

SOC 302 SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

(GEP:G3) 3 credits

Spring 1999

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 9:00-9:50 a.m.

LAC 342

Instructor: Lutz Kaelber

E-mail: kaelberl@queen.lsc.vsc.edu

Office: Vail 467

Phone: (802) 626-6204 (office); (802) 467-3826 (home)

Office Hours: Daily 11:00-11:55 a.m., and by appointment

Homepage: <http://www.lsc.vsc.edu/academic/soc/kaelberl/kaelber.htm>

Course Description

Welcome to SOC 302, Sociology of Religion. This course is designed as an introduction to the study of religion and its relations to other social institutions and spheres. Several issues will concern us throughout the semester: How does religion influence society and social behavior? How does society influence religion? And how do people construct boundaries between religion and other social spheres such as science or magic? In trying to find answers to these questions we first read and analyze classical sociological theories of religious organization and practice, to give us an appreciation for the works of Weber, Durkheim, and Marx. Then, we explore religion and its relation to politics and science, and other current substantive issues. We also have a look at the diverse religious landscape of North America as part of a multimedia application and internet-based research projects. Please note that this course is not a survey course of world religions, nor does it deal extensively with any particular world religion or denomination. Instead, we focus on the sociological analysis of religious phenomena, applying the sociological imagination in a variety of contexts. Furthermore, this course will neither question students' religious beliefs and values, nor presuppose that students hold such.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

The goals of this course are: for students, to

- understand different religious belief systems and their functions in society; and to be able to
- discuss the ways in which people organize their communities around religion to find meaning in life, and to cope with, or bring about, social change.

Hence, throughout this course, students will be encouraged to

- appreciate metaphysical and religious perspectives beyond your own;
- analyze the effects of social organization on religious life, and vice versa; and

think about the role religion plays in larger society.

Reading Materials

The following books are required and available at the LSC bookstore:

Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992).

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, tr. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, [1904-05] 1976).

Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Additional reading materials are on reserve for this course in the library.

Course Policies and Requirements

This course has several components, each of which is an important part of your overall evaluation.

Attendance: Your presence and participation is vital to the success of this course. I cannot do it without you. The class will succeed or fail because of our collective effort. Also, I want to see and hear you; your input and perspective is important. In case of frequent absence, I reserve the right to implement LSC's attendance policy stated in the current Undergraduate Catalog.

Student Projects: The emphasis in this class is not on teaching but on learning. I think that, in regard to certain issues we deal with, you will learn best by doing. Therefore, I require you to carry out a small number of student projects. For this course, the emphasis of these projects will be on **multimedia applications and information about religious groups available on the Internet**. These projects entail a variety of exercises, to be carried out outside the classroom. You should expect to spend at least 1-2 hours on each exercise. For each exercise, the project handout contains precise guidelines. If you have any questions or are not clear about a part of an exercise, please talk to me.

Exams: There will be three exams. These exams are designed to check whether you have learned and mastered the materials. All exams will be non-cumulative and a combination of any of the following: multiple choice, sentence completion, and essay. There will be a review sheet for each exam.

Participation: I know that it is difficult for some students to speak in class; I also believe that we all gain by sharing our thoughts and questions with others. To facilitate this, we are going to try something new. At the beginning of the semester, each student will be assigned one of three "teams" of approximately 4-5 students. Each team will serve as a micro-discussion group throughout the semester. For example, one team (let's call it the "blue team") will gather in the middle of the room, discussing an assigned reading, a film, or lecture material. Members of the other, "red team" will sit outside the group and listen to the discussion that the blue team holds. At the end of the discussion or presentation, members of the red team can interject questions, ideas, and further thoughts. Sometimes then the groups will switch places, and the red team holds its discussion, with the blue team watching. I may ask one of the group members to act as a leader in facilitating

discussion and summarizing the results.

