DAVIDSON COLLEGE
Soc 225 Religion and Non-Religion
Spring Semester, 2018

Course: Sociology 225 – Religion and Non-Religion
Time and Place: 12:15pm – 1:30pm Tuesdays and Thursdays, in Chambers 1003
Prerequisite: None
Instructor: Gerardo Marti
Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:30am – 11:30am and by appointment.

For most people, religion is a faith to be lived – or perhaps to be neglected – but for a few, it is also a phenomenon to be studied….
The student of society must be a student of religion; and the student of religion must be a student of society.

-- J. Milton Yinger

Course Description & Student Outcomes:

Religion exists in a social context, and always is shaped by and shapes its social context. Furthermore, religion itself is always (at least in part) a socially constituted reality—that is, its content and structure are always formed, at least partially, out of the "stuff" of the socio-cultural world (language, symbols, groups, norms, interactions, resources, organizations, etc.). The sociology of religion pursues an understanding of both the "social-ness" of religion itself and the mutually influencing interactions between religion and its social environment. We will analyze religious beliefs, practices, and organizations from a sociological perspective, with a primary focus on religion in contemporary American society.

Specifically, this course is designed to:

1. **Cultivate in students an understanding of the distinctively sociological approach to studying religion.** There are many approaches to studying religion—historical, psychological, theological, sociological, anthropological, etc. Since in this class we take a distinctively sociological approach, our most basic goal is to develop an understanding of and appreciation for the kinds of questions sociologists ask and the kind of explanations they offer when they analyze religion.

2. **Familiarize students with some of the major issues, problems, and findings in the sociology of religion.** Students will have the opportunity to learn some of the theoretical and substantive content of the sociology of religion, to deepen their sociological knowledge of such things as religious conversion, shifting church attendance rates, religiously inspired political activism, the emergence of new religions, and secularization.

3. **Introduce students to basic skills of field research.** Sociology is an empirical discipline that constructs theories and draws conclusions based on evidence that can be observed. Students in this class will go beyond merely reading about religion, to actually doing simple participant-observation through field trips at local religious groups, involving first-hand observation, analysis, and brief written reports.

4. **Improve cognitive & communication skills.** Finally, this course aims generally, through its exercises and requirements, to enhance students' abilities to read, analyze, discuss, and write skillfully.

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*Special thank you for syllabi suggestions drawn from Christian Smith and Wendy Cadge.*
To summarize in performance-oriented terms, students who have successfully completed this course ought to be able to: (1) know how to go about analyzing religious beliefs, experiences, practices, and organizations sociologically (as distinct from, say, theologically); (2) carry on an informed and informing conversation with others about the religious issues and problems we will study in this class; (3) have a basic idea about how to go about conducting field research on a religious group or institution; and (4) read, think, discuss, and write more skillfully than when they entered the course.

Listening, accepting and constructively giving group responses as we “think out loud” with each other are part of the education in this course. Everyone tends to have strong feelings about religion—their own or their lack of one, and others' religions. Students will be expected to temporarily "suspend subjectivity"; that is, use analytical thinking in examining their own religion as well as the religions of others. Please note that comments that could make any person feel uncomfortable will not be tolerated. The social locations of persons, whether present in the class or not, are to be respected.

After completing this course, the student should be able to:
- discuss the social dynamics of religion with a degree of objectivity,
- distinguish among the major classical and contemporary theoretical approaches employed by sociologists of religion in studying religion,
- appreciate the multidimensional nature of religiosity or ways of being religious,
- assess the impact of religion on the daily life of individuals and groups and the impact of society on religion,
- understand and appreciate the diversity of religious life in America as experienced by major denominational, ethnic, and demographic groups,
- understand the developments of religious trends in the United States since its founding,
- understand and appreciate the development of "secularization" and its effects on the development of American religions.
- understand and appreciate the roles of religion in American regional and national life,
- understand aspects of religion as they intersect with aspects of personal identity including race and gender,
- enhance analytical writing through written assignments, and
- enhance oral presentation skills through class discussions.

Specific Assignments:

Weekly Assignments

- Attendance/Participation in Class Discussion 10%
- Analytic Pre-discussion Papers - Set 1 10%
- Analytic Pre-discussion Papers - Set 2 10%

Major Papers

- Religion in America (Oral Presentation) 10%
- Field Research Report #1 (Paper) 20%
- Field Research Report #2 (Paper) 20%
- Final Field Research Report (Paper) 20%

Total Grade = 100%

Reading:

It is essential for you to keep up with the reading and to read actively. Active reading means taking notes as you read, crafting ideas in your own words, making a list of questions you have as you read, and reading far enough ahead that you have a chance not only to read but to think about what you have read. I expect that you will have read each week’s readings for our first class meeting of the week (Tuesday) unless otherwise indicated in the syllabus. Pre-discussion notes drawn from the reading (described below) provide launch points for discussion.
Required Books and Readings for All Students:

- Reserve (R) readings online on Moodle through Davidson College.

