Course Description and Goals:
In 2015, Secretary of State John Kerry wrote that “If I went back to college, I think I would probably major in comparative religion, because that’s how integrated it is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today.” In this class, we will examine just what Kerry refers to in this statement – how religion is connected to and can help us understand major social issues around the world today. The class will explore contemporary global religions in several world regions, with a special emphasis on non-Christian religions in non-Western contexts. We will examine how the study of religion can enhance our understanding of important global phenomena, such as health and health crises, immigration, changing gender roles and family roles, and conflict, violence, and terrorism.

The lens of religion will also aid us in examining what it means for something to be defined as a “problem.” We will examine how “problems” are socially constructed, or determined by societies. In doing this, we will engage with a number of religious practices that have been defined as problems by some, such as religious head coverings for women.

As this is a course on religion as a part of the social world, it is NOT a theological study to determine the doctrinal correctness of various beliefs. We will be studying what people think and do regarding religion and how religious groups behave, without evaluating them compared to some religious “ideal.” We are here to learn and think, not to judge.

At the end of this course, students should have achieved the following learning outcomes:
- Demonstrate understanding of how religion affects and is affected by other major social issues.
- Demonstrate understanding of how the relationship between religion and social issues plays out differently in different global contexts.
- Demonstrate understanding of the diversity of global religions.
**Course Etiquette:**
- I expect everyone attending class to have done the assigned readings and to be prepared to discuss them.
- I expect everyone to practice sensitivity and respect in all course discussions. You should feel free in class discussions to share as much as you are comfortable with about your experiences and background, but you must keep in mind that your classmates’ beliefs and experiences may be different from yours and are equally deserving of respect. I expect you to also respect everyone’s race, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, etc.
- **We will begin and end class on time.** In addition, unless you have an emergency or an extremely compelling reason, you should plan to stay for the entire class period.
- **Do not use your cell phone during class.** Keep cell phones in your bag/pocket, not out on your desk. If you are texting in class, I will ask you to leave.
- You may use computers during class only for course-related activities.
- Please check your UWG email and CourseDen daily M-F.
- Course assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class in hard copy and/or uploaded to the CourseDen dropbox. This will be specified in assignment instructions. **I will not accept or grade assignments turned in over email.**

**Contacting the professor:**
The best way to contact me outside of class is to visit my office hours. If you can’t make these hours, please let me know and we can arrange to meet at another time. If you feel that you are having a problem, please come with specific questions so that I can help you. You should also feel free to visit even if you are not having a “problem” in the course and just want to chat about something. I will also usually be available for a few minutes before and after class.

For more complicated questions, I recommend that you contact me via email – mckendry@westga.edu. I check my email frequently and will respond to you within two business days. When you email me, remember to note in the email which class you are taking, and also to use correct grammatical English and normal capitalization.

**Preparing for class:**
For each hour spent in class, you will probably need to set aside at least two hours for work outside of the class session such as reading, reviewing your notes, and completing your assignments.

Readings are listed in the syllabus on a daily basis. It is your responsibility to prepare for class each day. I recommend doing the reading for the each day before our class meeting, and then reviewing them again briefly afterwards. Your readings are an important resource to succeeding in this course. You will need to be familiar with the terms and concepts we discuss, and periodically reviewing your readings is the best way to stay familiar with important ideas. In addition, you will find our discussions much more meaningful if you spend some time before class to make some notes listing what you think are the main points of the author’s argument, as well as any questions you have about the reading.
**Honor Code and UWG Policies:**
The University Honor Code is in effect for all written assignments and exams. Please read the provisions of the Honor Code carefully, and make certain that you understand and follow them. Violations of the Code will not be tolerated.

In addition to the Honor Code, you should review the University’s policies on the Americans with Disabilities Act, Email, and Credit Hours, as these change periodically. You can view the Honor Code and other policies here: http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf

I expect you to do all of your own work. Initial instances of academic dishonesty (ie plagiarizing on an assignment or cheating on a quiz/exam) will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment/quiz/exam. Additional instances of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Readings:**
I have assigned the following books for our course. They are available for purchase at the university bookstore and online. I strongly encourage you to obtain your own copy of these books.


All other course readings will be available on CourseDen.

**Course requirements and evaluation:**
All written assignments must be turned in hard-copy and/or to the appropriate CourseDen dropbox. I will not grade papers that I receive over email. Grammar and composition are not a formal part of your assignment grades, but both are necessary to clearly present your ideas and experiences in a relatively small number of pages. If I cannot understand what you are trying to say, it is as though you have not said it, which may result in a lower grade.

I do not accept late assignments.

Although regular class attendance and participation are necessary for achieving a good grade in this course, they are not formally part of your course grade. You will simply do much better on
the assignments and exams if you attend class each day and actively participate in discussions and group-work.

Your final grade will be based on the following required assignments:

- Reading Responses and Issue selection 20%
- Midterm Exam 20%
- Final Exam 20%
- Issue in Context Paper 1 10%
- Issue in Context Paper 2 10%
- Comparative Paper 20%

Details for assignments will be provided in class on the day they are assigned and will be available on CourseDen.

