

SOCA 393C
Sociology of Religion
Fall 2016

Class Meeting: Tuesday & Thursday: 1:00pm-2:15pm in Oglebay Hall 118

	Office:	Office Hours:	E-mail address:
Professor Corcoran	400-D Knapp	TTh 10:30am-11:30am	kecorcoran@mix.wvu.edu

Course Description

Have you ever wondered what makes someone more likely to join a particular religion or why certain religious traditions have more members than others? Ever wonder why someone would join a highly strict religion or cult? In this course we will investigate these questions from a sociological perspective. We will examine the factors that lead to conversion, apostasy, and religious commitment and explore what makes certain religious traditions more effective at gaining and retaining members. By the conclusion of this course you will have gained knowledge of classical and contemporary sociological theories of religion that will provide you with a framework for understanding past, present, and future religious phenomena.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe classical and contemporary sociological theories of religion
2. Apply sociological theories of religion to real-world religious groups
3. Critically analyze and compare sociological theories of religion
4. Provide examples of religious groups that illustrate sociological concepts
5. Describe key trends in American religious life
6. Identify factors that affect religious recruitment, commitment, retention, and growth
7. Use primary data as evidence in a paper

NOTE: This course includes readings and audiovisual materials that some of you may find violent or offensive. Our discussions of religious groups will highlight differences in our faiths and values. Throughout the course, we will treat each other and the groups we study with respect as we learn from this material.

Required Text

Stark, Rodney and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

All readings marked “*” on the syllabus are on our E-CAMPUS website (labeled by author’s last name). I cannot help with technical problems. If you experience technical problems, please contact the ITS service desk at 304-293-4444 or email itshelp@mail.wvu.edu. Technical problems do **not** earn extensions on assignments/papers or excuse failure to do the assigned readings for the day.

Class Format and Participation

Class periods will contain a mix of lecture, discussion, and both individual and group activities. You are required to participate in class. Class participation consists of pop quizzes, in-class writing assignments, and active involvement in discussions and in-class activities. Thus, it is important to regularly attend class.

Attendance Policy: I do not take attendance formally. However, attendance is expected and strongly encouraged. **There will be quizzes and in-class activities at various points throughout the semester, thus, if you miss class, you will miss the points associated with the activity and/or quiz.** If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining notes from another student. Once you have carefully gone over notes from another student, any material listed on the website, and the readings, I will be happy to discuss the material with you during office hours.

You are required to know any announcements given in class or sent through email. You are therefore responsible for checking your MIX mail account or making sure that it is forwarded to an account that you do check.

Readings

Students must complete the course readings before the assigned class period and come to class ready to participate.

Introduction Assignment:

Students are required to complete an introduction assignment that is due at the beginning of class on **Tuesday, August 30th**. This assignment includes having your picture taken during class to help me learn your names. **Assignments and exams will NOT be graded until the introduction assignment is fully completed and submitted.** You cannot pass the course without submitting this assignment in its entirety.

Exams

There will be three exams in this class, two during the semester and a **cumulative final exam during finals week**. Exams will involve objective questions, such as multiple choice, True/False, and/or matching. The final will cover material from the entire semester, although it will focus on material from after the second exam. Exams will be based on readings, lectures, videos, and in-class activities.

Paper

You are required to write a 4-5 page paper. This will be an argumentative paper where you will generate and defend a thesis that either applies or critiques a particular theory from the course. As part of the course, you will be required to attend one religious service that you have never attended before and watch four YouTube videos on religious services. You will use observations from these services as evidence in your paper. You will turn in observations from the YouTube videos at the beginning of class on **Tuesday October 18th**, detailed notes regarding the religious service you attend at the beginning of class on **Tuesday November 1st** and a brief proposal for your paper at the beginning of class on **Thursday November 10th**. A hardcopy of the final

paper is due **Thursday December 1st** at the beginning of class. You must also **electronically submit** an exact copy of your final paper by **Thursday December 1st at 5:00pm**.

Reading Assignments

There will be three assignments related to concepts addressed in the readings. Assignments 1 and 2 will require you to take an online survey and write a 1-2 page reaction to the results. Assignment 3 will require you to write a 2-3 page response to the Smith and Snell reading, specifically on whether their description of the religious and spiritual lives of emerging adults applies to you.