Course Requirements:

1. Participation: I expect students to attend class regularly and to participate in class discussions, exercises, and group projects, as required or appropriate. I presume students can and will attend all or almost all classes, but may occasionally have a legitimate reason to miss one class in the semester (extremely sick, family funeral, etc.). I will take weekly attendance, however I am not interested in adjudicating doctors' notes and other excuses. Just come to class, and don't miss more than one, if any. An unreasonable number of absences from class will definitely hurt one's final grade. Entirely faithful class attendance is notable and could make a positive difference in final grades in borderline cases. I understand student athletes may need to miss additional classes, up to 2 TH or 3 MWF. Please provide schedules to me at the beginning of the semester. Overall, your active and prepared participation in class discussion will be worth 10% of the final grade.

2. Pre-discussion Reading Notes: Reading notes provide an ongoing opportunity for you to engage the most important concepts and ideas encountered in each reading section. As such, your papers should be both personal and analytical; in them, you bring your critical, individual point-of-view. Pre-discussion notes are not summaries but opportunities for critical thinking which demonstrate your knowledge of the text’s arguments by comparing approaches and methods, raising questions or critical comments, discussing the relevance (or lack thereof) for designing sociologically based study, and/or analytically drawing out implications. A good approach: 1) Essentialize. What are the essential concepts, ideas, insights and how are they connected? 2) Then Improvise. What are the implications I see which the author does not or did not bring out? View the assignment as writing a critical, introductory preface to each section’s papers. As such, your paper should be analytical, assume a personal point-of-view, and integrate mention of each reading in the context of that essay. Your pre-discussion notes provide launch points for discussion. Each paper should be between 2.5 and 4 pages in length, double spaced, have one inch margins, and typed in 12 point type. Altogether, the pre-discussion reading notes collected together in a portfolio at the end of the semester are worth 10% of the final grade. Any other guidelines for preparation of reading notes will be discussed in class.

3. Religion in America Oral Presentation: You will give a brief oral “mini-presentation” (10% of grade) to stimulate discussion about an interesting facet of religion in America. Depending on the size of the course, I anticipate there will be 1-2 per week. PowerPoint, Internet display, handout, or a physical object brought into the class should accompany these presentations. The goal is to 1) introduce a topic, idea, insight, dynamic in contemporary American religion, 2) connect its significance to the course, and 3) provide launch point for class discussion. Students are encouraged to bring in “artifacts” or material objects if possible. Students are also encouraged to use class projection system to show pictures or brief videos.

4. Two Field Reports Based on Self-guided Field Trips: You must choose two unfamiliar religious groups or organizations to visit and observe on self-guided field trips, and write 3-4 page reports for each. Your reports are based on attending religious services or gatherings and taking field notes. Please note that students may not choose to do the religious tradition(s) within which they were raised or with which they are quite familiar. The two trips/reports are each worth 20% of the final course grade. Guidelines and procedures for both the conduct of field observations and the writing of field reports will be provided in class.

5. Final Paper: Your final written assignment will provide the opportunity to delve into a topic addressed in the class or to research an area that is related to, but not directly touched on by, the course readings. A
sociology of religion bibliography is included at the back of this syllabus; you should also consult the journals in the sociological study of religion (Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, Sociology of Religion Quarterly, Review of Religious Research) and major sociological journals (American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, Social Forces, Social Problems, Journal for the Study of Symbolic Interactionism, &c.). There are essentially two choices in writing your final paper: (1) A paper based on your visits to two different religious centers this semester, or (2) A paper primarily on library rather than field research. In either case, papers should link to class readings and discussions or to your visits to religious centers as appropriate. More detailed guidelines will be provided in class.

Final Review

There will be no final review. I reserve the right to schedule a final review, however, if you are not keeping up with class readings.

Policy on Collaboration and Plagiarism:

Writing is a collaborative art, especially in this class where conferencing and discussion groups are built into the course. Talking about your paper with a spouse, roommate, friend, family member, etc. is also encouraged, not only for this class, but for other classes that involve writing. You are welcome to work through ideas with other students. Collaboration is good.

On the other hand, the paper you write must be entirely your own. Passing off somebody else’s work as your own (because you copied it out of a book, paraphrased it out of a book, bought a paper from a research paper service, downloaded it form the internet, wrote down ideas that someone else was dictating to you, recycled an essay written by someone else, or had someone else rewrite your paper for you) is plagiarism. It is unethical, illegal, and, in a college course, sufficient grounds for failure of the course. Don’t do it. When in doubt, cite. If you are unsure of something, ask. Diana Hacker in A Writer’s Reference gives excellent advice on avoiding plagiarism, pages 82-91.

