

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



**PLEASE PRINT OUT A HARD COPY OF THIS FOR YOUR RECORDS**

**SOCIOLOGY 5333: 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 tool)

**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 discuss it in terms of its important place in culture and influence upon the world as a whole. In this study, a knowledge of symbols, rituals, and beliefs will be crucial. We will also come to identify 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, this class will enable students to walk away with a better feel for personal 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 too 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 a knowledge of 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.

### Books to Purchase:

We will be reading lots this semester, but I don't think you'll find it overwhelming. The reads have a nice "ebb and flow," which I will discuss early on. The majority of our readings this semester will come from the books below (although we will have a nice sampling of peer-reviewed journal articles as well). In my humble opinion, these books are the touchstones of the sociology of religion foci. While the book list is extensive (and some books are very thick), we will not read all of each of these books. However, we will read lots of each one and we refer to each one quite a bit throughout the course of the semester. These books are easily available and reasonably priced.

- Ammerman, Nancy T. (2014). *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life*
- Berger, Peter L. (1967). *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of A Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Durkheim, Emile. (1995 ed.). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press
- Eck, Diana L. (2001). *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation*
- Eliade, Mircea. (1957, 1987). *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Orlando, Florida: Harcourt, Inc.
- Jelen, Ted G. (2002). *Sacred Markets, Sacred Canopies: Essays on Religious Markets and Religious Pluralism*. Oxford, England: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

### 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 AT LEAST 3 - 4 TIMES PER WEEK 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 powerpoints 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 powerpoints 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 powerpoints 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. Readings are extensive, but are not meant to be overwhelming. As you can see from the “Tentative Course Schedule” (at the end of the syllabus), readings are organized by units and are meant to compliment each other. **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 our progress in the class. **REQUIRED** discussion and/or assignment participation will take place **10 times** throughout the course of the semester. Discussion topics will be posted on **Mondays**. **Students will then typically be required to participate TWICE by Fridays at midnight in order to receive participation points for the discussion.** Note that all discussion dates are in the Tentative Schedule. (When other discussion parameters apply, they will be noted). During the course of discussions, I will be logging in to make posts that will hopefully emphasize important points or help us focus.

**In addition, this semester, each student will be required to “lead off” ONE discussion (worth an additional 50 points).** I have incorporated this aspect of discussion in order to make us all more invested in the readings and to understand what we read at a higher level. “Leading off” a discussion simply means that you need to send me a general question that you feel is pertinent to the readings for the week you are assigned. This obviously entails reading ahead. Your question is to be emailed to me by the Sunday at midnight prior to your discussion. By August 25th, I will make available the schedule for “leading off.”

**Late discussion submissions will not be accepted.** Discussion grades will be based upon the effectiveness (i.e. did your post do all that was required of it?) of your participation. Should your post be deemed inappropriate or not fully effective, you will see relevant comments with your discussion grade. Participation in discussion **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.

**A note about Netiquette and Getting the Most From a Discussion Post** .... Before you post, please ask yourself (1) Is my post respectful to others?; (2) Is my post responsible?; (3) Does my post accurately depict/detail the unit materials?; (4) Have I answered all that is asked of me?

I do love when we respond to each other. This is a quick and easy way to generate meaningful discussion, which is exceptionally important in a graduate class. In doing so, please however, be respectful of others beliefs, backgrounds, and identities. I will interrupt any sexist, racist, or homophobic remarks. I will also interrupt lude or fowl language or swearing (or abbreviations which imply any of the above).

It is naturally acceptable to disagree with classmates. However, please do so in a respectful way that truly expresses genuine academic interest, and genuine interest in a classmates' remarks. Finally, make sure you are also familiar with the videos regarding netiquette, in the Syllabus link (left menu).

### **Small Group Project:**

The online environment presents unique opportunities (and obstacles) for group work. However, we tend to learn the most and the best when learning from our colleagues. Thus, the group project. As a part of this small-group project, you will be given questions concerning a religious topic. Your group must conduct research and demonstrate depth-of-knowledge about the specific education issue assigned.

On September 5th, I will introduce a small-group project in which you will be a part. I will also break the class into small groups, where each person has a "job." Thus, you will be assigned to a group and will have some liberty to choose your "job." Please make sure you read and watch all that is available in the group project link. Also, please request your "job" by September 11<sup>th</sup> at midnight, via email. The project will be worth 50 points and will be due November 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### **Fieldtrip or Critical Response:**

In addition to other coursework, you will be required to write either a critical response piece or visit a local place of worship (your choice) and detail your experience. Each of these choices requires preparation, analyzation, and perspective. The reward is that the materials in class will be further illuminated and will become "real." Further details regarding these options will be made available August 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **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 8 AM August 30<sup>th</sup> to midnight on September 1st.** Each quiz will be worth 10 points. Quizzes will contain both multiple choice and short answer questions. Upon receiving your quiz grade, you will also be able to view sample answers and instructor feedback.

