

Sociology of Religion / Sociology 3040-010
Monday 6:00 pm - 8:45 pm / Social Work 137
Summer Semester, 2009, University of Utah

Dr. Frank J. Page

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 1:00 pm - 4:00 PM

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I. Goals:

The primary goal of this class is to give students access to a comparative and critical understanding of religious institutions and practices that will help them to better understand religion and its impact upon societies, global-international events, and personal well-being. This overview of the nature, functioning, and diversity of religion will help students make more discerning decisions regarding cultural, political, and moral issues that are often influenced by religion.

II. Topics To Be Covered:

The course is laid out in two parts. The first section begins with a review of conventional and theoretical definitions of religion and an overview of the importance and centrality of religion to human societies. It emphasizes the diversity and nature of "religious experience" in terms of different groups, classes, and individuals. This is followed by a comparative analysis of the major religions in terms of beliefs, values, norms, practices, and rituals. The comparative analysis surveys Western, Eastern, New Age, and Native American religions, and unaffiliated groups in terms of their defining beliefs and practices. It concludes with an analysis of the major commonalities and differences between Eastern and Western Religions, New Age, Native American religions, and unaffiliated groups that include agnostics, atheists and existentialists. This section ends with a take home midterm.

The second part of the course begins with an overview of biological, historical, sociological, anthropological, psychological, and philosophical explanations of the origin, development and practice of religion. This is followed by an analysis of religion in terms of social processes and phenomena that include, socialization, social control, social identity, authority, power, law, political behavior, stratification, culture, social change, deviance, and gender. This section also covers the relationship between religion and human well-being in terms of correlates regarding physical and mental health, achievement, deviance, marriage, divorce, and crime. This section concludes with a critical analysis of religion in terms of functions and dysfunctions and political, social and moral issues associated with religion. These issues will include patriarchy, prejudice, violence, sexism, conflicts between science and religion, modernity, separation of church and state, overpopulation, diversity, freedom, democracy, the environment, social change and terrorism. The course concludes with a study of master trends in religion in the 21st century. The final is a taken home exam given out on the last day of class and turned in a week later.

III. Pedagogy, Exams, and Papers:

This class will utilize a variety of teaching approaches that include lectures, in class discussion, films, and guest speakers representing different religious perspectives. There will be a midterm, a final exam and a paper. The exams will be ten page double spaced take home exams, and they should reflect materials addressed in the readings and lectures. The paper can be from four to six double spaced pages in length. There are four options for the paper. The first option calls upon the student to do participant observer or ethnographic research on a religion or religious practice. The student who chooses this option will spend time throughout the semester in a particular religious institution or group that she is not affiliated with and record her experiences in a journal. The journal will conclude with a summary of her observations in terms of what she has learned and any insights or hypotheses that have been generated by her research. The second option allows the student to write a formal research paper that addresses a particular religion, religious practice, or political or moral issue associated with religion or influenced by religious views. The third option asks the student to develop a hypothesis regarding religion and carry out an appropriate experiment or survey that will shed light on it. The fourth option entails writing a sociological analysis or response to one of the books or movies on the suggested readings and movies lists. These papers should summarize the major themes and ideas and conclude with a critical analysis of the book or movie in terms of concepts and research addressed in the class.

Students are advised to stay at least one week ahead in the readings. Much of the class discussion will be based on the readings, so please complete the readings before class. It should also be noted that while it may appear that there are a lot of readings, most of them, particularly the readings in the Sociology of Religion Reader are very short, most being from two to five pages. Students who do well in this class, attend class and do the reading.

IV. Texts:

Gods in the Global Village, The World's Religions in Sociological Perspective, Second Edition Lester R. Kurtz

The Religious Experience, Classical and Philosophical and Social Theories, Irving M. Zeitlin

Sociology of Religion: A Reader. Edited by Susanne. C. Monahan, William A. Mirola, and Michael A.O. Emerson.