I do not give grades, you earn them. You will receive point values, but not letter grades, for individual tests and assignments. I will award final grades using this scale:

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = 0-59

Course Schedule

Week 1
January 10th: Course Introduction

Week 2
January 15th: MLK DAY – NO CLASS
January 17th: Thinking Sociologically About Religion
  - Kurtz, Ch 1 & 2

Week 3
January 22nd: Thinking Sociologically About Religion
  - Kurtz, Ch 3
  - Reading Response Due: Group A-J

January 24th: Thinking Sociologically About Religion
  - Kurtz, Ch 6
  - Reading Response Due: Group K-Z

Week 4
January 29th: Religion, Fashion, and Modernity
  - Bucar, Introduction
  - Reading Response Due: Group A-J
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Material</th>
<th>Response Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 31st</td>
<td>Religion, Fashion, and Modernity</td>
<td>Bucar, Ch 1</td>
<td>Group K-Z</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Response Due: Group K-Z</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>February 5th: Religion, Fashion, and Modernity</td>
<td>Bucar, Ch 2</td>
<td>Group A-J</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Response Due: Group A-J</strong></td>
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<td>February 7th: Religion, Fashion, and Modernity</td>
<td>Bucar, Ch 3</td>
<td>Group K-Z</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Response Due: Group K-Z</strong></td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>February 12th: Religion, Fashion, and Modernity</td>
<td>Bucar, Ch 4 &amp; Epilogue</td>
<td>Group A-J</td>
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<td>February 14th: Religion and Health</td>
<td>Trinitapoli and Weinreb, Ch 1 “AIDS in Context” (CourseDen)</td>
<td>Group K-Z</td>
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<td>Trinitapoli and Weinreb, Ch 2 “Religious Patterns” (CourseDen)</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Response Due: Group K-Z</strong></td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>February 19th: Religion and Health</td>
<td>Trinitapoli and Weinreb, Ch 3 “Interpreting the AIDS Epidemic” (CourseDen)</td>
<td>Group A-J</td>
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<td>Trinitapoli and Weinreb, Ch 10 “Effects of AIDS on Religion” (CourseDen)</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Response Due: Group A-J</strong></td>
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<td>February 21st: Religion and Health</td>
<td>Halliburton, Ch 2 “Three Therapies of South India” (CourseDen)</td>
<td>Group K-Z</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Response Due: Group K-Z</strong></td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>February 26th: Religion and Aging Populations</td>
<td>Traphagan, “Introduction” (CourseDen)</td>
<td>Group A-J</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Response Due: Group A-J</strong></td>
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<td>February 28th: Religion and Aging Populations</td>
<td>Traphagan, Ch 4 “Omairi: The Practice of Concern” (CourseDen)</td>
<td>Group K-Z</td>
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<td>Review for Midterm Exam</td>
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<td><strong>Reading Response Due: Group K-Z</strong></td>
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Week 9
March 5\textsuperscript{th}: MIDTERM EXAM

March 7\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Incarceration
  o Johnson, Introduction & Ch 1
  o Reading Response Due: Group A-J

Week 10
March 12\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Incarceration
  o Johnson, Ch 2 & 3
  o Reading Response Due: Group K-Z

March 14\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Incarceration
  o Johnson, Ch 4
  o Reading Response Due: Group A-J

March 19\textsuperscript{th} & 21\textsuperscript{st} – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

Week 11
March 26\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Incarceration
  o Johnson, Ch 5
  o Reading Response Due: Group K-Z

March 28\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Incarceration
  o Johnson, Ch 6 & Conclusion
  o Reading Response Due: Group A-J

Week 12
April 2\textsuperscript{nd}: Religion and Education
  o Stambach, “Introduction” (CourseDen)
  o Stambach, Ch 4 “Teaching English in Tanzania” (CourseDen)
  o Reading Response Due: Group K-Z

April 4\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Education
  o Stambach, Ch 5 “Planting Church Schools in Kenya” (CourseDen)
  o Reading Response Due: Group A-J

Week 13
April 9\textsuperscript{th}:
  o Kurtz, Ch 5 – Read pp 151-188 and pp 198-207
  o Reading Response Due: Group K-Z
April 11\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Violence
  o Kurtz, Ch 7 – Read pp 251-259
  o Kurtz, Ch 8 – Read pp 290-311
  o Jurgensmeyer, Ch 1
  o Reading Response Due: Group A-J

**Week 14**

April 16\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Violence
  o Last name A-J: Jurgensmeyer, Ch 2
  o Last name K-Z: Jurgensmeyer, Ch 3
  o Reading Response Due: Group K-Z

April 18\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Violence
  o Last name A-J: Jurgensmeyer, Ch 6
  o Last name K-Z: Jurgensmeyer, Ch 4
  o Reading Response Due: Group A-J

**Week 15**

April 23\textsuperscript{rd}: Religion and Violence
  o Jurgensmeyer, Ch 7
  o Reading Response Due: Group K-Z

April 25\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Violence
  o Jurgensmeyer, Ch 8 & 9
  o Reading Response Due: Group A-J

**Week 16**

April 30\textsuperscript{th}: Religion and Violence
  o Jurgensmeyer, Ch 10
  o Review for Final Exam
  o Reading Response Due: Group K-Z

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, May 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2-4 PM