

SOC 395 SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
University of Northern Colorado, Fall 2012
Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:15
Kepner 2030

“Even if one is interested only in one's own society, which is one's prerogative, one can understand that society much better by comparing it with others.”-Peter Berger

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Course Information

Religion has long held a central role in sociology. As long as there has been society, people have been coming together to form belief systems in order to make sense of the world around them and express their experiences. Consequently, organized religion is bound up in our culture, in the construction of our daily existence, and even in our conflicts. In this class, we will examine each of these in order to understand the role of religion in U.S. culture.

Your participation in class discussions and out of class activities is essential. We will be learning from our texts and from each other which will bring us into contact with numerous varied perspectives and religious traditions. Your sensitivity is not requested, it is required. Discussions of the readings will make up the bulk of class time. You should come to these discussions prepared and with an open mind.

Course Requirements

Required Texts

Monhan, Susan, William Mirola and Michael Emerson, Eds. 2011. *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*. 2nd edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
Emerson, Michael, William Mirola and Susanne C. Monahan. 2011. *Religion Matters: What Sociology Teaches Us about Religion in Our World*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Attendance

You are both teacher and student in this class. Thus, your attendance is imperative. Without being in class, you will not learn much, and you will not be able to teach us what you know. So, you may have two unexcused absences. If, however, you miss more than two, your grade will be lowered one letter for each additional unexcused absence. For example, if your grade in the class is an 88 with three unexcused absences, your final grade will be a 78. Excused absences do not count toward this total. Petition for excused absence must be submitted to me in writing within one week of absence.

Methods of Evaluation

Presentation (1) - 10%
Participation - 15%
Journals (3) - 10%
Exams (3) - 15%

Calculating Your Grade

This is basic math. Here's the formula: (Journal Check I*.10)+(Journal Check 2*.10)+(Journal Check 3*.10)+(Exam I*.15)+(Exam II*.15)+(Exam III*.15)+(Class Participation*.15)+(Presentation*.10)=Your Numerical Average

LATE WORK IS NOT ACCEPTED



A Note about Assignments

You will have one presentation to give during the semester. This group presentation will enlighten the class about the history and development of a major world religion. See details at the end of the syllabus.

Your class participation will be taken into account as part of your grade. I evaluate participation in two ways taking into account both distractions and positive contributions. In short, distractions (sleeping, coming in late, not being prepared, etc.) will lower your grade while positive contributions (being an active participant in class discussion, coming to class having both read and thought about the material, etc.) will raise your grade.

A class focusing on a subject such as religion is often the kind of class that stays with you even after the class period ends. The journal assignment will help facilitate this by giving you a chance to expand on ideas discussed in class. Every week you will have one journal entry that should be around a page in length. These should NOT be simple rehashes of class discussion but rather are an opportunity for you to examine an issue in more depth. Your journals will be graded based on depth of thinking and connections to class discussion/material. They are due three times during the semester. Each time you turn in your journal there will be four entries corresponding to the prior weeks. These are due in typed format at the beginning of the class period noted on your syllabus. On the due date for the last journal, you will be required to submit an electronic version of your full journal.

There will be three exams for this class. These will consist of a mixture of definitions, theories, and short answers. Prior to each exam there will be a mini-review to ensure that you are able to prepare adequately. The exams will require you to both remember routine information such as definitions as well as think critically.

Class Policies

Office Hours and Email Policy

I will hold office hours on the following days and times throughout the semester: Wednesday 1:00-12:30 and Thursday 9:15-10:45. If you cannot make one of these times, please get in touch with me and we'll work something out.

My preferred method of electronic communication with students is via IM. I'll be available throughout the day. My AIM screen-name is "Dr Josh Packard" (please note the lack of a period after "Dr" due to AOL's bizarre screen-name policies). If you have a question that needs a quick response, this will probably work best. I respond to email every morning.