Assigned Readings on E. Reserve: These can be accessed on line through the Student Portal. To do this, you should log on to My.Utah.edu with your UNID. Click on Academics and a list of your current courses along with any course reserves will be listed. Click on the course reserve for this course and the E-reserve readings will appear. Click on a particular reading and you can read it on line or print it out.

V. Course Outline

Week One, (May 18): Defining and Studying Religion / Issues in Conventional and Theoretical Approaches to Religion.

Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction, Wade Clark Roof (1-4)
Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Classical Sociological Definitions of Religion, Patricia Chang (5-8)
Sociology of Religion Reader: Elementary Forms of the Religious life, Emile Durkheim. (9-14)
Sociology of Religion Reader: From Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law, Karl Marx (15-16)
Sociology of Religion Reader: Religion as a Cultural System, Clifford Geertz (16-22)

Week Two (May 25): Memorial Day: No class.

Sociology of Religion Reader: The Sacred Canopy, Peter L. Berger (23-29)
Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Belief and Ritual, Susanne Monahan (30-34)
Sociology of Religion Reader: Salvation on Sand Mountain, Patrice Gaines (37-42)
Sociology of Religion Reader: Civil Religion in America, Robert N. Bellah (43-46)
Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Religious Experience, William MacDonald Angels, and Kenneth Woodward. (55-57)
Sociology of Religion Reader: Ways of Seeing Ecstasy in Modern Society: Experiential-Expressive and Cultural-Linguistic Views, David Yamane, Megan Polzer (70-77)

Week Three, (June 1): Introduction to Western Religions and Religious Experience and Practice: Axial Age, Judaism, Christianity & Islam

Gods in the Global Village: Chapter One: Religious Life in the Global Village
Gods in the Global Village: Chapter Two: A Sociological Tour: Turning East
God's in the Global Village: Chapter Three: The Tour, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam,
Gods in the Global Village: Chapter Four: The Religious Ethos

Week Four, (June 8): Hinduism, Buddhism, Native American Religion

Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Race, Ethnicity, and Religion, Michael Emerson ((78-79)

Sociology of Religion Reader: Becoming American by Becoming Hindu: Indian Americans Take Their Place at the Multicultural Table, Prema Kurien, (83-89)

Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Alternative Religions: Wendy W. Young (258-262)

Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Gender and Religion, Lori Beaman (115-117)

Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Social Class and Religion, William Mirola (144-150)

Sociology of Religion Reader; Introduction to Sexual Identity and Religion, William Mirola. (173-175)

Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Religious Organizations, Institutions, and Authority, Susanne c. Monahan (225-230)

Sociology of Religion Reader: Negotiating a Religious Identity: The Case of the Gay Evangelical, Scott Thumma (189-195)

Week Five, (June 15): Comparative Analysis, East, West, New Age Religion.

E-Reserve. The Sacred Canopy; Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion. Peter L. Berger, Chapter Three, The Problem of Theodicy

E-Reserve: The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success, Rodney Stark, Chapter One: Blessings of Theology

E-Reserve: Emma Goldman, The Philosophy of Atheism, from The Portable Atheist, Christopher Hitchens Editor.

E-Reserve: Albert Einstein, Selected Writing on Religion, from The Portable Atheist, Christopher Hitchens Editor.

Week Six: (June 22): Theodicy, Crisis of Modernity, Agnostics, Atheists, Existentialists

The Religious Experience: Preface

Gods in the Global Village: Chapter Five: Modernism and Multiculturalism

Gods in the Global Village: Chapter Six: Religious Movements in a New Century

Gods in the Global Village: Chapter Seven: Religion and social Conflict.

