



Texas A&M
UNIVERSITY
Central Texas

RELS 5304
Sociology of Religion
Spring 2018

Class Location: FH 208
Class Hours: W 6-9
Instructor: Floyd Berry, PhD
Office: FH 217G
Office Hours: MTWR 2-5 (please make an appointment)
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1.0 Course Description

Examines the principles of religion, religious beliefs, and practices from the perspective of sociology.

2.0 Accessing Canvas

This is a lecture course with online components in Canvas. The student accesses Canvas on the TAMUCT website ("Search *myCT*").

3.0 Course Objectives

1. Students will be able to analyze and discuss eastern religious traditions from a sociological perspective.
2. Students will be able to analyze and discuss western religious traditions from a sociological perspective.
3. Students will be able to analyze and discuss indigenous religious traditions from a sociological perspective.
4. Students will be able to discuss problems in modernism and multiculturalism.
5. Students will be able to assess the varying traditions pertaining to theodicy.
6. Students will be able to discuss aspects of the sacred canopy as presented by Berger.
7. Students will submit a number of article summaries.

4.0 Textbook

4.1 Required for Course

Berger, P. L. (1990). *The sacred canopy: Elements of a sociological theory of religion* (2nd ed.). New York: Anchor.

Kurtz, L. R. (2016). *Gods in the global village: The world's religions in sociological perspective* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

4.2 Recommended but Not Required

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: Author. NOTE: *This work will be referred to as the APA manual in this syllabus and in the course.*
- Berger, P. L. (1970). *A rumor of angels: modern society and the rediscovery of the supernatural*. Garden City, NY: Anchor.
- Berger, P. L. (Ed.). (1999). *The desecularization of the world*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Anchor.
- Durkheim, E. (1915). *The elementary forms of the religious life*. New York: Free Press.
- Jelen, T. G. (Ed.). (2002). *Sacred markets, sacred canopies: Essays on religious markets and religious pluralism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Stark, R. (2007). *Discovering God: The origins of the great religions and the evolution of belief*. New York: HarperOne.
- Swanson, G. E. (1964). *The birth of the gods: The origin of primitive beliefs*. University of Michigan.
- Wach, J. (1944). *Sociology of religion*. University of Chicago.
- Wach, J. (1958). *The comparative study of religions*. New York: Columbia.
- Weber, M. (1963). *The sociology of religion* (Trans. E. Fischoff.). Boston: Beacon.
- Weber, M. (1930). *The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (Trans. T. Parsons). London: Routledge.
- Yinger, J. M. (1961). *Sociology looks at religion*. London: Macmillan.

5.0 Course Requirements

5.1 Exams (400 pts)

The student will take two exams, a mid-term and a final. The exams are essays, written in a blue book. Work not done in a blue book will not be graded. Blue books are available from the bookstore. Each exam is valued at 200 points. The student has a maximum of two hours to take the exam, given immediately after roll call. The exam window closes, however, when two hours have elapsed. The mid-term exam will receive comments from the instructor and will be returned to the student. Any use of books, notes, or internet (through cell phones) is forbidden during these two exams. Students are encouraged to review their work before submission. The following rubric will guide the instructor (next page):

Qualities & Criteria	Poor	Good	Excellent
Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of topics to be addressed • Information is correct • Coherency <i>(Weight: 70%)</i>	Not objective and poorly addresses the issues. Information is unnecessary or insufficient to discuss the issues. (0-109 pts)	Mostly objective and addresses most of the issues. Information is mostly necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues. (110-131 pts)	Objective and addresses all the issues. Information is necessary and sufficient to discuss the issues. (132-140 pts)
Quality of Writing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity • Grammar and English usage • Organization and coherence <i>(Weight: 30%)</i>	Poorly written and contains flagrant spelling and grammatical errors. Poorly organized, lacks clarity, and is incoherent. (0-40 pts)	Mostly well-written, without egregious spelling or grammatical errors. Organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways. (41-55 pts)	Well-written, without egregious spelling or grammatical errors. Well organized, clear, and ideas are presented in coherent ways. (56-60 pts)

A week before each exam, the instructor will provide students with two exam questions. This practice provides the student with a week's worth of preparation. It is highly recommended that students compose some outline of how they will write their essays and commit that outline to memory. After beginning the exam, students may wish to write their memorized outlines on the blank exam questions page, given to students before they begin their exams. This practice provides coherency and organization for one's essay.

