



*“Religion is essentially the art and the theory of the remaking of man.” –
Edmund Burke*

**SOCI 3342: Sociology of Religion
Sam Houston State University
FALL 2017**

**Instructor: Amy Manning Kirk, Ph.D.
Contact Information: amk009@shsu.edu
(However, please use our Blackboard class as your
primary communication too)**

Course Description & Why Take this Class?:

The class is meant to enhance our understanding of religion in society. We will come to think of religion as “socially constructed,” and thus come to understand it in terms of its important place in culture and influence upon the world as a whole. In this study, an understanding of symbols, rituals, and beliefs will be crucial. We will also come to know more about the historical context of religion (in American society and beyond). Our work will rely heavily upon sociological theory and classic as well as contemporary works, so that students can become “owners” of particular topics. Finally, the class will enable students to walk away with a better feel for their own experiences with religion, and think about how religion has impacted the lives of loved ones around them. We will investigate religion through the use of sociological concepts, theories, and empirical research. As sociologists do, we will overlap concepts, theory, and research, as a way to critically analyze how religion “plays out” in society. In approaching the study of religion in this way, students will improve their academic careers and “real-world” endeavors. While the

course is grounded in sociology, we will also be drawing upon relevant work from other disciplines, including anthropology and history. Finally, a disclaimer: This course is NOT a world religions course. When I first taught this class many years ago, I taught it as that, and it was a disaster. While we will learn much about world religions, our primary focus is upon how religion impacts the social world around us.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Become familiar with classical sociological theory that has informed the study of the sociology of religion
- Understand how sociologists became interested in the study of religion
- Identify notable trends historical and current trends in the religious world
- Develop an understanding for empirical works relevant to trends in the religious world
- Be able to explain how religion, politics, and economics work to influence each other
- Inform each other about what happens when religion is a major source of social problems
- Come to see the important ways religion may have impacted one's own life

Textbook:

While we will read some peer-reviewed journal articles and chapters (see Tentative Course Schedule in the back of the syllabus), our primary text is...

Roberts, Keith A. and David Yamane. (2012 – Sixth Edition). *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Los Angeles: Sage.

What is Required of You & Course Structure:

This course is **ALL** Distance Learning format - meaning we will NEVER meet in person, unless scheduled by the student. Instead, **you are required to log on to our course 3-4 times/weekly over the course of the semester**, to keep abreast of notes, discussions, and assignments. You are also required to do all class readings. Lectures and power points that are posted on-line cover the "highlights" from units, and are therefore not exhaustive. However, they are meant to inform students of the most important items from the units. They should be used in conjunction with the readings. New lectures and power points will be posted by units (see "Tentative Course Schedule" at the end of the syllabus). Email updates will be sent out on the days that new lectures and power-points are available. You are responsible for all unit materials, including lecture materials, discussions, assignments, quizzes, and assigned readings. Anything from the notes, discussions, or assigned readings will be considered "fair game" for tests.

More About Readings:

You will be assigned readings with each unit. As you can see from the "Tentative Course Schedule" (at the end of the syllabus), readings are organized by units and are germane to the unit subject matter. To get the most out of the class, read early, read often, and read everything. Also, please read BEFORE watching weekly lectures if at all possible. I encourage you to take notes while you read the text and supplemental readings. I will

elaborate on this more in the first few days of class. The exercise may seem pointless to some, but note-taking really does help the memory. Plus, these notes are great to refer to when studying for tests. Finally, the process helps keep you engaged as you read.

Discussions and Assignments:

Because the course is all Distance Learning, we will rely heavily on class discussions and assignments, to get to know each other, and to evaluate your progress in the class.

REQUIRED discussion and/or assignment participation will take place **10 times** throughout the course of the semester. Discussion topics (or assignments) will be posted on Tuesdays. For discussions, students must participate (as described by the initial instructor's discussion post) by Fridays at midnight in order to receive participation points for the discussion. Discussion grades will be based upon the effectiveness (i.e. did your post do all that was required of it?) of your participation. Discussion posts should be polite, respectful, and follow the rules of "netiquette." (More on this in the opening unit). Should your post be deemed inappropriate or not fully effective, you will be sent an email by me detailing the post's deficiencies. Oftentimes, I will give extra credit to students who post by Wednesdays at midnight.

