

SOC 325 / REL 325: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
Maryville College, Spring 2011

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Office Hours: Thursdays 9:30-11am, Fridays 9:30-11am, and by appointment

Class Time: MW 2:00-3:15pm in Thaw 202

Course Description and Objectives

Religion exists in a social context. The sociology of religion is concerned with this social nature of religion and the mutually influencing interactions between religion and its social environment. While religion can be studied through a variety of theoretical lenses, the sociological perspective treats religion as a social institution that can be an agent of social change, control, cohesion, and division. We will be attuned to the ways in which religion intersects with other social institutions including the state, education, and family, as well as the intersection of religion with race, class, gender, and sexuality.

This course does not attempt to argue for the legitimacy of one set of religious beliefs over another set of beliefs (or none at all). It is not a philosophy or theology course, and thus will not delve into the theological nuances of particular belief systems or ponder questions such as “Is there a God?” or “Why is there so much suffering in the world?” Such approaches do not fall within the scope of this course nor of the social sciences in general.

Our primary objectives are three-fold:

1. To gain an understanding of the sociological approach to studying religion.
2. To recognize ways in which religion and society (including social institutions and identities) are interconnected.
3. To learn about some of the major issues, problems, and findings in the sociology of religion.

Course Readings

The following two books are required for all students:

Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Bruce, Tricia C. 2011. *Faithful Revolution: How Voice of the Faithful Is Changing the Church*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

In addition, one of the following three books is required (your selection will depend on your group assignment):

Ammerman, Nancy Tatom. 2002 [1987]. *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Brown, Karen McCarthy. 2001 [1991]. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cadge, Wendy. 2005. *Heartwood: The First Generation of Theravada Buddhism in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Additional required readings will be available on the Tartan, which you are expected to check regularly.



Recommended watching/listening:

Religion and Ethics Newsweekly airs on PBS (Ch. 2) every Sunday at 5:00pm. It is also available for free via podcast on iTunes or at the following website: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/>. I encourage you to bring up relevant stories in class.

Class Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory and expected. You have three allowances if important circumstances lead you to miss class. On the fourth and subsequent absence, your final grade will decrease 5 percentage points per absence. There will be no make-ups for in-class activities, and you are responsible for getting all notes and missed information from a classmate.

Course Requirements and Grading

This course consists of the following components:

Ethnography Panel Participation	75 points (15%)
February Meetings Response Paper	25 points (5%)
Exam One	100 points (20%)
Exam Two	100 points (20%)
Religion in East TN: Field Report	75 points (15%)
Five Reading Reactions (5 points each)	25 points (5%)
Final Paper	100 points (20%)

Total possible points = 500 points (100%)

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

A	470-500 pts.
A-	450-469 pts.
B+	434-449 pts.
B	420-433 pts.
B-	400-419 pts.
C+	384-399 pts.
C	370-383 pts.
C-	350-369 pts.
D+	334-349 pts.
D	320-333 pts.
D	300-319 pts.
F	<300 pts.

Course Components

- On all days that we read *The Sacred Canopy* and *Faithful Revolution*, you are required to come prepared with 1-page (written or typed) of **Reading Reactions** featuring your comments and questions for the class in light of the assigned reading. Come prepared for summary and discussion.
- I will distribute more information regarding the **Ethnography Panels** (March 7 and 9). This is not a group presentation; rather, you will be individually responsible for reading your ethnography and preparing responses to the panel questions.
- We will have **two exams** in this class, consisting primarily of essay questions. There is no final exam.
- You are required to write a brief (1-2 page) response paper that reflects upon and connects one session of the **February Meetings** (February 7-8) to the sociology of religion.
- I will also distribute more information regarding your **Reports from the Field**, for which your small group will attend a religious service, write about the sociological relevance of your observations, and report to the class.
- You will have a few options to choose from regarding your **Final Paper** of approximately 2000-2500 words. Instructions will be available later in the semester.

Additional Information

- Academic integrity and honesty are fundamental to academic work; the Maryville College Covenant affirms these values. Incidences of plagiarism, cheating, or other academic dishonesty will result in a grade of 'F' for the assignment in question.
- Students who might need a learning or physical accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Lori Hunter at 981-8124 to discuss coordination of services related to documented disabilities. The Disability Services office is located in the Learning Center in Bartlett Hall 204.
- Unless otherwise noted (as with the Reading Reactions), all papers should be word-processed and submitted in hardcopy. Printing on both sides is always acceptable.
- Feel free to email or come by during office hours with any questions.