NOTE: Graduate students are expected to have adequate knowledge of the essentials of grammar, writing style, and paper organization in accordance with the APA manual. If the student does *not* have adequate knowledge in these areas, then the purchase and use of additional books are recommended. Failure to provide written work in accordance with the essentials of acceptable, English writing style and APA guidelines will result in poor grades. Examples of non-standard English usage include sentence fragments, dangling modifiers, lack of agreement between pronouns and their antecedents or subjects and verbs, bulleted items, flagrant misuse of punctuation, second-person pronouns, and slang or abbreviated expressions.

5.2 Class Participation (300 pts)

Students are expected to participate in class discussions, indicating an understanding of the reading material and how to apply it. Students earn a point for full attendance on a specific day (appears on time and does not leave early). Students earn an additional point for participating in class discussion. (No points are awarded on exam days, however.) Thus, the student earns 0-2 points on each class day (total of 14 days), which corresponds to the following grade:

Points	Grade	Points	Grade
26	300	12-13	149
24-25	278	10-11	128
22-23	257	8-9	106
20-21	235	6-7	85
18-19	214	4-5	63
16-17	192	2-3	42
14-15	171	1	20

NOTE: If the student is tardy (appears in class after roll is called), it is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor at the conclusion of class (before leaving the classroom that evening), that the student arrived in class and would like to receive some credit for class participation. Failure to notify the instructor may result in an absence for that day. The student is allowed to miss a class without major reduction in points. **If the student misses two classes, the final letter grade for the course will be reduced by one letter grade (e.g., A becomes a B, B becomes a C, etc.).**

Cell phone use is forbidden during class, and such behavior is not awarded class participation points.

5.3 Academic Honesty

During the first week of class, the student reads the section in the syllabus on academic honesty (section 8.0) and the material at the Purdue University OWL website regarding plagiarism (see handout and link). The student must sign the document pertaining to academic honesty and return it to the instructor. **NOTE: Students will not be allowed to continue in the course without notifying the instructor of their comprehension of this material (by signing the document and submitting it to the instructor).**

5.4 Article Summaries (300 pts)

Students will read six assigned articles in the Course Calendar and provide a one-page summary of their content. Each summary will have a header with the student's name. The summary will be double-spaced, with some paragraphs. Each summary is submitted by attaching it to an email on Canvas, due by 6:00 p.m. (The due date for each summary is indicated in the Course Calendar.) Points are awarded for the number of article summaries submitted, as follows (next page):

# of Articles	Grade
6	300
5	250
4	200
3	150
2	100
1	50

Students must submit summaries that are well-written, in accordance with graduate-level standing. Poorly written summaries will receive no credit.

6.0 Grading Matrix and Conversion

6.1 Matrix

	Points
Exams (2 @ 200)	400
Class Participation	300
Reaction Comments	300
Academic Honesty Document	-----
Total:	1000

6.2 Conversion to Course Letter Grade

Points	%	Grade
900 – 1000	90 – 100	A
800 – 899	80 – 89	B
700 – 799	70 – 79	C
600 – 699	60 – 69	D
0 – 599	0 – 59	F

7.0 Course Calendar¹

Date	Topics/Activities	Readings	Due Dates
1/17	Academic honesty Course requirements Religious studies	Academic honesty/plagiarism readings (see document) Syllabus PowerPoint discussion	RC1 due before midnight
1/24	Definitions Theory v theology	B, Appendices 1 & 2 Article 1: Parvez, Z. F. "Toward a global sociology of religion." (On Canvas, under Modules, read Parvez 2017.)	Academic honesty document due at 6:00 p.m. Article 1 Summary due at 6:00 p.m.

