

Sociology of Religion
SOCL 4441
Louisiana State University, Spring 2019

Tuesday & Thursday 1:30-2:50, Stubbs Hall, Room 220

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“The idea of society is the soul of religion”
Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

OVERVIEW

This course introduces undergraduate students to the sociology of religion and devotes substantial attention to global non-Western religion. Special focus is given to social scientific analysis of Hinduism in the Indian subcontinent, but time will also be devoted to global Islam, global Christianity, and religion in several East Asian nations. More broadly, the course will discuss the unique role of the sociology of religion in the context of other disciplines. Sociological theory is arguably one of the key distinctive features of the sociology of religion. As such, we will devote time to both major sociological paradigms and a variety of specific theories used in the sociology of religion. We will investigate how people’s religious involvement is shaped by a variety of social factors such as sociodemographic characteristics, social relationships, subcultural distinctives, institutional contexts, geography, and beliefs. We will also investigate how religion impacts other domains of social life such as demographic behavior, social attitudes, well-being, crime, and civic engagement. Throughout the course, we will examine the importance of different levels of sociological analysis including micro, meso, and macro levels. Students will have the opportunity to explore a sociology of religion topic of their choice at the end of the course.

The sociology of religion deals with a variety of intriguing questions. Is secularization inevitable? Does material deprivation lead to increased religiosity? Why do some religious groups grow while others shrink? Does religious involvement influence people’s health and political attitudes? We will explore questions such as these and many others as the course unfolds over the semester.

In addition to providing a foundational knowledge of the sociology of religion, the course also aims to develop students’ skills in critical thinking, rigorous discussion, collaborating in small groups, and effectively presenting material orally and in writing. The knowledge base and skills developed in this course will provide practical tools for students in a variety of future endeavors.

REQUIRED READINGS

Book chapters, empirical articles, and topical readings provide background and focus for lectures and discussions in the class. Readings are posted on Moodle in the “Readings” folder and are listed at the end of the syllabus.

Required text: Prothero, Stephen. 2010. *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World*. New York, NY: HarperOne.

COURSE WEBSITE

Moodle is available through your *myLSU* account. I will post grades, readings, and any updates to this syllabus on Moodle. Announcements will come through email from me or my Teaching Assistant (TA) and will only go to students LSU email account.

REQUIREMENTS

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND READINGS

It will be extremely difficult to be successful in this course without regularly attending class, reviewing notes, and keeping up with the readings. If you are unable to attend class on a particular day, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate rather than request notes from the instructor. You are responsible for all information communicated in class, whether or not you are in attendance. Information on scheduling changes will be emailed or posted on Moodle.

You are expected to be able to discuss readings in class, including the following items.

- a. What assumptions or claims do the authors of the article make about religion and how it relates to society?
- b. Theoretical contributions and ideas – What are the main conceptual and theoretical ideas in the piece? How developed are the ideas? How innovative or insightful are the main ideas underlying the paper? What are strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical ideas?
- c. Methodological approach (where appropriate) – What is the general methodological strategy or approach taken? How appropriate is it? How good is the fit between theory, method, and analysis? How rigorous and thorough is the empirical analysis? What are strengths and weaknesses of the methodological approach?
- d. Contribution to the field – Theoretical? Empirical? Does the reading have a clearly important message? What is it?
- e. Interest value of the piece – To what audience? What policy implications are there?
- f. The quality of the writing – Is the piece clearly written and pleasurable to read? What can be learned for your own writing?

In addition to attending class, keeping up with readings, and engaging in class discussions, in-class assignments will also be given during a number of course periods to assess student learning and to ensure that students are actively participating in class. These assignments will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. In general, “good faith efforts” which demonstrate that you have done the assigned readings or have thoughtfully reflected on a documentary film segment will be given credit on in-class assignments. Pop quizzes will be given over certain readings.

INDIVIDUAL PRESENTATION

Near the end of the course, each of you will give a brief presentation summarizing a sociological study of religion during semester. Student presentations frequently generate in-class discussion and presenters should be prepared to answer questions and facilitate short discussions if these arise. A written summary of the presentation will be due earlier in the semester (see course schedule below). I will discuss these presentations in class and post a more detailed description in Moodle.

GROUP PRESENTATION

Each of you will contribute to a group presentation on a topic during the semester. Each member should contribute equally. Student presentations frequently generate in-class discussion and presenters should be prepared to answer questions and facilitate short discussions if these arise. I will provide further instructions regarding group presentations during the course.

