



**Texas A&M**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
**Central Texas**

RELS 5304  
*Sociology of Religion*  
Spring 2020

Class Location: FH 203  
Class Hours: T 6:00-8:45  
Instructor: Floyd Berry, PhD  
Office: HH 204 S  
Office Hours: By appointment  
Email: (prefer Canvas message) [fberry@tamuct.edu](mailto:fberry@tamuct.edu)  
NOTE: If contacting instructor outside of Canvas, students must use their official TAMUCT emails.

### **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 at <https://tamuct.onecampus.com/> or on the TAMUCT website ("MY CT").

### **3.0 Course Objectives**

1. Students will be able to discuss aspects of the "sacred canopy" as presented by Berger, such as world construction and maintenance, theodicy, alienation, and secularization.
2. Students will be able to discuss and critique Stark's explanations of religious phenomena as presented by Stark in his book *Why God?*
3. Students will be able to explain and discuss how sociologists, as social scientists, view religious phenomena.
4. Students will submit acceptable summaries of articles pertaining to the sociology of religion.
5. Students will submit acceptable essays for mid-term and final exams. To be accepted, the student shall discuss all aspects of an essay question, using standard English prose and grammatical construction.

### **4.0 Textbook**

#### **4.1 Required for Course**

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

#### **4.2 Recommended but Not Required**

- American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- American Sociological Association. 2019. *American Sociological Association Style Guide*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington, DC: Author.
- 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.
- Bruce, S. (2017). *Secular beats spiritual: The Westernization of the Easternization of the West*. Oxford.
- 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.
- Kurtz, L. R. (2016). *Gods in the global village: The world's religions in sociological perspective* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.
- 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 not “open-book,” nor may the student use any notes or messages from cell phones. 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. Students are encouraged to review their work before submission. The following rubric will guide the instructor in grading essays:

Qualities & Criteria	Poor	Good	Excellent
<b>Content</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elements of topics to be addressed</li> <li>• Information is correct</li> <li>• Coherency</li> </ul> <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)
<b>Quality of Writing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clarity</li> <li>• Grammar and English usage</li> <li>• Organization and coherence</li> </ul> <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. Blue books must be blank before students begin their exams. After beginning the exam, however, students may wish to write working outlines on the exam questions page or on the inside cover of the blue book. A simple outline 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 essay organization in accordance with writing manuals. If the student does *not* have adequate knowledge in these areas, then the purchase and use of additional books are highly recommended. The University Writing Center is also available to students. Failure to provide written work in accordance with the essentials of acceptable, English writing style will result in poor grades. Examples of non-standard English usage include, among other things, sentence fragments, run-ons, dangling modifiers, lack of agreement between pronouns and their antecedents or subjects and verbs, bulleted items, slashes, flagrant misuse of punctuation, slang or abbreviated expressions, "etc." or "*et cetera*," and excessive use of metaphorical language. In Modules, there is a Power Point on "Typical Problems with Essay Exams." Students should review this Power Point.

### 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 are to read assigned material before class. Students earn a point for full attendance on a specific day (appear on time and do not leave early). Students earn an additional point for participating in class discussions. (No points are awarded on exam days.) Thus, the student earns 0-2 points on each class day (total of 14 days), which correspond to the following grade:

Points	Grade	Points	Grade	Points	Grade
28	300	19	201	10	102
27	289	18	190	9	91
26	278	17	179	8	80
25	267	16	168	7	69
24	256	15	157	6	58
23	245	14	146	5	47
22	234	13	135	4	36
21	223	12	124	3	25
20	212	11	113	1-2	13

**NOTE:** If students are tardy (appear in class after roll is called), they are responsible for notifying the instructor at the conclusion of class (before leaving the classroom that evening), that they 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. Cell phone use is forbidden during class, and such behavior is not awarded class participation 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.).**

### 5.3 Academic Integrity Document

During the first week of class, the student is to read the section in the syllabus on Academic Integrity (§ 8.0) and the link provided in that section regarding plagiarism. The student must sign the document (also in Canvas, under Modules) pertaining to Academic Integrity and return a hard copy 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:

# 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
Article Summaries	300
Academic Honesty Document	-----
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1000</b>

### 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 Calendar<sup>1</sup>

Date	Topics	Readings <sup>2</sup>	Assignments
1/14	Syllabus Academic Integrity	Syllabus Academic Integrity readings (§ 8.0 of syllabus)	
1/21	World Building	B, ch 1 <b>Article 1:</b> Parvez, Z. F. "Toward a global sociology of religion." (On Canvas, under Modules, read Parvez 2017.)	Academic Integrity document due at 6 p.m. (hard copy) Article 1 Summary due at 6:00 p.m.

1/28	World Maintenance	B, ch 2  <b>Article 2:</b> 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.
2/4	Theodicy	B, ch 3  <b>Article 3:</b> Bellah, R. N. "Religious evolution." (On Canvas, under Modules, read Bellah 1964.)	Article 3 Summary due at 6:00 p.m.
2/11	Secularization	B, ch 5  <b>Article 4:</b> 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.
2/18	"Ungodly theories" Faith	S, Introduction S, ch 1  <b>Article 5:</b> 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.
2/25	Monotheism and morality	S, ch 2  <b>Article 6:</b> 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.
3/2	Religious experience, miracles, and revelation	S, ch 3	
3/9	Spring break		
3/16	Mid-term exam		<b>Blue book!</b>
3/23	Religious movements	S, ch 4	
3/30	Religious group dynamics	S, ch 5	
4/7	Religious leadership	S, ch 6	
4/14	Hostility and civility	S, ch 7	
4/21	Causes and consequences	S, ch 8	
4/28	Meaning and metaphysics	S, ch 9	

5/5	Final exam		Blue book!
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<sup>1</sup> Events are subject to minor revision

<sup>2</sup> **B** = Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*; **S** = Stark, *Why God?*

### 8.0 Academic Integrity

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/student-affairs/student-conduct.html>.

### 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 first communicate with Access and Inclusion. The director of Access and Inclusion is Donald Norman.

### 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 Classroom Etiquette

Students shall show respect to other students and to the instructor in all communications, whether verbal or in writing (e.g., online). For example, making rude or threatening remarks or gestures, arguing, complaining, and challenging that is not based on readings, rationality, and the course objectives are all violations of classroom etiquette. Regarding odors, please refrain from bringing smelly foods into the classroom, and please engage in personal hygiene practices. Certain strong odors may be perceived as offensive and may distract other students from their learning experiences.

**12.0 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. One may contact Dr. Bruce Bowles at [bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu](mailto:bruce.bowles@tamuct.edu) for more information.

**13.0 Late Work**

As a rule, make-up work for exams is not offered. *The mid-term exam may be made up with instructor approval; however, in no instance will that make-up be given later than two weeks from the original exam date. To be considered as a prospect for making up the mid-term exam, the student must contact the instructor within 24 hours of having missed the exam for purposes of making it up.* 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 students foresee that they will be unable to complete the course, then they should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

**14.0 Student's Expectation of Grades**

If students foresee that their scores in class participation, reaction comments, or exams are unacceptable, they may wish to drop the course. Absences for any reasons, including medical, cannot be used to exempt one from the requirements of the course. For example, students may inform the instructor that they will not or did not attend class(es) for some reason. While the instructor appreciates the information about absences, students should not expect that they will be afforded leniency or a recalculation of grades based on this information. All students in a class must be treated fairly and equally. If students foresee that they will be unable to earn the grade they desire, then they should either drop the course or accept the posted grade.

**15.0 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 typos or events in the course calendar (§ 7.0). If modified, a revised course calendar will be posted on Canvas and will replace § 7.0 of the syllabus.

**16.0 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. If students contact the instructor through the instructor's official TAMUCT email, they must use their own official TAMUCT email. Many personal emails find their way to the junk folder by default.

**17.0 Announcements**

The student is responsible for checking Canvas for ongoing announcements or messages pertaining to the course. For example, if a class is cancelled due to inclement weather, students would benefit from checking messages about the class cancellation and thus be able to alter their travel schedules.