.

Prelim 1: Friday, 2/22

Prelim 2: Friday, 3/22

4. Final Project (30%)

You will complete a final project that will be an analysis of a religion, religious issue, etc. from a sociological perspective. The analysis must draw on the readings, as well as other additional material. Further information will be distributed later in the semester. There is no final exam and we will not meet during exam week.

Final project due: Tuesday, March 14 at noon

Requirements Summary:

Class Participation	15%
Response Memos	15%
Prelim 1	20%
Prelim 2	20%
Final Project	30%
TOTAL	100%

Course Hashtag:

When I see news related to topics we're covering in the course I occasionally post it on Twitter using the #RelSocLife hashtag. My twitter handle is @prairiedogking. More information will be given during the semester.

Course Outline and Readings:

Items marked with a * are on e-reserve. All others can be found under "Content→Readings not on E-reserve"
Remember to bring the readings for the day with you to class!

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

Week 1: Introduction and Numbers

W 1/23: Intro; No reading

F 1/24: Numbers; No reading

Week 2: Setting the Stage

M 1/28: Davidman (2007)*: "The New Voluntarism and the Case of Unsynagogued Jews"

W 1/30: Moss and Baden (2017)*: "Introduction" in *Bible nation: the United States of Hobby Lobby*

F 2/1: Zuckerman (2012)*: "To Be Mormon, or Not to Be" in *Faith No More: Why People Reject Religion*

SECTION 1: CLASSIC THEORIES, A TASTE

Week 3: WWDD (What would Durkheim do?)

M 2/4: Durkheim (1995 [1912]): “Introduction” in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

W 2/6: Durkheim (1995 [1912]): “Chapter One: Definition of Religious Phenomena and of Religion” in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

F 2/8: Durkheim (1995 [1912]): “Chapter Seven: Origins of These Beliefs (Conclusion)” in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

Week 4: How do religion and culture interact? (ala Weber)

M 2/11: Weber (1930)*: “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,” selections in McIntosh (1997)

W 2/13: Weber (1948): “Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions,” selections

F 2/15: Gooren (2002): “Catholic and Non-Catholic Theologies of Liberation: Poverty, Self-Improvement, and Ethics Among Small-Scale Entrepreneurs in Guatemala City”

Week 5: Religion’s about meaning – or is it? (Geertz & Asad)

M 2/18: Geertz (1966)*: “Religion as a Cultural System,” selections in Lessa (1965)

W 2/20: Asad (1993)*: “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. LAST CHANCE FOR SECTION 1 REPSONE PAPERS.

F 2/22: NO CLASS, EXTRA DAY OFF JUST FOR YOU!

Prelim 1 (Take-home): Friday, Feb 22

SECTION 2: “RECENT” APPROACHES

Week 6: Is my “religion” the same as yours? (A word from our friends in Religious Studies)

M 2/25: NO CLASS, FEBRUARY BREAK

W 2/27: Smith (1998)*: “Religion, Religions, Religious”

F 3/1: Masuzawa (2005)*: “Chapter 1: “The Religions of the World” before “World Religions” in *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*

Week 7: Is your neighbor singing loud enough? (Rational choice)

M 3/4: Finke and Stark (1992): *The churching of America, 1776-1990: winners and losers in our religious economy*, selections in Monahan et al. (2001); Iannaccone (1994), selections

W 3/6: Chaves and Gorski (2001): "Religious Pluralism and Religious Participation"

F 3/8: Woods (2018): "Spaces of the Religious Economy: Negotiating the Regulation of Religious Space in Singapore"

Week 8: Is God dead? (Secularization theory)

M 3/11: Berger (1967): *The Sacred Canopy*, selections

W 3/13: Gorski and Altinordu (2008): "After Secularization?"

F 3/15: Schnabel and Bock (2017): "The Persistent and Exceptional Intensity of American Religion: A Response to Recent Research"

Week 9: Yeah, but what's religion really like in everyday life? (Everyday/lived religion)

M 3/18: Ammerman (2014): "Finding Religion in Everyday Life"

W 3/21: Bender (2003)*: "Chapter 4: Religious Practice in the Kitchen," in *Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver*

F 3/23: Parvez (2017)*: "Chapter 5: Politics of Recognition," in *Politicizing Islam: the Islamic revival in France and India* LAST CHANCE FOR SECTION 2 RESPONSE PAPERS.

Prelim 2 (Take-home): Friday, March 22

SECTION 3: CASE STUDIES

Week 10: Evangelicals

M 4/15: Smith (1998)*: "Chapter 2: Evangelicalism Thriving" in *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*; Hackett and Lindsay (2008): "Measuring Evangelicalism: Consequences of Different Operationalization Strategies" (selection)

W 4/17: Bean (2014)*: "Chapter 3: Two American Churches: Partisanship without Politics" in *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada*

F 4/19: Perry (2018): “Not Practicing What You Preach: Religion and Incongruence Between Pornography Beliefs and Usage”

4/1 – 4/5: SPRING BREAK!