About the Grading Scale:

Your final grade for the class will be based on four substantive papers (75%), attendance, participation, quizzes and quick writes (10%) and pre-discussion papers portfolio (15%). I will use the following guidelines to grade your written assignments:

A Outstanding Work (90-100%) Goes above and beyond the requirements of the assignment, above and beyond merely competent work. Outstanding effort, significant achievement, and mastery of the material of the course are clearly evident. Exceptional critical skills, creativity or originality is also evident. Consistently developed sociological perspective.

B Above Average (80-89%) A “B” paper fulfills all aspects of the assignment and goes bit beyond minimum competence to demonstrate a thorough and above average understanding of course material. Extra effort, extra achievement or extra improvement often evident. Clearly demonstrated sociological perspective.

C Average (70-79%) A “C” paper fulfills all aspects of the assignment with obvious competence and grace. A thorough and satisfactory understanding of basic course material and incorporation of a sociological perspective. If you do the assignment exactly as it is assigned, you will receive an average grade; in other words, you will receive a grade of 75.

D Below Average (60-69%) A “D” paper represents marginally satisfactory understanding of basic course material. A “D” may indicate failure to follow directions, failure to implement specific recommendations, or failure to demonstrate personal effort and improvement. Surface level grasp or application of a sociological perspective. Often a “D” is given either because some aspect of the assignments have not been fulfilled, or because a preponderance of errors (more than one or two per page) interferes with clear communication.
**Lack of demonstration of satisfactory understanding of basic course material. Failure to grasp or apply a sociological perspective. Not Acceptable, either because the student did not complete the assignment as directed, or because the level of writing skill is below an acceptable level for college work.**

**All papers and/or reviews must be completed to receive a passing grade in this class**

In addition to these five grades, a student may receive a grade of R. R stands for “Redo” and means the student has both the opportunity and the responsibility to do the assignment over. Usually this is given because the student has misunderstood the assignment, or because some particularly egregious error prevents the paper from achieving its purpose, or because I believe that the student has made a good faith effort to excel but has run into significant difficulties with the assignments. If you receive a grade of R, you have 48 hours to contact me for a phone or face-to-face appointment. In our appointment, we will discuss what went wrong with the assignment, and we will contract a way and a time to redo the assignment. If you fail to turn in a revision according to the individual contract, the student will receive a 0 on the assignment.

Davidson College uses a plus and minus system on report cards. My scale for final averages is as follows:

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College, Department and Instructor Policies for Davidson College:

A. Please refer the Davidson College Official Record regarding THE HONOR CODE. As members of the Davidson College community, we are expected to uphold the honor code. In regard to writing assignments, any student found to plagiarize or cheat will receive an “F” for that assignment and will be referred to the Dean and Honor Council.

B. Students who will be absent at some point during the semester owing to religious observance are requested to notify the instructor during the first week of class (or the first week after late enrollment) in order to make accommodations for assignment or review dates falling during such observances.

C. As a courtesy to the instructor and your classmates, please be sure to turn off cell phones and pagers or switch them to vibrate mode prior to the start of class.

D. Due to abuse by students in previous courses, laptops and other electronic devices are not acceptable for use during class. If you wish to take notes, please use paper and pen/pencil.

E. Please be mindful of due dates/times. Submission guidelines for assignments are as follows: All assignments will be accepted on the due date. Assignments must be submitted no later than the beginning of the class scheduled on the due date. Late work will be penalized at 10% of the total value for each day late, beginning immediately during the class on the due date. No work will be accepted after the last scheduled class of the semester. The instructor is not responsible for lost papers. If you are unable to turn in the assignment personally, please your own arrangements to have the paper submitted on your behalf. Students are strongly encouraged to keep a copy of each assignment until final grades are recorded. Any exceptions must be approved well in advance of the due date with the instructor.

F. All major written assignments must be prepared using a word processor (some exercises may be exempted) and submitted hard-copy. PLEASE DO NOT EMAIL PAPERS. The length and content for each assignment will be discussed in class. Work done for this class is to be original, done exclusively for this class, and must comply with high standards for written work. The grade for each assignment will reflect evaluation of expression as well as content. Please proofread carefully for spelling and grammatical errors. Spelling, grammatical, or typographical errors reduce the quality of your work, and grades assessed will reflect such errors. Have someone proofread your paper before you complete your final draft. Also, last-
minute, hand-written corrections to final copy are not preferred but accepted – better to have you catch it than for me to see it.

G. Please note in regard to submission of papers that it is the responsibility of every student to print pages for course assignments well before (hours or days) they are due. All excuses of “printer malfunctions” are not acceptable.