Week Seven: (June 29): Classical Philosophical Conceptions of Religion

Midterm on comparative analysis of religion, distributed. Due in two weeks,

The Religious Experience: Chapter One: Rousseau

The Religious Experience: Chapter Two: Hegel

The Religious Experience: Chapter Three: The Young or Left Hegelians

The Religious Experience: Chapter Four: Marx

Week Eight: (July 6): Anthropological / Sociological Conceptions of Religion

The Religious Experience: Chapter Five: Nietzsche

The Religious Experience: Chapter Six: Max Weber

The Religious Experience: Chapter Seven: Max Weber on the World's Religions

The Religious Experience: Chapter Eight: E. B. Tylor

Week Nine: (July 13): What Americans Believe. Religion as Institution and Social Process and Phenomena.

Midterm is due.

The Religious Experience: Chapter Nine, James George Frazer

The Religious Experience: Chapter Ten: Bronislaw Malinowski

The Religious Experience: Chapter Eleven: Sigmund Freud

The Religious Experience; Chapter Twelve: Emile Durkheim

Week Ten: (July 20): Religion and well-being, marriage, divorce, deviance, socialization, social control, authority, power, stratification, politics, self, culture, and gender.

E-Reserve, The God Part of the Brain, A Scientific Interpretation of Human Spirituality and God, Mathew Alper, Chapter Three

E-Reserve. The God Delusion, Richard Dawkins, Chapter Five.

Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to the Secularization Debate, Susanne C. Monahan (196-200)

Sociology of Religion Reader : Introduction to Science and Religion, Eric Gormly and William MacDonald ((374-377)

Sociology of Religion Reader. Introduction to Social Movements and Religion, William Mirola (399-403)

Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Politics and Religion, Richard Wood. (347-341)

Week Eleven: (July 27) Critical Analysis of Religion, Fundamentalism & Terrorism

Review for final is distributed.

E-Reserve, The True Believer, Eric Hoffer, Chapter Two: The Desire for Substitutes,

E-Reserve, The Causes of World War Three, Chapter 21, A Pagan Sermon, C. Wright Mills.

E-Reserve: Acts of Faith, The Story of An American Muslim, The Struggle for the Soul of a Generation, Eboo Patel,

E-Reserve: Is Religion Killing Us, Chapter Two, Religion and Violence, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer,

E-Reserve: Infidel, Ayann Hirisi, Chapter Two. Under the Tala Tree

E-Reserve: The End of Faith, Chapter One, Reason in Exile, Sam Harris

E-Reserve, God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, Christopher Hitchens, Chapter Seven, Chapter Eight, Chapter 16.

Week Twelve: (August 3): The Future of Religion

Final Exam on Theories of Origin of Religion and Critical analysis of Religion distributed. It is due Friday August 7th at my office rm. 429 Beh. Sci. Bldg.

E-Reserve: Strong Religion. The Rise of Fundamentalisms Around the World, Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan, Introduction.

E-Reserve: Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence, Mark Juergensmeyer. Chapter One. Terror and God.

E- Reserve: Terror Management Theory: An Evolutionary Existential Account of Human Behavior. Chap. Two, Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg

E-Reserve: Does God Have A Future, Karen Armstrong

E-Reserve: Tomorrow's God, Our Greatest Spiritual Challenge. Neale Donald Walsch, Chapters 1, 2, 3.