Late assignment, quiz, paper, and exam policy

All assignments/papers must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due for full credit unless you have a documented emergency or university-sanctioned absence. I will deduct 10% for each day (not class period) that they are turned in late. **After class on the date the assignment is due counts as one day.** I do not accept assignments over email unless I have approved it beforehand. You may turn in late assignments to me in class or by slipping them under my office door (you must tell me ahead of time that you will be doing this). You may only make-up a quiz if you have a documented emergency or university-sanctioned absence. However, there will be at least six quizzes and one quiz score will be dropped. This allows you to miss one quiz without penalty.

Exams must be taken during class on the date they are scheduled. If you have a documented emergency or absence you may take a make-up exam without penalty for exams 1 and 2. All other students who miss the scheduled exam will have their make-up exam score reduced by 10 percent. All make-up exams must be taken within 3 days of the scheduled exam unless you received prior approval from me. If you need to miss an exam due to a university-sanctioned absence, you must communicate this to me as soon as you become aware of it. **There are NO make-ups for the final exam except for extreme emergencies (e.g., hospitalization).** If you miss a scheduled exam, you must contact me to make arrangements for a make-up exam by **the end of the day of the scheduled exam** or you **will receive a score of zero. If you are unable to take the final exam at the time it is scheduled, you should drop the class.**

Grades

I will regularly update the E-CAMPUS gradebook with your grades. Make sure to keep all of your returned assignments, quizzes, and exams in case you have questions regarding your grades. The grade breakdown is provided in the chart below. If your total score puts you within one point of a higher grade, I will round the grade **ONLY** if you completed all assignments, quizzes, and exams on time, participated in class, and never violated the electronic device or classroom behavior policies. I will also consider improvement in the course when computing final grades. Grades are **NEVER** negotiable. I do not give you a grade, you **earn** your grade. If you want a particular grade, you need to make sure that you have the requisite number of points to receive it. I do **NOT** bump grades because you want a particular grade but did not put in the effort to earn it. **I reserve the right to offer extra credit at any time and to make changes to any grade requirements if it benefits students' grades to do so.**

Grade Breakdown:	Points	Weight
Exam 1	60	20%
Exam 2	60	20%
Final Exam	75	25%
Paper project	54	18%
YouTube Video Notes (4 pts)		
Detailed Field Notes (5 pts)		
Paper Proposal (5 pts)		
Paper (40 pts)		
Reading Assignments	12	4%
Assignment 1 (2 pts)		
Assignment 2 (2 pts)		
Assignment 3 (8 pts)		
Participation/Quizzes/Intro Assignment	39	13%
Introduction Assignment (4 pts)		
Five pop quizzes (5 pts each, 25 pts total)		
In-class activities (5 pts total)		
Participating in discussion (5 pts total)		
Total	300	100%

Letter Grade	Point Scale
A+	291 and above
A	279 to 290
A-	270 to 278
B+	261 to 269
B	249 to 260
B-	240 to 248
C+	231 to 239
C	219 to 230
C-	210 to 218
D+	201 to 209
D	189 to 200
D-	180 to 188
F	179 and below

Academic Integrity

I will enforce rigorous standards of academic integrity in all aspects and assignments of this course. For the detailed policy of West Virginia University regarding the definitions of acts considered to fall under academic dishonesty and possible ensuing sanctions, please see the West Virginia University Academic Catalog at

<http://catalog.wvu.edu/undergraduate/coursecreditstermsclassification/#academicintegritytext>.

Should you have any questions about possibly improper research citations or references, or any other activity that may be interpreted as an attempt at academic dishonesty, please see me before the assignment is due to discuss the matter.

Inclusivity Statement

The West Virginia University community is committed to creating and fostering a positive learning and working environment based on open communication, mutual respect, and inclusion. If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with the Office of Disability Services (293-6700). For more information on West Virginia University's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives, please see <http://diversity.wvu.edu>. **Students requesting special accommodations for exams are required to inform me at least one week in advance of the exam.**

Inclement Weather

While unlikely, if I need to cancel class due to inclement weather, I will send an email to your MIX account by 9:00am on the day of the canceled class (or sooner if possible).

Electronic Devices Policy:

Students may not use cell phones or other electronic devices (including but not limited to tablets, PDAs, MP3 players, and so on) during class except laptops for the purposes of taking notes only, unless told otherwise by me; all prohibited devices must be turned off and placed out of sight until the class has concluded. **A student's first violation of this policy will result in a verbal warning (one verbal warning per semester), and each subsequent violation even during the same lecture will result in a 1% deduction in the student's overall course grade.** Using laptops for any purpose other than taking notes will result in the same penalties. If I see electronic devices during quizzes or exams, this will be considered cheating and I will enforce West Virginia University's academic integrity policy.