Extra Credit

There are typically several extra credit opportunities available throughout the semester. These almost always come in the form of an event or speaker you can attend. In order to receive credit, you need to attend the event and turn in a one-page, double spaced paper connecting the event to our class in some way (e.g., speaker discussed similar topic which added to your understanding in some way). These papers are due no later than one-week after the event.

Plagiarism and Cheating

Cheating will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will result in immediate disciplinary action. Don't do it. If you have concerns about how to cite a source and give proper credit, please see me or a librarian.

Accommodation of Disabilities

Any student who may require additional time, help or an alternative format on the graded requirements of this course, please contact Student Disability Services (SDS) to discuss your needs with one of SDS's counselors. Also students need to schedule an appointment with me within the first two weeks of the semester in order to address how best to accommodate their needs.

Course Schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
Tuesday, August 28	Intro. to Class	
Thursday, August 30	The Social Construction of Religion	E1 and 2; M4
Tuesday, September 4	Theories of Religion	E4
Thursday: September 6	Theories of Religion	M1, M2
Tuesday, September 11	Theories of Religion	M3, M35
Thursday, September 13	Theories of Religion	CHRISTIANITY Presentation; E7
Tuesday, September 18	St. Peter's Catholic Church visit	
Thursday, September 20	Secularism and Pluralism	ISLAM Presentation; E5
Tuesday, September 25	Secularism and Pluralism	ARDA " Americans and Religious Diversity "
Thursday, September 27	Secularism and Pluralism	JUDAISM Presentation; M25-27
Tuesday, October 2	Secularism and Pluralism	BUDDHISM Presentation; M25-27
Thursday, October 4	Beth Israel Synagogue visit	
Tuesday, October 9	Exam I	
Thursday, October 11	Religion in the U.S.	SIKHISM Presentation; E8
Tuesday, October 16	Religion in the U.S.	HINDUISM Presentation
Thursday, October 18	Religion in the U.S.	QUAKERS Presentation; M37, M38
Tuesday, October 23	Identity and Religion	E10; M10
Thursday, October 25	ARDA " Exploring the U.S. Religious Landscape "	M16
Tuesday, October 30	Identity and Religion	E9; M23
Thursday, November 1	Identity and Religion	M18
Tuesday, November 6	Exam II	
Thursday, November 8	Religion, Fundamentalism and Violence	What in the Name of God
Tuesday, November 13	Religion, Fundamentalism and Violence	E6
Thursday, November 15	Religion, Fundamentalism and Violence	M39, M40
Tuesday, November 20	Religion, Fundamentalism and Violence	M41, M31
Thursday, November 22	Thanksgiving-No Class	
Tuesday, November 27	Culture and Religious Consumption	E3; M30; M44
Thursday, November 29	Atlas Emerging Church visit	Packard and Sanders
Tuesday, December 4:	God and Morality	E14 and Handout
Thursday, December 6	God and Morality	TBD

Major World Religion Project

In this project you will work in groups of three to become experts in a major world religion. The culmination of your research will be a 15 minute presentation in class with follow up question time, and a **one page handout** highlighting the most important information. The general idea here is to convey the central tenets of a religion so that we can have a good working knowledge of the various religious systems that are most common in the world. We'll want to do this in a socio-historical manner. That is, while some basic historical "nuts and bolts" information will be necessary, we will also need some information about the wider social and cultural context within which the religion developed and exists. I will provide an example of the kind of presentation and analysis necessary during the second week of class by enlightening you all about Scientology.

Your presentations will be graded based on clarity of presentation, quality and accuracy of information, depth and breadth of information, appropriate sociological analysis. In your presentations you will want to address at least the following points. Feel free to use whatever visual aids (PowerPoint, video clips, etc) that you think would be useful.

- History-timeline of major events
- Size (both current and past)
- Current and past locations
- Core beliefs
- MAJOR schisms
- Key symbols
- Traditions and Rituals
- Current issues/challenges
- List of sources consulted and suggestions for further reading

We will cover the following major religions and religious groups.

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism
- Mormonism
- Quakers, Shakers, Hutterites, Mennonites