Assignments will vary in nature, and will be detailed fully as they are made available, in select units. See "Tentative Course Schedule."

Participation in discussion and assignments **MUST** take place within the allotted response time. Otherwise, **ALL** points for the particular discussion/assignment will be lost. Again, there are 10 discussions (and/or assignments), worth 10 points each (making up 100 points on your point total). This means you have a little "room" to miss one discussion or so, but no more than that without it affecting your grade.

Fieldtrip Paper:

In the course of the semester, you will be asked to attend a place of worship and report back upon your experience. As a class, we will prepare for the experience and I will ask you to detail your worship experience, including documentation of the experience. I will ask you questions that help link the worship experience to our course materials. The parameters for the paper will be available September 5th. The checkpoint is due September 22nd and the paper is due November 7th. The checkpoint/paper is worth 100 points of your point total.

Quizzes:

Throughout the semester, you will also have five quizzes at pre-assigned times. (See "Tentative Course Schedule"). **YOUR FIRST QUIZ WILL BE A "Syllabus Quiz," AVAILABLE FROM August 30th at 8 am to September 1st at midnight.** Each quiz will be worth 10 points. Quizzes will contain both multiple choice and short answer questions (three multiple choice questions and two short answer questions). Upon receiving your quiz grade, you will also be able to view sample answers and instructor feedback. Quizzes must be taken in the allotted time frame. No make-up quizzes will be available unless one provides documentation of illness.

Examinations:

You will have three examinations, including the final exam. All exams (including the final) will have 40 multiple-choice questions (worth 2 points each), and two short essay questions (worth 10 points each). Because of the online format of the course, exams can be taken at home, without a proctor. Exams are open-book, open notes, but are designed so that you cannot do well, just relying on the open notes. **There is a strict 50-minute time limit for all exams except the final.** The final will have the standard two-hour time limit.

Roughly half of the final exam will cover new materials and half of it will be cumulative. As mentioned previously, exams will consist of questions from the readings, lectures, notes, and class discussions. Exams are designed to assess not only what you know, but also your critical thinking skills. In order to do well on examinations, you must study all the relevant lecture notes, readings and/or notes from the readings, and class discussions, despite the “open” format. Test reviews will also be posted prior to each test (see “Tentative Course Outline” at the end of the syllabus). You may take exams from your home (on-line), and all students will be given special log-on instructions with time constraints and a password prior to taking exams. You will be given a 24-hour window in which to take exams. Please just make sure you have a good, strong Internet connection and a fast computer for examinations.

There will be no make-up exams unless there is a genuine emergency and you can verify in writing the nature of the emergency. Arrangements will be made at the instructor’s discretion. All makeup exams will be entirely essay exams.

Movie Review:

Back by popular demand ... You will be responsible for one major writing assignment throughout the semester – a movie review (worth 150 points). The assignment involves watching a movie (with a religious theme/s), and then writing about the movie, using sociological analysis. The movie review will contain a literature review (worth 50 points of the 150 point total). You will be required to turn in the literature review only at an intermediate deadline of October 20th. A “folder,” detailing the literature review and other movie review requirements will be made available August 30th. Complete movie reviews are due November 13th by midnight (CST), via turnin link. Late reviews will be accepted, however, 15 points will be deducted for each 24-hour period a movie review is late.

Extra Credit:

At times throughout the semester, you will be given the opportunity to earn extra points on your point total for the semester. In order to earn these points, you must go “above and beyond” the requirements of the course. Oftentimes, earning extra credit will involve bringing and discussing supplemental materials that are relevant to the topic(s) at hand. We will discuss extra credit more as the semester progresses. Doing things to earn extra credit is recommended if you think your grade might be “border-line” at the end of the semester. Although each semester varies, I typically give the opportunity to make 5 extra

credit points (points towards the point total) throughout the semester.