Classroom Behavior Policy:

I will not tolerate inattention or incivility to me or to other students in the class. When I am speaking to you and to the class, I expect to have your undivided attention. When another student is speaking, I expect you to give him/her your undivided attention. If you have a question, raise your hand and I will be happy to answer it. You should arrive to class on time; coming to class late disrupts everyone. You should stay for the entire class period unless you made prior arrangements with me. Do not get up and leave during class sessions (this includes when we watch video clips and when we are doing in-class activities), unless you are ill or have spoken with me prior to the class. Do not read newspapers, magazines, or any other material during class unless it pertains to what we are doing. Do not sleep during class. If you are going to sleep, text message, read newspapers, surf the web, do work for other classes, or be disruptive, do not come to class. **A student's first violation of this policy will result in a verbal warning (one verbal warning per semester), and each subsequent violation even during the same lecture will result in a 1% deduction in the student's overall course grade.**

Intellectual Property Policy:

All course materials, including lectures, class notes, quizzes, exams, handouts, presentations, and other materials provided to students for this course are protected intellectual property. As such, the unauthorized purchase, sale, or distribution of these materials may result in disciplinary sanctions under the Campus Student Code.

Course Schedule

The course schedule is subject to change. I will announce any changes to the schedule in class and through MIX email.

Date	Topic	Readings	Exams and Assignments Due
Thursday, August 18	Syllabus	<i>No readings.</i>	
Tuesday, August 23	Introduction: <i>How do we study religion sociologically?</i>	Barker, E. 1995. "The Scientific Study of Religion? You must be Joking!" <i>Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion</i> .*	
Section I: What do Believers and Adherents Seek?			
Thursday, August 25	<i>Moral Community</i>	Pals, D L. 1996. "Society as Sacred: Emile Durkheim." In <i>Seven Theories of Religion</i> . Pp. 88-118.*	
Tuesday, August 30	<i>Emotional Energy</i>	Collins, R. 2010. The Micro-sociology of Religion: Religious Practices, Collective and Individual. *	Intro Assignment
Thursday, September 1	<i>Identity</i>	Smith, C. "Toward a Subcultural Identity Theory of Religious Strength", excerpt from <i>American Evangelicalism</i> (1998). * Peek, L. 2005. "Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity." <i>Sociology of Religion</i> 66(3):215-242.*	
Tuesday, September 6	<i>Moral Worldviews</i>	Wellman, J. K. 2008. Chapters 4 and 7. *	
Thursday, September 8	<i>Security</i>	Pals, D. L. "Religion as Alienation: Karl Marx." * Marx, K. Short excerpt from Contribution to the Critique of Hegel. *	

Date	Topic	Readings	Exams and Assignments Due
Tuesday, September 13	<i>Compensation</i>	Stark, R. and R. Finke. 2000. Chapters 2 and 4.	
Thursday, September 15	<i>Spiritual Mastery</i>	<p>Pals, D. L. 2006. "A Source of Social Action." In <i>Eight Theories of Religion</i>. Pp. 171-174 (start at "Belief and Behavior" and stop before "Religion and Other Spheres of Life"). *</p> <p>Stark, R. and R. Finke. Chapter 5, ONLY pages 114-125, stop before "Mass Conversion."</p> <p>Iannaccone, L. 1990. "Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach." <i>Journal of the Scientific Study of Religion</i> 29/3: 297-314. *</p>	Assignment 1
Tuesday, September 20	Review: Exam 1	No reading. Bring questions.	
Thursday, September 22	Exam 1	Bring a scantron and two pencils.	EXAM 1
Section II: Religion in the United States			
Tuesday, September 27	<i>How Religious is the U.S.A.?</i>	<p>Chaves, M. and D. Hagaman. 2002. "Abiding Faith" <i>Contexts</i> 1/19-26. *</p> <p>Putnam, R. and D. Campbell. 2010. Chapter 4 from <i>American Grace</i>. *</p>	Assignment 2
Thursday, September 29	<i>How is Religion Passed Down in the United States?</i>	Bengston, V. 2013. Excerpt from <i>Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down Across Generations</i> . *	
Tuesday, October 4	<i>How Religious are Emerging Adults in the United States?</i>	Smith, C. and P. Snell. 2009. Excerpt from <i>Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults</i> . Oxford: Oxford University Press. *	Assignment 3