Papers and Presentations: For the **short paper/individual presentation**, you will be asked to address a religious group or phenomenon of your own choice. This assignment includes the choice of a presentation topic, the composition of a handout, the presentation itself, and the composition of a short paper accompanying the presentation. There will also be an accompanying Internet or multimedia project (see above). In the **group presentation**, carried out in small groups, you will review one or several chapters in Finke and Stark's book *The Churching of America*. I will assign the chapter(s) to the groups. The **long paper**, about 6-8 pages in length, is to be written on Max Weber's book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. No independent outside research is required for the long paper.

All these assignments are graded on the basis of a) accuracy and thoroughness of content, and b) formal organization and clarity. Detailed guidelines for the assignments will be distributed later in the semester.

Portfolio: You are responsible for putting all projects, in-class writing activities, exams, etc. in a portfolio at the end of a semester--make it neat! I require this because it is a very good way to document learning that takes place in a course. Students who fail to turn in their portfolio will not receive a passing grade for the course.

The maximum points are:

Attendance/Participation: 25 points

Student Projects: 4 x 25 points each 100 points

Exams: 3 x 50 points each 150 points

Presentations: 2 x 50 points each 100 points

Papers: 30 and 70 points 100 points

Portfolio: 25 points

Total: 500 points

Grading Scale

500-483 points (100-97%) A+ 415-400 points (82-80%) B- 332-316 points (66-63%) D

482-466 points (96-93%) A 399-383 points (79-77%) C+ 315-300 points (62-60%) D-

465-450 points (92-90%) A- 382-366 points (76-73%) C 299-0 points (59-0%) F

449-433 points (89-87%) B+ 365-350 points (72-70%) C-

432-416 points (86-83%) B 349-333 points (69-67%) D+

A denotes superior performance, highest competency

B denotes high performance

C denotes average performance, satisfactory competency

D denotes minimum pass, does not satisfy GEP or program requirements

F denotes failure

Special Needs

If you have special needs, I will do my best to make the necessary accommodations. Please let me know as soon as possible.

Teams

Please use the space below to write down the names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of the members of your team.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

I'm in the _____ team.

A Note About Cheating

Do not cheat. The vast majority of students are honest--I appreciate that. To the few students who do not hold such ideals, I want to stress that cheating (getting unauthorized help on an exam or assignment) and plagiarism (submitting work as your own that is someone else's) in any form are unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Failure to comply by this directive will be dealt with according to Lyndon State College policy. This may result in a "0" or an "F" on a specific exam, or in a failure for the whole course (see the Undergraduate Catalog for more details).

Course Schedule

Note: This is a tentative schedule. Handouts are not listed; keep track of them.

M–Monday, W–Wednesday, F–Friday; A—Photocopies, B—Books

Date	Topics	Readings	Tests/Papers/Presentations
------	--------	----------	----------------------------

Week 1 Jan. 11 – 15	1. Introduction and Orientation 2. Science and Values 3. Approaches to the Study of Religion	A: Roberts	W: In-class writing assignment (ungraded)
Week 2 Jan. 18 – 22 (Jan. 18: No class)	4. Religious Change	A: Bellah, Worsley	W: Choice of Individual Presentation Due
Week 3 Jan. 25 – 29	5. Marxist Approaches	A: O’Toole, Marx/Engels, G. Marx	W: Project #1 Due
Week 4 Feb. 1 – 5	6. Nietzsche (Guestlecture Dr. Vos)	A: Nietzsche	W: Individual Presentation Handout Due F: Exam #1
Week 5 Feb. 8 – 12	Individual Presentations		Individual Presentations
Week 6 Feb. 15 – 19	7. Durkheim	B: Durkheim	M: Project #2 Due W: Short Paper Due
Week 7 Feb. 22 – 26	WINTER BREAK		
Week 8 Mar. 1 – 5	8. Weber	B: Weber	
Week 9 Mar. 8 – 12	8. Weber (continued)	A: Weber	M: Project #3 Due
Week 9 Mar. 15 – 19	9. Weberian Comparative Studies (World Religions)	B: Kaelber A: Lewis	M: Long Paper Due
Week 10 Mar. 22 – 26	10. Religion and Modern Science	A: Merton	F: Exam #2
Week 11	11. Religion in the United States	A: Greeley, Roof/McKinney	M: Project #4 Due