Course Grade:

Your final course grade will be based upon the following:

Exam One	100 points
Exam Two	100 points
Final	100 points
Movie Review (Literature review is 50 points of this total)	150 points
Participation in Class Discussions/Assignments (10 @ 10 pts.)	100 points
Fieldtrip Paper	100 points
Quizzes (five @ 10 pts.)	50 points
Extra Credit (generally 5-7 points throughout the semester)	
Total Possible Points (excluding extra credit)	700 points

Where: A = 630 to 700 points, B = 560 to 629 points, C = 490 to 559 point, and so on

Additional Classroom Policies:

Please refer to <http://www.shsu.edu/syllabus/> and below ...

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

[Dean of Student's Office](#)

STUDENT ABSENCES ON RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS POLICY:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to

observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

</dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center . They should then make arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Counseling Center . For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/811006.pdf>

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM:

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

Tentative Course Schedule – Fall 2017:

➤ Unit 1 – What is the Sociology of Religion? (August 23rd – September 1st)

To Do: Participate in Introductions Discussion by August 29th at midnight;
Movie Review folder available August 30th; Syllabus Quiz August 30th at 8 am to
September 1st at midnight

Readings: Chapters 1 & 2 (textbook); ^[SEP]Eliade, Mircea (1957) *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Introduction); Smithsonian article

➤ Unit 2 – Religion in Society (September 5th – 8th) ^[SEP]

To Do: Fieldtrip Assignment folder available September 5th; Discussion 1
September 5th – 8th

Readings: Chapter 3 (textbook)

➤ Unit 3: Constructing Religion in Our Lives (September 11th – 15th) ^[SEP]

To Do: Discussion 2 September 12th – 15th; Quiz 2 September 14th & 15th; Quiz
review available September 11th; Test 1 review available September 12th

Readings: Chapters 4 & 5 (textbook)

➤ Unit 4: Conversion and Switching (September 18th – 22nd)

To Do: **Test 1 September 19th starting at 8 am until September 20th at 8 am;**
Discussion 3 September 19th – 22nd; Fieldtrip checkpoint due September 22nd by
midnight

^[SEP]Readings: Chapter 6 (textbook)

➤ Unit 5: Religious Organizations (September 25th – 29th) ^[SEP]

To Do: Discussion 4 September 26th – 29th; Quiz 3 review available September
25th; Quiz 3 September 28th & 29th

Readings: Chapter 7 (textbook)

➤ **Unit 6: Denominationalism (October 2nd – 6th)**

To Do: Assignment 5 due October 6th by midnight

Readings: Chapter 8 (textbook)

➤ **Unit 7: Religion, Class & Race (October 9th – 20th)**

To Do: Test 2 review available October 9th; Discussion 6 October 17th – 20th

Readings: Chapters 9 & 10 (textbook)

➤ **Unit 8: Religion and Gender (October 23rd – 27th)**

To Do: **Test 2 October 24th at 8 am to October 25th at 8 am**; Discussion 7 October 24th – 27th

Readings: Chapter 11 (textbook); McQueeney, Krista. (2009). “We are God’s Children, Ya’ll: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Lesbian and Gay Affirming Congregations.” *Social Problems*. 56, 1. (pp. 151-173)

➤ **Unit 9: Secularization (October 30th – November 10th)**

To Do: Fieldtrip paper due November 7th; Discussion 8 November 7th – 10th; Quiz 4 review available October 31st; Quiz 4 November 9th & 10th

Readings: Chapter 13 (textbook); Wuthnow, Robert (1998) *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950’s*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (pp. 1-19)

➤ **Unit 10: Religion Adapts (November 13th – 22nd)**


To Do: Movie reviews due November 13th by midnight; Discussion 9 November 15th – 22nd; Quiz 5 review available November 21st

Readings: Chapter 14 (textbook); Gerardo Marti. 2008. *Worshipping Jesus in Hollywood: Holiness, Prosperity, and Ambition in a Multiracial Church*. New York: Rutgers. (Chapter 1)

➤ **Unit 11: Religion and Globalization (November 27th – December 1st)**

To Do: Quiz 5 open all week; Discussion 10 open all week; Final review available November 27th

Readings: Chapter 15 (textbook); Wuthnow, Robert. (2009). *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches*. Berkeley: University of California

Press. (Chapter 1; pp. 12-31) 

Final time December 4th from 8 am to December 5th at 8 am