



## **Course syllabus: Religion in contemporary France**

**Credit value:** 2 (meets for 2 hours per week over 13 weeks)

**Language of instruction:** French and English.

**Semesters:** fall and spring

**Instructor:** Alex Neff, director Accès-France

**Learning objectives:** Students will understand how the history of religion in France, particularly the relationship between the Church and the State, continues to shape the religious landscape of the country today. Students will learn to use some sociological tools for analyzing religion. They will use these tools to examine a religious community in France through participatory observation. Students will articulate how faith is expressed differently in the United States and in France.

### **Section1: Theoretical approaches to the sociology of religion**

1. What is religion? Durkheim on sacred/profane distinction, Bruce and Davies on common religion
2. Institutions: Church and sect distinctions in M. Weber, E. Troeltsch and J. Yinger.
3. Authority: Leadership roles in M. Weber, Protestant "précarité" in J.P. Willaime
4. Modernity and post-modernity: the secularization debate in P. Berger, S. Bruce and B. Wilson
5. Globalization of religious movements: What happens when religions cross borders? M. Noll, P. Jenkins and R. Wuthnow on spread of evangelical Christianity.

### **Section 2: Historical overview of religion in France, from eldest daughter of the Church to post-Christian society**

1. Power and the Church in medieval France
2. Challenges to religious and political hegemony, 496-1789: repression of Albigensians, Judaism in 14<sup>th</sup> century Alsace, Protestant Reformation and Wars of Religion, Edict of Nantes and Edict of Fontainebleau
3. Laïcité and Republic: religion and modernity in France (1789-1905)
4. The end of Christian France? 1905- present

### **Section 3: Religious landscape of contemporary France**

1. Islam and "valeurs républicaines"
2. Catholicism as an expression of national identity
3. Protestantism and the rise of evangelical movement
4. Religious "bricolage" in D. Hervieu-Léger

#### **Readings:**

Selections in French from the following:

- Fath, Sébastien, *Du ghetto au réseau*, 2005.
- Hervieu-Léger, Danièle, *Le pèlerin et le converti*, 2000.
- Willaime, Jean-Paul, *La précarité protestante*, 1992.

Selections in English from the following:

- Berger, Peter, *The Desecularization of the World*
- Jenkins, Phillip, *God's Continent*
- Noll, Mark, *The New Shape of Global Christianity*
- Wuthnow, Robert, *Boundless Faith: The Global Reach of American Churches*

#### **Grading:**

Final grade is based on a mid-term exam (25%) a final exam (25%) and a research project (50%).

The research project consists of:

- identifying a religious community in the Strasbourg area and studying it through participatory observation,
- presenting an overview of the community to the class,
- using the sociological tools from the first part of the course, preparing a 10-15 page paper in French analyzing the social situation of the community.