### **Examinations:**

You will have two 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 60-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.*** Exam 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.***

### **Term Paper or Portfolio:**

You will be responsible for ONE major writing assignment throughout the semester –either a term paper OR a Portfolio (worth 150 points).

#### **Term Paper Option:**

The term paper option allows students to explore a topic related to the Sociology of Religion. This paper requires a literature review, with an intermediate deadline of October 17th. (The literature review is worth 50 points towards the 150 point total). The final term paper should also include other sections. A “term paper” unit, detailing the parameters of the paper (including the literature review) will be made available August 29th. Complete term papers are due November 17th by midnight (CST), via Blackboard turn-in. Late reviews will be accepted, however, 15 points will be deducted for each 24-hour period a term paper is late.

#### **Portfolio Option:**

The portfolio option also allows students to explore a topic related to the Sociology of Religion, in a more applied way. This project requires a literature review, with an intermediate deadline of October 17<sup>th</sup>. (The literature review is worth 50 points towards the 150 point total). The portfolio also requires that students go and study an aspect of religion and relay this information to classmates. You will be required to give a 10-minute presentation of your findings that requires powerpoints and audio, or prezi. Details for the portfolio option will be made available August 29<sup>th</sup> as well.

**Students must email their term paper or Portfolio topic/question (and justification for it) by September 6<sup>th</sup> at midnight. I will send you feedback and will encourage us to be in regular communication about your term paper or portfolio.**

### **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
Fieldtrip or Critical Response	100 points
Portfolio/Term Paper (where literature review is worth 50 points)	150 points
Participation in Class Discussions (10 discussions @ 10 points each)	100 points
“Lead off” for class discussion (make it really good and thoughtful!)	50 points
Group Project	50 points
Quizzes (five of these)	50 points
Extra Credit (generally 5-7 points throughout the semester)	
<b>Total Possible Points (Where: A = 630 – 700 points, B = 560 – 629 points and so on ....)</b>	<b>700 points</b>

### **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 and Readings**

### **Unit 1 – *Theory and Religion with Durkheim, Marx & Weber* (August 23<sup>rd</sup> - September 1<sup>st</sup>)**

To Do: Participate in Introductions Discussion by August 29<sup>th</sup>; August 25<sup>th</sup> – lead off assignments made available; Discussion 1 August 28<sup>th</sup> – September 1<sup>st</sup> (Amy will lead off); August 29<sup>th</sup> Term paper and portfolio info available; August 30<sup>th</sup> to September 1<sup>st</sup> Syllabus Quiz; August 30<sup>th</sup> Critical response/fieldtrip info available

Readings: Durkheim, Emile. (1995 ed). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press (Book One pp. 1-95)

Marx, Karl. (2002) “Concerning Feuerbach” (pp. 182-183) and “Social Principles of Christianity” (pp. 184-187) In Marx on Religion; John Raines (editor) Philadelphia. Temple University Press.

Swatos, William H. and Peter Kivisto. (1991). Max Weber as "Christian Sociologist" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* , Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 347-362

### **Unit 2 - *How to Study the Sociology of Religion* (September 5<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup>)**

To Do: Discussion 2 September 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>; Term paper or Portfolio justification due September 6<sup>th</sup> via email Small group project info available September 5<sup>th</sup>

Readings: Dillion, Michelle (2002) *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press (Chapters 1-2)

Feathersone, Richard and Katie L. Sorrell. (2007). “Sociology Dismissing Religion?: The Presentation of Religious Change in Introductory Sociology Textbooks.” *The American Sociologist*. 38, 1. (pp. 78-98)

### **Unit 3: *Making the World Sacred* (September 11<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>)**

To Do: Discussion 3 September 18<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup>; Job requests for group project due September 11<sup>th</sup>; Quiz 2 September 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>

Readings: Berger, Peter (1967). *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of A Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Random House (Chapters 1-2)

Eliade, Mircea (1957) *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (entire book)



Durkheim, Emile (1995 ed). *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York: The Free Press (Chapters 8-9)

#### Unit 4: *Religious Consumption and Consumers* (September 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>)

To Do: Test 1 review available September 26<sup>th</sup>; Discussion 4 September 25<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup>

Readings: Jelen, Ted G. (2002). *Sacred Markets, Sacred Canopies: Essays on Religious Markets and Religious Pluralism*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield (Chapters 4-6)