Week 11: Atheism

M 4/22: Baker and Smith (2015): “Chapter 1: Classifying Secularities” and “Chapter 5*: Nonreligious Belief Systems” in *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems*

W 4/24: Smith (2011): “Becoming an Atheist in America: Constructing Identity and Meaning from the Rejection of Theism”

F 4/26: Edgell et al. (2016): “Atheists and Other Cultural Outsiders: Moral Boundaries and the Non-Religious in the United States”

Week 12: Politics

M 3/25: Whitehead et al (2018): “Make America Christian Again: Christian Nationalism and Voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election”

W 3/27: Hurd (2008)*: “Chapter 2: Varieties of Secularism,” in *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*

F 3/29: Bellah (1967): “Civil Religion in America”

Week 13: Does it make sense to study religion by itself? (Complex Religion)

M 4/8: Wilde (2018): “Complex Religion: Interrogating Assumptions of Independence in the Study of Religion”

W 4/10: Ellis (2018): “It’s Not Equality”: How Race, Class, and Gender Construct the Normative Religious Self among Female Prisoners”

F 4/12: Cressler (2017)*: “Chapter 3: The Living Stations of the Cross,” in *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic: the Rise of Black Catholicism in the Great Migration*

Week 14: What we want to read now? (Class Choice)

M 4/29: TBA

W 5/1: TBA

F 5/3: TBA; LAST CHANCE FOR SECTION 3 RESPONSE PAPERS

Week 15: Wrapping things up

M 5/6: TBA

Final Project DUE: Tuesday, March 14 at noon

General Course Policies:

Academic Integrity:

All work that is not your own must be cited appropriately. Academic dishonesty *of any sort* will not be tolerated and may result in a failing grade for an assignment, the entire course and/or other actions the instructor and university deem appropriate. Unless I have informed you otherwise in writing, reusing material from previous work you wrote for this class or other classes also constitutes plagiarism. Ignorance of academic honesty expectations (including citation practices) or “unintentional plagiarism” do not excuse violations; it is your responsibility to ensure that your work and conduct comply. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic honesty please speak with me and I will be happy to help you.

Cornell’s Code of Academic Integrity: <https://cuinfo.cornell.edu/aic.cfm>

A helpful page with resources for citation practices is <http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu/cite>

Attendance:

Attendance is mandatory and unexcused absences will significantly lower your grade. Excused absences (e.g. athletic participation) for a regular class require notice by email 48 hours before the absence in order for it to count as excused. Absences on exam days should be avoided whenever possible; if the absence cannot be avoided you must email me at least 2 weeks before the exam date to arrange an alternate time to take the exam. The final exam, however, must without exception be taken during our final exam time. If you are sick and cannot come to class, I hope you feel better! Also, if you are sick please email me within 24 hours of the class you missed for your absence to count as excused. Frequent or extended absences may require additional documentation.

Course Changes:

Over the quarter there might be changes made to the syllabus, especially concerning the exact readings. If any changes are made, we will go over them in class.

Grade Changes:

If you feel that I have graded something incorrectly, or not entered the correct grade in the Blackboard gradebook, you have one week from the time the assignment was returned (or graded on Blackboard) to discuss the possibility of any changes.

Grade checks:

If you require a grade check form signed for any reason, please inform me via email 48 hours before you would like me to sign it. If I do not receive an email from you, I will not sign any grade check forms.

Grading Scale:

A	> 93%	A-	90.0 – 92.9%	B+	88.0 – 89.9%
B	83.0 – 87.9%	B-	80.0 – 82.9%	C+	78.0 – 79.9%
C	73.0 – 77.9%	C-	70.0 – 72.9%	D+	68.0 – 69.9%
D	63.0 – 67.9%	D-	60.0 – 62.9	F	< 60%

Email and Electronic Etiquette:

You are expected to regularly check your official Cornell email account, as important class emails will be periodically sent to it. Having not checked that account or having technical problems are not excuses for missing something in the class. You are also responsible for any items posted on our Blackboard page.

I do my best to answer emails quickly. However, I cannot guarantee that last minute emails will be answered as soon as you might wish. Please do not expect an answer to your email faster than 48 hours. Most likely I’ll answer much sooner but there are no guarantees - please plan accordingly. Also, I will not answer emails related to an assignment after 5p the day before the assignment is due.

Computers are great for taking and organizing notes but can also be distracting from class discussion. If you choose to bring a laptop or tablet to class please be respectful and do not use it for anything except taking notes relevant to this class (i.e. no internet, no email, no working on other assignments). Phones must be turned off unless you work for some type of emergency agency (i.e., medical or law enforcement). Failing to adhere to this policy will affect your participation grade.