Date	Topic	Readings	Exams and Assignments Due
Section III: Religious Groups and Organizations			
Thursday, October 6	<i>How do religious organizations garner commitment from adherents? Why do religious organizations change over time?</i>	Stark, R. and R. Finke. Chapter 6.	
Tuesday, October 11	No Class	Identify a religious service you will attend. Complete the YouTube observation assignment.	
Thursday, October 13	<i>Do theologically conservative groups have an advantage? The benefits to strictness</i>	Iannaccone, L. 1994. "Why Strict Churches are Strong," ONLY pages 1180-1196 and 1201 (start at Limits to Strictness)-1205. * Stark, R. and R. Finke. Chapter 10, ONLY pages 259-263 (top of page) and ONE case (choose from Roman Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Unitarian-Universalists, and Reform Jews).	
Tuesday, October 18	<i>How do moral worldviews affect organizations?</i>	Wellman, J. K. 2008. Chapter 9, read ONLY pages 127-154 and skim the rest of the chapter. Excerpt from <i>Evangelical vs. Liberal.</i> *	YouTube video notes.
Thursday, October 20	<i>What makes megachurches so successful?</i>	Ellingson, S. 2008. "Rise of the Megachurches and Changes in Religious Culture: Review Article." <i>Sociology Compass.</i> * Wellman, J. K., K. E. Corcoran, and K. Stockly-Meyerdirk. 2013. "'God is like a drug.': Explaining Interaction Rituals in American Megachurches." <i>Sociological Forum.</i> *	
Tuesday, October 25	Review: Exam 2	No readings. Bring questions.	
Thursday, October 27	Exam 2	Bring a scantron and two pencils	EXAM 2

Date	Topic	Readings	Exams and Assignments Due
Section IV: State, Society and Market			
Tuesday, November 1	<i>Is religion bound to decline in the modern world?</i>	<p>Berger, P. 1967. "Secularization and the Problem of Plausibility." <i>Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion</i>. Pp. 126-153. New York: Doubleday & Company. *</p> <p>Stark, R. and R. Finke. 2000. Chapter 3</p>	Detailed notes from the religious service you attend.
Thursday, November 3	<i>How does competition and regulation affect the religious marketplace?</i>	<p>Stark, R. and R. Finke. 2000. Chapters 8 and 9 (for Chapter 9 carefully read at least one country example for each section and skim the rest).</p> <p>Lang, G. and S. C. Chan. 2005. "Folk Temples and the Chinese Religious Economy." <i>Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion</i> 1:1-29. *</p>	
Tuesday, November 8	No Class: Election Day		
Thursday, November 10	<i>Does religion shape economic development?</i>	<p>Greely, A. M. 1995. "A Reply to Marx—Max Weber." <i>Sociology and Religion: A collection of Readings</i>. Pp. 32-39. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers. *</p>	Paper proposal
Tuesday, November 15	<i>Is religion at the root of today's violent conflicts?</i>	<p>Grim, B. and R. Finke. 2011. Excerpt from <i>The Price of Freedom Denied</i>. *</p> <p>Berman, E. and L. R. Iannaccone. 2005. <i>Religious Extremism: The Good, the Bad, and the Deadly</i>. ONLY pages 2-26. *</p>	

Date	Topic	Readings	Exams and Assignments Due
Section V: <i>New Religious Movements</i>			
Thursday, November 17	<i>Why do people join new religious movements? Part 1</i>	Dawson, L. 1998. "Are Converts to New Religious Movements 'Brainwashed'?" Excerpt from <i>Comprehending Cults</i> . *	
Tuesday, November 22	No Class: Fall Recess		
Thursday, November 24	No Class: Fall Recess		
Tuesday, November 29	<i>Why do people join new religious movements? Part 2</i>	Stark, R. and W. Bainbridge. 1980. "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects." <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> 85: 1376-1395. * Snow, D. A., L. A. Zurcher, and S. Eklund-Olson. 1980. "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment." <i>American Sociological Review</i> . 45:787-801. *	
Thursday, December 1	<i>Why do some new religious movements turn violent?</i>	Dawson, L. 1998. "Why Do Some New Religious Movements Become Violent?" Excerpt from <i>Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements</i> . *	Paper
Section VI: <i>Final Exam</i>			
Tuesday, December 6	Review: Final Exam	No Readings. Bring questions.	
WEDNESDAY, December 14, 11am-1pm	Final Exam	Bring a scantron and two pencils	Final Exam