#### Unit 5: *Religion, Community, and Politics* (October 2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup>)

To Do: Discussion 5 October 2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup>; Quiz 3 October 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>

Readings: Bellah, Robert N. (2008 ed.) *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press (selections)

Paul D. Numrich and Elfriede Wedam (2015). *Religion and Community in New Urban America* (selections)

Robert P. Jones (2016). *The End of White Christian America*. New York: Simon and Schuster. (Chapters 1 & 2)

Eck, Diana L. (2001). *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become American’s Most Diverse Nation*. New York: HarperCollins. (Chapter 1)

Putnam, Robert. (2000). *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster. (Chapter 4)

#### Unit 6: *Religion and the Family* (October 9<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup>)

To Do: **Test 1 October 10<sup>th</sup> starting at 8 am to October 11<sup>th</sup> at 8 am;** Discussion 6 October 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>

Readings: Edgell, Penny. (2006) *Religion and Family in a Changing Society*. Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press. (Chapter 1 to page 21)

Ellison, Christopher G., Amy M. Burdette, and Norval D. Glenn. (2011). “Praying for Mr. Right?: Religion, Family Background, and Marital Expectations Among College Women.” *Journal of Family Issues* Vol. 32, 7. Pp. 906-931

Ellison and Hummer (2010). Religion, Families, and Health: Population-Based Research in the United States (selections)

Vern L. Bengtson and Norella M. Putney (2013). *Families and Faith: How Religion is Passed Down Across Generations* (Selections)

### Unit 7: Race, Gender & Religion (October 16th – 27th)

To Do: Discussion 7 October 23<sup>rd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>; Literature Review due by October 17th at midnight

Readings: Adams, Jimi. (2007). “Stained Glass Makes the Ceiling Visible: Organizational Opposition to Women in Congregational Leadership.” *Gender and Society*. 21, 1. Pp. 80-105.

Comstock, Gary David. (1996). *Unrepentant Self-Affirming, Practicing: Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay People Within Organized Religion*. (Chapter 1)

Eck, Diana L. (2001). *A New Religious America: How a “Christian Country” Has Become American’s Most Diverse Nation*. New York: HarperCollins. (Chapter 5)

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)

Taylor, Robert Joseph, Karen D. Lincoln and Linda M. Chatters. (2005). “Supportive Relationships with Church Members Among African Americans.” *Family Relations*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (Oct., 2005), pp. 501-511

### Unit 8: Religion as a Justification & When Religion Becomes Deviant and Lethal (October 30<sup>th</sup> – November 3<sup>rd</sup>)

To Do: Discussion 8 October 30<sup>th</sup> – November 3<sup>rd</sup>; Group project due November 2<sup>nd</sup>; Quiz 4 November 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>

Readings: Juergensmeyer, Mark. (2003). *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press (pp. 1-31)

Kimball, Charles. (2003). *When Religion Becomes Lethal: The Explosive Mix of Politics and Religion in Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (selections)

Lincoln, Bruce. (2006). *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11, Second Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapter 6)

### Unit 9: *Religion, Social Change & Current Trends* (November 6<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup>)

To Do: Discussion 9 November 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup>; Term paper or Portfolio due November 17<sup>th</sup>

Readings: Eck, Diana L. (2001). *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Become American's Most Diverse Nation*. New York: HarperCollins. (Chapters 2, 6 & 10)

Drescher, Elizabeth. 2016. *Choosing our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of American Nones*. Oxford University Press

Gerardo Marti. 2008. *Hollywood Faith: Holiness, Prosperity, and Ambition in a Los Angeles Church*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers. (Chapter 3)

Packard, Josh and A. Hope (2015). Church Refugees: Sociologists Reveal Why People are DONE with Church but Not Their Faith (Selections)

Wuthnow, Robert. (2009). *Boundless Faith: The Global Outreach of American Churches*. Berkeley: University of California Press. BV2410 .W88 2009 (Chapter 1)

### Unit 10: *Spirituality and Secularization* (November 20<sup>th</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup>)

To Do: Quiz 5 November 29<sup>th</sup> – December 1<sup>st</sup>; Discussion 10 November 27<sup>th</sup> – December 1<sup>st</sup>

Readings: Ammerman, Nancy. (2014). *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (Chapters 1-3; 7 & 9)

Berger, Peter L. (1967). *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Random House. (Chapters 5-7) – Textbook

Wuthnow, Robert (1998) *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950's*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 1 & 7

*FINAL TIME 8 AM December 4<sup>TH</sup> TO 8 AM December 5<sup>TH</sup>*