Exceptions:

Any exceptions to standard course procedures due to exceptional circumstances must be worked out with me over email in addition to any in-person discussions we might have. This helps prevent any misunderstandings.

Incompletes:

An incomplete will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

Late Work:

Assignments that are accepted late will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day overdue – for example, A will become A-, B- will become C+ etc. Late assignments can receive grades below failing (< 59%) as there will be a continued reduction of 3.3% credit each day late beyond the time the work would receive an F. In-class assignments and quizzes will not be accepted late and cannot be made up. No work will be accepted after the end of exam week.

Full Citations for Course Readings:

- Ammerman, Nancy T. 2014. "Finding Religion in Everyday Life." *Sociology of Religion* 75 (2): 189–207. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/sru013>.
- Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Baker, Joseph O., and Buster G. Smith. 2015. *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems*. Religion and Social Transformation. New York: New York University Press.
- Bean, Lydia. 2014. *The Politics of Evangelical Identity: Local Churches and Partisan Divides in the United States and Canada*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Bellah, Robert N. 1967. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus* 96 (1): 1–21.
- Bender, Courtney. 2003. *Heaven's Kitchen: Living Religion at God's Love We Deliver*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Berger, Peter. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Chaves, Mark, and Phillip S. Gorski. 2001. "Religious Pluralism and Religious Participation." *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 261–81.
- Cressler, Matthew J. 2017. *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic: The Rise of Black Catholicism in the Great Migration*. New York: New York University Press.
- Davidman, Lynn. 2007. "The New Voluntarism and the Case of Unsynagogued Jews." In *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*, edited by Nancy Ammerman, 51–67. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press.
- Edgell, Penny, Douglas Hartmann, Evan Stewart, and Joseph Gerteis. 2016. "Atheists and Other Cultural Outsiders: Moral Boundaries and the Non-Religious in the United States." *Social Forces* 95 (2): 607–38. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sow063>.
- Ellis, Rachel. 2018. "'It's Not Equality': How Race, Class, and Gender Construct the Normative Religious Self among Female Prisoners." *Social Inclusion* 6 (2): 181–91. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v6i2.1367>.
- Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 1992. *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Geertz, Clifford. 1966. "Religion as a Cultural System." In *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, edited by Michael Banton, 1–46. New York: F.A. Praeger.
- Gooren, Henri. 2002. "Catholic and Non-Catholic Theologies of Liberation: Poverty, Self-Improvement, and Ethics Among Small-Scale Entrepreneurs in Guatemala City." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (1): 29–45. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5906.00098>.

- Gorski, Philip, and Ates Altinordu. 2008. "After Secularization?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: 55–85.
- Hackett, Conrad, and D. Michael Lindsay. 2008. "Measuring Evangelicalism: Consequences of Different Operationalization Strategies." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47 (3): 499–514. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00423.x>.
- Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. 2008. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Iannaccone, Laurence R. 1994. "Why Strict Churches Are Strong." *American Journal of Sociology* 99 (5): 1180–1211.
- Lessa, William Armand. 1965. *Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*. Edited by Evon Z. Vogt. 2d ed. New York: Harper & Row.
- Masuzawa, Tomoko. 2005. *The Invention of World Religions, or, How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- McIntosh, Ian, ed. 1997. *Classical Sociological Theory: A Reader*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=9598>.
- Monahan, Susanne C., William A. Mirola, and Michael O. Emerson, eds. 2001. *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Moss, Candida R., and Joel S. Baden. 2017. *Bible Nation: The United States of Hobby Lobby*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Parvez, Z. Fareen. 2017. *Politicizing Islam: The Islamic Revival in France and India*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
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- Schnabel, Landon, and Sean Bock. 2017. "The Persistent and Exceptional Intensity of American Religion: A Response to Recent Research." *Sociological Science* 4: 686–700. <https://doi.org/10.15195/v4.a28>.
- Smith, Christian. 1998. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Smith, Jesse M. 2011. "Becoming an Atheist in America: Constructing Identity and Meaning from the Rejection of Theism." *Sociology of Religion* 72 (2): 215–37.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. 1998. "Religion, Religions, Religious." In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, 269–84. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.
- Weber, Max. 1930. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Routledge Classics.
- . 1948. "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions." In *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. New York: Routledge.
- Whitehead, Andrew L., Samuel L. Perry, and Joseph O. Baker. 2018. "Make America Christian Again: Christian Nationalism and Voting for Donald Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election." *Sociology of Religion*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx070>.
- Wilde, Melissa J. 2018. "Complex Religion: Interrogating Assumptions of Independence in the Study of Religion." *Sociology of Religion* 79 (3): 287–98. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx047>.
- Woods, Orlando. 2018. "Spaces of the Religious Economy: Negotiating the Regulation of Religious Space in Singapore." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57 (3): 531–46. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12531>.
- Zuckerman, Phil. 2012. *Faith No More: Why People Reject Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.