VI. Suggested Readings:

Why God Won't Go Away, Brain Science & the Biology of Belief, Andrew Newberg, M.D., Eugene D Aquili, M.D., PH.D., and Vince Rause
Why I Am Not A Christian, Bertrand Russell
Civilization and its Discontents, Sigmund Freud
Varieties of Religious Experience, William James
Life is a Miracle, Wendell Berry
The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Emile Durkheim
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Max Weber
The "God" Part of the Brain, A scientific Interpretation of Human Spirituality and God, Mathew Alper
Strong Religion, The Rise of Fundamentalism Around the World, Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan
The True Believer, Eric Hoffer
When Religion Becomes Evil, Charles Kimball
Escape From Evil, Ernest Becker
The Denial of Death, Ernest Becker
Consilience, Edward O. Wilson
The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion, Peter Berger
The Sociology of Religion, Max Weber
The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success, Rodney Stark
The End of Faith, Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason, Sam Harris
Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer
The Anatomy of Peace, The Arbinger Institute
The Devil, Peter Stanford
A History of God, Karen Armstrong
Fundamentalism, Karen Armstrong
The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions, Karen Armstrong
Wherever You Go There You Are, Jon Kabat Zinn
Mountains and More Mountains, Dr. Paul Farmer
Under the Banner of Heaven, A Story of Violent Faith, John Karkauer
Galileo's Daughter, A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love, Dava Sobel
Elmer Gantry, Sinclair Lewis
The God Delusion, Richard Dawkins
American Theocracy, Kevin Phillips
Beyond Good and Evil, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche
Think on These Things, Krishnamurti
Infidel, Ayaan Hirsi Ali
Acts of Faith, The Story of An American Muslim, the struggle for Soul of a Generation, Eboo Patel
Secret Ceremonies, Deborah Laake (Mormon experience with ostracism)
The Crucible, Arthur Miller (Salem Witch Trials)
Tomorrow's God: Our Greatest Spiritual Challenge, Neal D. Walsch, Atria Books
The Portable Atheist, Christopher Hitchens
God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, Christopher Hitchens
Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know, Steven Prothero
In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror, Tom Pyszczynski, Sheldon Solomon, and Jeff Greenberg
Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence, Mark Juergensmeyer
Siddhartha, Herman Hesse

Beyond the Chains of Illusion, Eric Fromm
Long Way Gone, Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, Ishmael Beah
The Art of War, Sun Tzu (Taoist text)
The Glorious Qu'ran, Marmaduke William Pickthall
Upanishads (Hindu philosophical meditations)
Rig-Veda (Hindu hymns to Pantheon of gods)
Quran (Koran)
Old Testament, Bible
New Testament, Bible
Torah (First five books of the Bible)
The Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith
Wu Ching, (Confucianism, five classic works)
Sutra Pitka (Discourse of the Buddha)
Tao Te Ching, Lao Tse (Taoism)

Suggested Movies

The Rapture, (fictional drama about evangelical beliefs regarding endtimes)
Everyman for Himself, and God Against All, (socialization without God)
When Nietzsche Wept, (bio on Nietzsche & Freud) Armand Assante, Ben Cross
Religulous, Bill Maher (atheist criticism of religion)
Elmer Gantry, Burt Lancaster (fundamentalist hegemony)
A Light in the Jungle, (Albert Schweitzer, a Christian life)
The Black Robe, (religious / cultural imperialism)
Gulliver's Travels, Jonathan Swift (social criticism of religion and government)
Moloki, The Story of Father Damien, (Christianity in practice with lepers)
The Ten Commandments, Charlton Heston (conventional view Old Testament)
Galileo's Daughter, (Knowledge and the conflict between religion and science)
What the BliB Do I Know? (human nature, epistemology, spirituality)
Martin Luther, (biography) Stacy Keach
Jesus Camp, (documentary on aggressive evangelicals)
Doubt, Meryl Streep (Religious Deviance)
The Apostle, Robert Duval
Mind Walk, (existential and religious views on modernity)
Razor's Edge, (existentialism meets Buddhism) Bill Murray
The Mission, (religion and colonial exploitation), Robert Dinero
Jonestown, The Life and Death of the Peoples Temple, (Documentary)
The Last Temptation of Christ, (Radical dramatization of the crucifixion of Christ)
Friendly Persuasion, Gary Cooper (colonial American, Puritans, Synchronicity)
The Crucible, Arthur Miller (Salem Witch Trials)
Inherit the Wind, George C. Scott, (Scopes Trial)
Resurrection, Ellen Burstain (Gift of Healing)
The Bible, In the Beginning, George C. Scott, (Old Testament, Hollywood style)