TESTS

Lateness will not be tolerated on test days. No new tests will be administered 10 minutes after the start of class. Make-up tests can create unfair situations among students, so they will only be permitted with advance notification and in unavoidable, extreme, and well-documented circumstances. To receive credit for a test, a student must return both his/her scantron and test sheet prior to exiting the classroom. The student's name must be clearly written on both the scantron and test sheet.

THE FINAL PAPER will be a literature review of a topic in the sociology of religion. A separate handout will be distributed in class and posted on Moodle detailing parameters of the final paper.

ABSENCE AND MAKE-UP POLICY

You will not be penalized for missing up to 3 classes. These 3 absences include both your excused and unexcused absences. Beyond these, in order to be excused for an absence, you will be required to provide written documentation of a valid reason for your absence within one week's time (see LSU Policy Statement 22, posted on the course website, for a list of valid reasons for student absences). No graded items can be made-up without such documentation.

GRADING

Test 1	15%
Test 2	15%
Test 3	15%
Individual Presentation	5%
Group Presentation	5%
Quizzes	5%
Final Paper	25%
Class participation	15%
Total	100%

Based on the cumulative score earned on the above components, letter grades will be assigned as follows:

100-97: A+
96.99-93: A
92.99-90: A-
89.99-87: B+
86.99-83: B
82.99-80: B-
79.99-77: C+
76.99-73: C
72.99-70: C-
69.99-67: D+
66.99-63: D
62.99-60: D-
59.99-: F

Note: No extra credit options are available in this course. I do not round up scores when calculating final grades.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Statement on Academic Integrity. Louisiana State University adopted the Commitment to Community in 1995 to set forth guidelines for student behavior both inside and outside of the classroom. The Commitment to Community charges students to maintain high standards of academic and personal integrity. All students are expected to read and be familiar with the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community, found online at www.lsu.edu/saa. It is your responsibility as a student at LSU to know and understand the academic standards for our community. Students who are suspected of violating the Code of Conduct will be referred to the office of Student Advocacy & Accountability. This course utilizes the Turn-it-In plagiarism detection software.

Plagiarism and Citation Method. As a student at LSU, it is your responsibility to refrain from plagiarizing the academic property of another and to utilize appropriate citation method for all coursework. In this class, it is recommended that you use citation methods common in sociology. ASA, Chicago, and APA are commonly used. (See “ASA Style” at

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html#.) Ignorance of the citation method is not an excuse for academic misconduct. It is students' responsibility to remember there is a difference between paraphrasing and quoting and how to properly cite each respectively. UNC and Purdue OWL have helpful summaries of plagiarism with examples. See:

<http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/plagiarism> ; https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html
> Research and Citation > Using Reserach > Avoiding Plagiarism.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Louisiana State University is committed to promoting an atmosphere to end discrimination against individuals with special needs, to bring persons with special needs into the social and economic mainstream, and to provide enforceable standards to address discrimination against individuals with special needs. In order to ensure reasonable accommodations, students with special needs should register with the Office of Disability Services. If you will need special accommodations in this course, *please contact me as soon as possible.*

IMPORTANT NOTES

SYLLABUS CHANGES

This syllabus is subject to change at my discretion. However, I do not expect the overall workload to increase if changes are made.

ELECTRONICS POLICY

No laptop computers, phones, or other electronic devices. Due to distractions caused by use of the above devices, their use is banned in my class unless you have a documented disability requiring their use. Please print off readings if you would like to refer to them in class.

A NOTE ON RESPECT

Please be respectful of other members of this class. Please refrain from conversations with other students during lectures, turn off and put away cell phones upon entering the classroom, and wait until I dismiss the class before starting to pack up your things. If it is necessary to leave class early, document your reason with me before class and please choose a seat near the door so that others are not disrupted upon your exit. Finally, please show respect to others with views that differ from your own including fellow students with differing religious views. A college education should help you develop the ability to step inside the shoes of another person to understand his or her point of view in an intelligent manner.