1/31	Introduction to sociology of religion	K. Preface and ch 1 Article 2: Barth, C. <i>"In illo tempore</i> , at the center of the world: Mircea Eliade and religious studies' concepts of sacred time and space." (On Canvas, under Modules, read Barth 2013, pp. 59-65.)	Article 2 Summary due at 6:00 p.m.
2/7	Eastern Religious Traditions	K, ch 2 Article 3: Bellah, R. N. "Religious evolution." (On Canvas, under Modules, read Bellah 1964.)	Article 3 Summary due at 6:00 p.m.
2/14	Western Religious Traditions	K, ch 3 Article 4: Thomassen, B. "The hidden battle that shaped the history of sociology: Arnold van Gennep contra Emile Durkheim." (On Canvas, under Modules, read Thomassen 2016, pp. 173-183.)	Article 4 Summary due at 6:00 p.m.
2/21	Indigenous Religious Traditions	K, ch 4 Article 5: Harjo, S. S. "Threatened and damaged: Protecting sacred places." (On Canvas, under Modules, read Harjo 2013.)	Article 5 Summary due at 6:00 p.m.
2/28	The Religious Ethos	K, ch 5	
3/7	Modernism & Multiculturalism	K, ch 6 Article 6: Schmidt-Leukel, P. "Peter Berger's 'many altars' and the theology of religions." (On Canvas, under Modules, read Schmidt-Leukel 2017.)	Article 6 Summary due at 6:00 p.m.
3/14	Spring break		
3/21	Religious Movements	K, ch 7	
3/28	Mid-term exam		
4/4	World Construction	B, ch 1	
4/11	World Maintenance	B, ch 2	
4/18	Theodicy	B, ch 3	
4/25	Religion and alienation	B, ch 4	
5/2	Secularization	B, ch 5	
5/9	Final exam		

¹ Events are subject to minor revision

8.0 Academic Honesty

TAMUCT expects all students to maintain high standards of personal and scholarly conduct. Students guilty of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, self-plagiarism (“recycling”), or collusion. The instructor shall initiate action for each case of academic dishonesty and report it to the Associate Director of Student Conduct. Zero points are assigned for any course product that violates academic honesty. The student should access this link for more information: <https://www.tamuct.edu/departments/studentconduct/academicintegrity.php>.

9.0 Disability Support

If students believe that this course may present barriers to learning due to a disability, they must contact Access and Inclusion at (254) 501-5831 in Warrior Hall, Ste. 212. For more information, students may visit their website at <https://www.tamuct.edu/student-affairs/access-inclusion.html>. Any information that the student provides is private and confidential and will be treated as such. The instructor cannot accommodate students’ disabilities unless they communicate with Access and Inclusion first.

10.0 Diversity in the Classroom

Respect for cultural and human biological diversity are core concepts within the social sciences. In this course, each voice in the classroom has value in contributing to class discussion. The student should respect the different experiences, beliefs, and values expressed by one’s fellow students and instructor, and refrain from derogatory comments about other individuals, cultures, groups, or viewpoints. In this course we welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, citizenships, disabilities, education, ethnicities, family statuses, genders, gender identities, geographical locations, languages, military experiences, political views, races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and work experiences.

11.0 Writing Center

The University Writing Center (UWC) at Texas A&M University-Central Texas is a free workspace open to all TAMUCT students. The UWC is located in Warrior Hall, Rm 416. The Center is open 11 am - 6 pm, Monday-Thursday during the term. Students may work independently in the UWC by checking out a laptop that runs Microsoft Office Suite and connects to WIFI, or by consulting the resources on writing, including all of the relevant style guides. Students may also arrange a individual session with a trained and experienced writing tutor. Tutorials may be arranged by visiting the UWC. Tutors are prepared to help writers of all levels and abilities at any stage of the writing process. Sessions typically last 20-30 minutes. While tutors will not write, edit, or grade papers, they will help students develop more effective creative and revision strategies.

12.0 Late Work

As a rule, there is no make-up work for exams. In rare instances, however, a make-up for the mid-term exam may be offered, but with a 20-point deduction, or 10% of the grade (evidence pertaining to a serious emergency will be considered for such a makeup). *In no instance will a make-up exam be offered for the final exam, and in no instance will a make-up for an exam be given after two weeks from the original exam date.* To be considered as a prospect for making up an exam, the student must contact the instructor within 24 hours of having missed an exam for purposes of making it up. A request for make-up, of course, may or may not be granted. The final course grade will be posted within a few days of the final exam; therefore, *no incompletes will be awarded for this course.* If the student foresees that he or she will be unable to complete the course, then the student should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

13.0 Modification of the Syllabus

This syllabus may be revised in minor ways at the discretion of the instructor. The student is responsible for noting any changes in the syllabus. More than likely, a change in the syllabus will pertain to events in the course calendar (sect. 7.0). If modified, the revised course calendar will be posted on Canvas and will replace section 7.0 of the syllabus.

14.0 Contact with the Instructor

The student should contact the instructor via the message feature of Canvas about any topic or issue that pertains to the course.

15.0 Announcements

The student is responsible for checking Canvas on a near-daily basis for ongoing announcements pertaining to the course.