Course Schedule

“SC” refers to *The Sacred Canopy* (Berger)

“FR” refers to *Faithful Revolution* (Bruce)

Date	Topic	Reading
Wed. Jan 26	Introduction to the Sociology of Religion	
Mon. Jan 31	Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Religion	Excerpts from the classics (available on the Tartan)
Wed. Feb 2	Conceptualizing and Operationalizing Religion, cont.	Excerpts from the classics (available on the Tartan)
Mon. Feb 7	Religion and World Construction <i>DUE: Reading Reaction #1</i>	SC Chapter 1

Date	Topic	Reading
[Mon. Feb 7]	February Meetings: “A View From the Underside: <i>The Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer</i> ” (7pm, Nutt Theatre)	
[Tues. Feb 8]	February Meetings: “Laughter for Life” (1pm, Nutt Theatre) “Clarence Jordan and the God Movement” (7pm, Nutt Theatre)	
Wed. Feb 9	Religion and World Maintenance <i>DUE: Reading Reaction #2</i>	SC Chapter 2 + scan rest of book, paying special attention to themes of theodicy & secularization
Mon. Feb 14	A New Paradigm	“Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States” (R. Stephen Warner)
Wed. Feb 16	Religious Socialization	“Religious Socialization: Sources of Influence and Influences of Agency” (Darren E. Sherkat)
Mon. Feb 21	Religion and Gender	First half of ethnography
Wed. Feb 23	Religion and Class	Excerpt from <i>The Social Sources of Denominationalism</i> (H. Richard Niebuhr)
Mon. Feb 28	Religion and Authority	(Check the Tartan)
Wed. Mar 2	Religious Conversion and Commitment	“Social Predictors of Retention in and Switching from the Religious Faith of Family of Origin: Another Look Using Religious Tradition Self-Identification” (Christian Smith and David Sikkink)
Mon. Mar 7	Ethnography Panels, Round One	Second half of ethnography
Wed. Mar 9	Ethnography Panels, Round Two	None
March 14-18	Spring Break!!	
Mon. Mar 21	First Exam	None
Wed. Mar 23	Religious Collectives	Excerpt from <i>Habits of the Heart</i> (Robert N. Bellah et al.)
Mon. Mar 28	Religion and Social Cohesion <i>Group One Field Report</i>	“Civil Religion in America” (Robert N. Bellah) and “On the role of images in the construction of narratives about the crash of United Airlines Flight 93” (Alexander Riley)
Wed. Mar 30	Religion and Conflict <i>Group Two Field Report</i>	Excerpt from <i>Holy Terrors: Thinking About Religion After September 11</i> (Bruce Lincoln)

Date	Topic	Reading
Mon. Apr 4	Religion and Politics <i>Group Three Field Report</i>	Excerpt from <i>Culture Wars</i> (James Davison Hunter)
Wed. Apr 6	Religion and Politics, cont. <i>Group Four Field Report</i>	(Check the Tartan)
Mon. Apr 11	Religion and Race and Ethnicity <i>Group Five Field Report</i>	“Equal in Christ, but not in the World” (Michael O. Emerson, Christian Smith, & David Sikkink) and “Bringing Race to the Center: The Importance of Race in Racially Diverse Religious Organizations” (Korie L. Edwards)
Wed. Apr 13	No Class: Social Science Division Advising Day	
Mon. Apr 18	Religion and Social Movements / Social Change <i>Group Six Field Report</i>	(Check the Tartan)
Wed. Apr 20	Religion and Social Movements / Social Change, cont. <i>DUE: Reading Reaction #3</i>	FR Introduction, Chapters 1-4, and Methodology
Mon. Apr 25	Religion and Social Movements / Social Change, cont. <i>DUE: Reading Reaction #4</i>	FR Chapters 5-6
Wed. Apr 27	Religion and Social Movements / Social Change, cont. <i>DUE: Reading Reaction #5</i>	FR Chapters 7-9
Mon. May 2	Second Exam	None
Wed. May 4	Course Conclusion	“Is There a Place for ‘Scientific’ Studies of Religion?” (Robert Wuthnow)
Tues. May 10	<i>Final Paper Due in Thaw 203A by 1pm.</i>	