****The semester schedule is on the next page****

<u>Date</u>		<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading due</u>	<u>Group Presentation #</u>
10-Jan	Thu	Introduction to the course		
15-Jan	Tue	Secularization and global religious vitality	Hackett & Stonawski 2017	
17-Jan	Thu	Global growth and decline of religious groups	Yang 2006	
22-Jan	Tue	Global growth and decline of religious groups	Froese 2004	1
24-Jan	Thu	New Religious Movements	Olson 1999	
29-Jan	Tue	The sociological study of religion	Wuthnow 2003	2
31-Jan	Thu	Social dimensions of individual religiousness	Stroope 2012	
5-Feb	Tue	Social dimensions of individual religiousness	Ruiter & Tubergen 2009	3
7-Feb	Thu	Individual religiousness in global Hinduism	Prothero 2010 "Hinduism"	
12-Feb	Tue	Test 1		
14-Feb	Thu	Religion, health, and well-being	Boorah 2018	4
19-Feb	Tue	Religion, health, and well-being	Krause et al. 1999	5
21-Feb	Thu	Religious affiliation	Emerson & Smith 2001	
26-Feb	Tue	Religious affiliation	Ali 2002	
28-Feb	Thu	Research session	Edwards 2014a; Edwards 2014b	
5-Mar	Tue	Mardi Gras (No class)		
7-Mar	Thu	Religious affiliation	Vasquez 2003	6
12-Mar	Tue	Test 2		
14-Mar	Thu	Religious socialization	Anthony et al. 2007	
19-Mar	Tue	Religious socialization		
21-Mar	Thu	Religion & crime	Corcoran et al. 2012	7
26-Mar	Tue	Global Buddhism	Prothero 2010 "Buddhism"	
28-Mar	Thu	Religion & social capital / Plagiarism presentation	Sarkissian 2012	8
2-Apr	Tue	Global Islam & religious discrimination	Prothero 2010 "Islam"	
4-Apr	Thu	India/US religious comparison	Kurien 2007; Individual Presentation written content due	
9-Apr	Tue	Test 3		
11-Apr	Thu	Individual presentations and class discussion		9
16-Apr	Tue	Spring Break (No class)		
18-Apr	Thu	Spring Break (No class)		
19-Apr	Tue	Individual presentations and class discussion	Becker & Richards 2007	10
23-Apr	Thu	Individual presentations and class discussion		11
25-Apr	Tue	Concentrated study period		
29-Apr	Mon	Final Paper due 5pm		

Course Readings

- Ali, Syed. 2002. "Collective and Elective Ethnicity: Caste among Urban Muslims in India." *Sociological Forum* 17 (4): 593–620.
- Anthony, Francis-Vincent, Chris A.M. Hermans, and Carl Sterkens. 2007. "Religious Practice and Religious Socialization: Comparative Research among Christian, Muslim and Hindu Students in Tamilnadu, India." *Journal of Empirical Theology* 20: 100–128.
- Becker, Howard S., and Pamela Richards. 2007. "Terrorized by the Literature." In *Writing for Social Scientists: How to Start and Finish Your Thesis, Book, or Article*, 2nd ed., 135–49. University of Chicago Press.
- Borooh, Vani Kant. 2018. "Caste, Religion, and Health Outcomes in India." *Economic & Political Weekly* 53 (10): 65.
- Corcoran, Katie E., David Pettinicchio, and Blaine Robbins. 2012. "Religion and the Acceptability of White-Collar Crime: A Cross-National Analysis." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51 (3): 542–567.
- Edwards, Mark Evan. 2014a. "Borrowing Well From the Literature." In *Writing in Sociology*, 2 edition. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- . 2014b. "Quantitative Papers: The Literature Review." In *Writing in Sociology*, 2 edition. SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Emerson, Michael O., and Christian Smith. 2001. "Color Blind." In *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, 69–92. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Froese, Paul. 2004. "After Atheism: An Analysis of Religious Monopolies in the Post-Communist World." *Sociology of Religion* 65 (1): 57–75.
- Hackett, Conrad, and Marcin Stonawski. 2017. "The Changing Global Religious Landscape." Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center. <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/>.
- Krause, Neal, Berit Ingersoll-Dayton, Jersey Liang, and Hidehiro Sugisawa. 1999. "Religion, Social Support, and Health among the Japanese Elderly." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 405–421.
- Kurien, Prema. 2007. "Hinduism in India." In *A Place at the Multicultural Table: The Development of an American Hinduism*, 19–39. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press.
- Olson, Kyle B. 1999. "Aum Shinrikyo: Once and Future Threat?" *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 5 (4): 513.
- Prothero, Stephen. 2010. *God Is Not One: The Eight Rival Religions That Run the World*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- Ruiter, Stijn, and Frank van Tubergen. 2009. "Religious Attendance in Cross-National Perspective: A Multilevel Analysis of 60 Countries." *American Journal of Sociology* 115 (3): 863–95.
- Sarkissian, Ani. 2012. "Religion and Civic Engagement in Muslim Countries." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51 (4): 607–622.
- Stroope, Samuel. 2012. "Caste, Class, and Urbanization: The Shaping of Religious Community in Contemporary India." *Social Indicators Research* 105 (3): 499–518.

- Vasquez, Manuel A. 2003. "Tracking Global Evangelical Christianity." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71 (1): 157–73.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 2003. "Studying Religion, Making It Sociological." *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, 16–30.
- Yang, Fenggang. 2006. "The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China." *The Sociological Quarterly* 47 (1): 93–122.