Mar. 29 – Apr. 2	a) Empirical Trends		
Week 12 Apr. 5 – Apr. 9	b) Religion in the History of the U.S. (Group Presentations)	B: Finke/Stark A: Moore	Group Presentations W: Long Paper Re-Write Due
Week 13 Apr. 12 – 16	SPRING BREAK		
Week 14 Apr. 19 – 23	c) Current Issues: Religious Conflict and Secular Culture	B: Wuthnow A: Hunter	
Week 14 Apr. 26 – 30	c) Current Issues (continued)	A: Blee, Bellah	F: Portfolio Due
Week 15 May 3 – 7	Wrap-up and Review		Exam #3 (Final): M, May 10, 8:00 a.m.

Photocopies (A) or Books (B) on Reserve in the LSC Library

1. Introduction and Orientation

2. Science and Values

3. Approaches to the Study of Religion

Keith A. Roberts, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (3rd ed., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1995), pp. 3-47.

A

4. Religious Change

Robert N. Bellah, "Religious Evolution," in idem, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in the Post-Traditional World*

(New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 20-50. **A**

Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound: A Study of 'Cargo' Cults in Melanesia* (2nd ed.; New York: Schocken, 1968),

pp. 146-69. **A**

5. Marxist Approaches

Roger O'Toole, "Feuerbach, Marx and the Criticism of Religion," in idem, *Religion: Classic Sociological Approaches*

(Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1984), pp. 63-69. **A**

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *On Religion* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), pp. 41-2, 69-81. **A**

Gary T. Marx, "Religion: Opiate or Inspiration of Civil Rights Militancy Among Negroes," *American Sociological*

Review 32 (1967), pp. 64-72. **A**

6. Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche, "What Do Ascetic Ideals Mean?," in idem, *The Genealogy of Morals* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956), selections. **A**

7. Durkheim

Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, tr. Karen E. Fields (New York: Free Press, [1912] 1995),

pp. 1-44, 84-95, 99-102, 111-26, 190-200, 207-41, 303-21, 424-29. **B**

8. Weber

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, tr. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's

Sons, [1904-05] 1976). **B**

-----, "The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism," in idem, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, tr. and ed.

Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1948), pp. 302-22. **A**

9. Weberian Comparative Studies

Lutz Kaelber, *Schools of Asceticism: Ideology and Organization in Medieval Religious Communities* (University Park,

PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), selections. **B**

Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *The Atlantic* 266 (September, 1990), pp. 47-60. **A**

10. Religion and Modern Science

Robert K. Merton, "Motive Forces of the New Science," in *Puritanism and the Rise of Modern Science: The Merton*

Thesis, ed. I. Bernard Cohen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1990), pp. 112-31. **A**

-----, "Preface to Reprint of Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England," in *Puritanism and the*

Rise of Modern Science: The Merton Thesis, ed. I. Bernard Cohen (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), pp. 303-21. **A**

10. Religion in the United States

a) Empirical Trends

Andrew M. Greeley, "American Denominationalism: The Statistics," in *Sociology and Religion: A Collection of*

Readings, ed. Andrew M. Greeley (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), pp. 339-47. **A**

Roof, William Clark, and William McKinney, "The Demography of Religious Change," in *Sociology and Religion:*

A Collection of Readings, ed. Andrew M. Greeley (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), pp. 384-413. **A**

b) Religion in the History of the U.S.

Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*

(New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1992). **B**

R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press,

1994), pp. 176-88. **A**

c) Current Issues: Religious Conflict and Secular Culture

Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith since World War II* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988). **B**

James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: BasicBooks, 1991), pp. 135-58. **A**

Kathleen M. Blee, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991),

pp. 11-41, 175-80. **B**

Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in idem, *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in the Post-Traditional World*