H. As discrepancies with regard to grades can occur, it is recommended that students retain all graded materials until such time as final grades have been sent out.

I. Extra-credit or make-up work is not available in this course. Please make every effort to submit your assignments in a timely, complete, and professional manner.

J. Office hours and appointments: Since the management of time is critical for student and professor alike, you are requested to please observe the following guidelines regarding office appointments.

1. Priority: Students who have made appointments with me personally (either in person, by phone, or via email) will be given priority. This is the best way to ensure time together.
2. Drop-ins: I will be in my office at Preyer 107 during office hours as described at the top of the syllabus.
3. Non-office hour appointments: Please try to stick to scheduled office hours for appointments. However, if you find it impossible to schedule an appointment during regular office hours, I will work with you to find a mutually convenient time.
4. Canceling appointments: If you will be unable to keep an appointment it would be appreciated greatly if you would contact me via one of the means identified above to cancel your scheduled appointment. Thank you for your professional courtesy in this regard.

Occasionally office hours may be canceled due to meetings, travel, or emergencies. I will make an effort to contact you if you have scheduled an appointment during such times. If I am able to remain accessible on another part of campus, I will indicate my location on my door. Please accept my apologies in advance for this possible inconvenience.
Please Note: Topics & Assignments May Shift; Changes in will be Announced

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Recommended Readings:


Dr. Marti, Soc 320 Sociology of Religion
### January
#### 23, 25

**Karl Marx and Beyond.** Functional vs. Conflict Theories of Religion. Religion and Social Class.

Emile Durkheim and Beyond. Focus on two elements of religious experience: myth and ritual.

**Thursday is a Reading Day.**


**Recommended Readings:**


https://www.jstor.org/stable/3712005?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Liston Pope. 1942. Millhands and Preachers. Yale. (Chs. 1, 2, 3, 5, 8-10, 14).

https://books.google.com/books?id=rG7q1-KEkJoC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false


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**January 30, February 1**

**Emile Durkheim and Beyond.** Focus on two elements of religious experience: myth and ritual.


**Recommended Readings:**


https://monoskop.org/images/5/54/Geertz_Clifford_The_Interpretation_of_Cultures_Selected_Essays.pdf


http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/007540408X125302


https://books.google.com/books?id=prJn3_7IJOAC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false

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**February 6, 8**

**Max Weber.** Charisma and institutionalization.

**Max Weber. *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*** (entire, especially Author's Introduction; and Part 1 = Chapters 1, 2, 3).


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*Pre-discussion paper.

Religion in America Paper due.*
February 13, 15

Religion in America: Alexis de Tocqueville and Beyond.

**Thursday – Also, we will meet with Dr. Kate Bower (Duke Divinity School of Theology) 2pm-3pm regarding American Religion, and then attend lecture 7pm on “Health and the Prosperity Gospel.”**


https://books.google.com/books?id=5DOHmykT6u4C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false


https://davidson.on.worldcat.org/oclc/434083313


Recommended Readings:


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Recommended Readings:


Pre-discussion paper.

Field Report #1 due.


Recommended Readings:


Pre-discussion paper.


Recommended Readings:


https://books.google.com/books?id=ZTlSAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_atb#v=onepage&q&f=false


Recommended Reading:


http://www.jstor.org/stable/25681259

Pre-discussion paper.
Field Report #2 due.
Easter Break


Recommended Readings:


April

Islam and Muslims in America.


Recommended Readings:


April 17, 19

Sexuality and Religion.


Robbee Wedow, Landon Schnabel, Lindsey K D Wedow, and Mary Ellen Konieczny. “‘I’m Gay and I’m Catholic’: Negotiating Two Complex Identities at a Catholic University.” *Sociology of Religion* 78(3) 289–317. [https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx028](https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srx028)


**Recommended Readings:**


Kurien, Prema. 2002. “‘We are Better Hindus Here’ Religion and Ethnicity Among Indian Americans.” Pp. 99-120 in Jung Ha Kim and Pyong Gap Min (eds.), Religions in Asian America: Building Faith Communities. New York: AltaMira. [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/91e7/5a033f5dea76cddf58b67310f53c399ec5d5f.pdf](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/91e7/5a033f5dea76cddf58b67310f53c399ec5d5f.pdf)

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<th>April 24, 26</th>
<th>African American, Multietnic, Multiracial, Multicultural Church.</th>
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<td>Jessica M. Barron. 2016. “Managed Diversity: Race, Place, and an Urban Church.” Sociology of Religion 77(1) 18–36. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srv074">https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srv074</a></td>
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| May 8 (Optional Last Class) | Final Field Report Paper due. | None. |

| May 11-16 | Final Review Period. | None. |