SOCI 310
Religion in Society

Course Description:

“A religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite in one single community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.”

Emile Durkheim

“...the message that was transmitted to me under a pine tree in North Carolina on a cold winter moonlit night.... Close your eyes, let your hands and nerve-ends drop, stop breathing for 3 seconds, listen to the silence inside the illusion of the world, and you will remember the lesson you forgot, which was taught in immense milky ways of cloudy innumerable worlds long ago and not even at all. It is all one vast awakened thing. I call it the golden eternity.”

Jack Kerouac

The sociology of religion studies the meaning of religion in contemporary ways of life. As such it is constantly being revised to account for changes in the nature of religious experiences, practices and events. How do sociologists explain religion? Why do they feel the need to explain religion? How do they define religion? What is the relationship between religion and other social and political phenomena? These questions and the answers sociologists provide have become increasingly fluid over the last few decades. In this course we will seek to revitalize these questions by asking ourselves what it is we want to know about religion and why. In what ways does sociology help or hinder our understanding of religion? What is the meaning of religion in the whole way of life that we are part of?

As a reference point for our inquiries, we will consider classical and contemporary approaches to religion with regard to current phenomena such as religious diversity, secularization, popular religious movements, and our special topic, fundamentalism.

Course Materials:


Teaching Assistant (TA):

Galina Scolnic: galinas@uvic.ca

Important Dates:

*Take home exam 1 due:* Wed, May 25
*Take home exam 2 due:* Mon, June 13
*Take home exam 3 due:* Fri, June 17
*Final research paper due:* Fri, June 24
Course Requirements:

Course evaluation will be assessed as follows:

- 20% Take Home Exam 1
- 20% Take Home Exam 2
- 10% Take Home Exam 3
- 40% Final Research Essay
- 10% Class Participation

Take Home Exams:

There will be three take home exams in the course. These will consist of a choice of two or three short essay questions in which students will engage briefly and concisely with course materials from the textbooks and the lecture. Take home exams will be handed in on Coursespaces.

The first take home exam will be handed out May 18 and will be due at the beginning of class on May 25. The second take home exam will be handed out on June 6 and will be due at the beginning of class on June 13. The third take home exam will be handed out on June 15 and will be due at midnight on June 17.

The take home exams will not be cumulative, but based on material from the beginning, middle and end of the course respectively.

Final Research Essay:

Final research papers will focus in some way on the general question: What is the meaning of religion in our contemporary way of life (or Lebensführung, “conduct of life”)? How does sociology deal with this question?

The specific topic of the paper is open, but students should choose from among four types of research paper:

- Classic secondary source, evidence based research
- Theoretical research
- Autobiography case study
- Embodied research of a specific ritual practice

These options will be discussed in more detail in class. Essays will be 10-12 pages in length (double spaced, standard 12 pt font) and conform to the sociology department’s criteria for third year essays. Essays are due on Friday, June 24 (at midnight). They will contribute 40% of the student’s final grade.

Class Participation:

A grade for class participation will be assigned based on the value of an individual’s contributions in small group and class discussions. As participation is a difficult component to grade, particularly for those who are uncomfortable speaking in front of the class, the class participation grade will be based on the average grade received for the course assignments and exams for those who attend 80% or more of the small group discussions and in class exercises. It will be graded higher for those who contribute regularly to class discussion in a productive way and lower for those who do not attend or participate regularly. Class participation will contribute 10% to students’ final grades.

Course Experience Survey (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term you will have the opportunity to complete a confidential course experience survey (CES) regarding your learning experience. The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. When it is time for you to complete the survey, you will receive an email inviting you to do so. If you do not receive an email invitation, you can go directly to http://ces.uvic.ca. You will need to use your UVic NetLink ID to access the survey, which can be done on your laptop, tablet or mobile device. I will remind you nearer the time, but please be thinking about this important activity, especially the following three questions, during the course.

1. What strengths did your instructor demonstrate that helped you learn in this course?
2. Please provide specific suggestions as to how the instructor could have helped you learn more effectively.
3. Please provide specific suggestions as to how this course could be improved.
Course Outline:

Part One: The Sociology of Region

May 9, 11, 13: INTRODUCTION: What is the sociology of religion?

Required: Dawson and Thiessen, Chapter 1 and 2

Recommended:


May 16, 18, 20: THE DIMENSIONS AND SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES OF RELIGION

Required: Dawson and Thiessen, Chapter 3 and 4

Recommended:

Steven Batchelor, Confession of a Buddhist Atheist. (NY: Spiegel and Grau, 2011)


Friedrich Nietzsche, “What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?” Excerpt from The Genealogy of Morals

Karl Marx, ”Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction”

Emile Durkheim, “Religion and Society.” Excerpt from The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life


Max Weber, ”Science as a Vocation” (excerpt)

May 25, 27: SECULARIZATION
Required: Dawson and Thiessen, Chapter 5

Recommended:
  Friedrich Nietzsche, “The Madman,” Excerpt from The Gay Science

**May 30, June 1, 3: RELIGION IN LATE MODERNITY AND THE CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS LIFE OF CANADIANS**

Required: Dawson and Thiessen, Chapters 6 and 7

Recommended:
  Friedrich Nietzsche, “What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals?” Excerpt from The Genealogy of Morals
  Karl Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction”
  Emile Durkheim, “Religion and Society.” Excerpt from The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life
  Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation” (excerpt)

**Part Two: Fundamentalism**

**June 6, 8, 10: THE NEW RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN CANADA AND INTRODUCTION TO FUNDAMENTALISM**

Required: Dawson and Thiessen, Chapter 8
  Malise Ruthven, Chapters 1 and 2

Recommended:

**June 13, 15, 17: FUNDAMENTALIST LITERALISM, THE PLACE OF WOMEN AND THE POLITICAL**

Required: Malise Ruthven, Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6

Recommended:


**June 20, 22, 24: COURSE CONCLUSION**

**FINAL PAPER due JUNE 24**

Required: TBA
Department of Sociology Evaluation and Writing Expectations

*Effective September 2012

### 100-level courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum writing requirement</th>
<th>In-class or take-home assignment spanning at least <strong>5 pages</strong> in length.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Primarily multiple-choice exams, short assignment, possibly written component on exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Lectures and tutorials. Primarily textbook readings. Students also read original sociological research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 200-level courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum writing requirement</th>
<th>At least one assignment involving library research that spans at least <strong>8 pages</strong> in length.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>A combination of multiple choice and written exams, including short-answer and essay questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Lectures. Primarily textbook readings. Students also read original sociological research.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 300-level courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum writing requirement</th>
<th>An essay involving literature reviews and applications of concepts. A minimum of <strong>10 pages</strong> in length.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Short-answer and primarily essay-type exams, written assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Lectures. Assigned readings include scholarly articles and/or primary sociological writing. Readings may also include textbook chapters.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 400-level courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning outcomes</th>
<th>One term paper, involving advanced literature reviews and the application of a sociological model, spanning at least <strong>15 pages</strong> in length.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Major paper, short-answer and primarily essay-type exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Format</td>
<td>Lectures/seminars. Assigned readings include scholarly articles, original monographs, and primary sources. Textbooks are not used.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Official Grading Standards
Undergraduate Records, University of Victoria, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passing Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>90 – 100</td>
<td>Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>85 – 89</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>80 – 84</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>77 – 79</td>
<td>Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>73 – 76</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70 – 72</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>65 – 69</td>
<td>Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>60 – 64</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50 – 59</td>
<td>Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM</td>
<td>Excluded Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>Complete (pass). Used only for 0-unit courses and those credit courses designated by the Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Failing Grades</th>
<th>Grade Point Value</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td>Conditional supplemental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/X</td>
<td>Excluded Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>Did not complete course requirements by the end of the term; no supplemental. Used only for co-op work terms and for courses designated by Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings. The grade is EXCLUDED from the calculation of all grade point averages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/X</td>
<td>Excluded Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance. Completed course requirements; no supplemental. Used only for co-op work terms and for courses designated by Senate. Such courses are identified in the course listings. The grade is EXCLUDED from the calculation of all grade point averages.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
University Course Policies

Examination and Assignment Policy
As per university policy, absence is only permitted in cases of illness, accident, family affliction, or religious obligations. Missing an exam for other reasons will result in an “F.” Students are responsible for providing official documentation to justify their absence, e.g. a doctor’s note. In cases of justified absences, the student has the right to request a make-up exam. Please note that exams will not be rescheduled to accommodate students’ personal circumstances, including travelling plans. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Grading
In accordance with Senate Regulations, grading on the curve is not permitted. The grades students receive in this course reflect their performance in relation to specified academic expectations. Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments (in case of loss) and should retain all their marked assignments in case they wish to apply for a Review of Assigned Standings. Students have the right to view their marked examinations with their instructor, providing they apply to do so within a month of receiving their final grades. All exams remain the property of the University of Victoria.

Attendance
As per university policy, attendance to all classes is mandatory. Students who are unavoidably absent because of illness, accident or family affliction should report to the instructor as soon as possible. Absences that cannot be justified in accordance with university policies will be subject to penalty at the discretion of the instructor. If you are absent for reasons other than those specified under university policies, then it is not the responsibility of the instructor or the TA to help you catch up with missed lecture material.

Academic Integrity
The Department of Sociology fully and rigorously enforces the Senate Policy on Academic integrity. It is of utmost importance that students who do their work honestly be protected from those who do not. Because this policy is in place to ensure that students carry out and benefit from the learning activities assigned in each course, it is expected that students will cooperate in its implementation. Students caught cheating in the course will be expelled and reported to the Chair of the Department of Sociology and the Dean of Social Sciences for disciplinary action.

Plagiarism and Cheating
Students must note the statement on “Plagiarism” in the UVic Calendar, and all regulations under the “Policy on Academic Integrity.” Quotes and citations must be used for any material longer than 5 words in succession that is not the student’s original work.
Accommodations
The University of Victoria accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre. The University accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. As per university policy, students who plan to be absent for varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with the instructor before the drop date.

Classroom Etiquette
Distractions can easily hinder the difficult process of conveying knowledge. Please observe standard classroom etiquette. Entering the classroom after the instructor's presentation has started can be distracting both to the instructor as well as to other students. While occasional lateness may be unavoidable, your dedication to being on time is greatly appreciated. The use of electronic communication devices is also a distraction to both the instructor and classmates. This includes texting and surfing the internet. Please turn off your electronic communication devices before entering the classroom and refrain from using them during class. If there is a justifiable reason for using your device during class (e.g., expecting an urgent call related to health or illness), please notify the instructor ahead of time, keep the device on vibrate, and exit the room if you must receive a message.

Harassment
The Department of Sociology supports the University’s policies on harassment, and is committed to ensuring that all students, staff, and faculty are able to exercise fully their rights to participate in activities at the University without fear of harassment.

Commitment to Inclusiveness and Diversity
The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members. The Department of Sociology is committed to inclusiveness and to a welcoming, friendly learning and working environment. We condemn sexism, ageism, racism, ethnocentrism, homophobia and inappropriate behaviour toward people with a disability.