

Bellevue College

SOC 246 Religion & Our Social World

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Winter Term: January 2nd – March 20th
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No On-Campus office this quarter

****Please always email me through the Canvas site first. If you don't hear from me within 24 hours, then email at the above address or call****

****If you see underlined, bold, red words in our syllabus, click on them!
They're links to webpages and will take you somewhere interesting!****

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course acquaints you with sociological concepts and perspectives around the broad definition and concepts of the idea of Religion. We are, in this class, ever-mindful that Religion in America is a political, cultural, and social institution and to that end, attempting a critical understanding of it through the lens of sociology makes it both intimately familiar and understandable. Through lecture, film and other media, and assigned readings, this course takes you on an exploration of the many dimensions of contemporary cultural and sociological perspectives on the idea of Religion and religious topics, including but not limited to religious dominance, music and religion, death and dying, sexuality/race/class/gender and religion, as well as cults in America. We will also be making broad use of popular culture to understand the many complexities of the ideas around Religion in the United States, including its ever-questioning relationship with education, family and politics.

A NOTE ABOUT COURSE CONTENT: Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we talk about provocative material. Please be advised that when we explore controversial topics, they will always be framed within an academic context. Keeping in mind that when we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for learning, and you may be confronted with subject matter that is difficult to watch, see, discuss, or listen to. Please note, however, that you will be responsible for any course material you miss if you choose not to participate. If you have any questions or concerns about content or climate, feel free to speak with me about it right away.

READING REQUIREMENTS:

- Furseth, Inger and Pål Repstad. *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. 2007. Ashgate Publishing Limited.
- Handouts and articles. All handouts (syllabus included) are available on Canvas. It is your responsibility to download all required material.

STRONGLY RECOMMENDED:

- Any current Dictionary of the English Language
- Any current Sociology Dictionary
- *A Writer's Reference, 6th Ed.* By Diana Hacker. See the [companion website](#).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: If you have medical information to share with me in the event of an emergency, please contact me via email or come to see me during office hours. Emergency preparedness is important! If you need course modifications, adaptations, or accommodations because of a disability, I can refer you to our Disability Resource Center (DRC). If you prefer, you may contact them directly by going to B132 or by calling 425.564.2498 or TTY 425.564.4110. Information is also available on their [website](#).

EXPLORE THE LMC! The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the LMC at least once a week if you can, but you can also access it via the web. Talk to a Reference Librarian at the Library (D-I26), by calling (425) 564-6161, or by [email](#).

- [Main Library Media Center](#)
- [LMC online catalog](#)
- [Article databases](#)

LEARNING AND COURSE OUTCOMES: Upon your dedicated participation and subsequent completion of this course, you will demonstrate:

- 1) A general understanding of basic concepts and ideas around the Sociology of Religion.
- 2) A general understanding of and the ability to critically recognize basic concepts and ideas around Religion, including the use of religious symbols, icons, and popular conceptions of things like worship or death around the world.
- 3) An awareness of the way in which popular culture has shaped the beliefs, structures and practices of religious groups (and vice versa), particularly in the United States.
- 4) A critical idea of U.S. and global society and social, political and cultural rules about Religion.
- 5) The ability to think critically about the various ways in which we construct ideas of our Selves as against the landscape of Religion (whether we think it defines us or not). How do we define ourselves as a member or nonmember of an organized religion, and why is that important in developing a sense of Self?
- 6) A general understanding of popular culture and religion, and religious popular culture.



- 7) A general understanding of the relationship between American religious ideologies and the political, social, and cultural climate in the United States today.

GENERAL RULES & EXPECTATIONS:

- Check in to our online classroom no less than *four times per week* (yes – I do keep track!). This means you log on and surf around the site. No need to check in with me. Make this work for you on your own time.
- Complete readings and homework assignments **on time**. I do not check whether you complete your readings; this is on the honor system! You do need to read your required material in order to complete homework assignments.
- Late homework assignments **are accepted**.
 - Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.
 - Late Discussion Boards that go beyond the date for responses can only be made up for half credit. Responses are due three days after the Initial Posts are due (see schedule for details). A big part of these assignments is your communication with other students. If you make up an initial post past the deadline for responses, you'll get credit for that post, with late points assessed, but the base grade will be half of its original worth, regardless of the days you're late. Otherwise, your post will be assessed late points within the first three days and your response will be accepted.
- I expect that your behavior in our virtual classroom be respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class will result in your grade lowering. Please keep your postings to discussion boards (DBs) thoughtful and polite. One-on-one conversations should be taken off-board and onto email so our DBs don't get clogged. If you find at any point that you are uncomfortable with anything posted to a DB, please email me right away. Be wary of soap boxing in this class; you may be tempted to present your opinion and editorialize, but refrain from doing this.



COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Participation*:	200 points
Key Terms Assignments (3):	75 points
Discussion Board Assignments (5):	100 points
New Religion Project (3 Team assignments):	300 points
New Religion Final:	50 points
New Religion Reflection:	75 points
Course Exams, Overall:	200 POINTS
TOTAL:	1000 POINTS

Remember: Falling behind can be hazardous to your health!
The Fine Print (or, what I really mean by that table above):

****Participation points accrue with various short assignments in the Discussion Area, such as your Introductory DB. These are labeled **PARTICIPATION DBs**. The Main DB assignments are labeled **MAIN DBs**.***

Attendance & Participation: Come to class and on time regularly, provoke energetic and polite discussion, speak out, listen actively, work diligently and respectfully with your colleagues in class, take loads of notes in class and from your readings, look up words you don't understand or know, ask questions, etc. Think critically about the world around you.

Main Discussion Board Assignments: The work done in the Discussion Board area will have you engage course material and work closely together. You are expected to participate in these assignments in order to generate critical discussion amongst one another. These assignments are always due on Wednesdays and Saturdays (your initial post goes up Wednesday and your responses to one another are due Saturdays). Your DBs are graded on two things: your original post and your responses (two of them) to colleagues of yours in the class. You must do both to earn full credit. A submission with no responses posted earns ½ credit at most, and responses without an original submission receive zero credit.

“Participation” Discussion Board Assignments: These are meant to support you throughout the course and will include things like Introductions, Some Uncategorized Discussions, & Feedback for the course. They are required and the grades are folded into your overall Participation Grade.

Key Terms Assignments: You will be expected to understand certain terms used in the field of the Sociology of Religion. For these assignments, you will need to demonstrate your understanding by viewing the accompanying Prezis and following the instructions therein.

Exams: Your Exams cover everything up through the week they're given, and are short-answer questions. Your responses should be clear and concise. Your responses will range from no less than **one full paragraph**, to two **full paragraphs**. Your syllabus and modules should fill in as your study guides.

New Religion: You will have one large course-long assignment with one other student this term, where you'll create a New Religion and turn in the final project at the end of class. Directions for this we'll go over in the third week. There are three assignments worth 100 points each that you'll do with your team member throughout the quarter. You'll turn in an individual write-up on this project at the end of the quarter. At the end of the second week of class, I'll pair you up. If we are an odd number of class members, one team will have three members. If by the end of Week Three you have not been active in your team, your team will be reassigned. All Teams need to be active by Week Four. Remember this is a large part of your grade, so be sure to activate your team. Instructions on how to do this will be folded into class.



For all of your work: Submit proofread work **only**. Work not proofread will be returned **once** for a rewrite, expected to be handed in within 48 hours. If you need help with your writing, please make use of the following student support services:

- [Academic Success Center](#)
- [Academic Tutoring Center](#)
- [TRiO Student Support Services](#)
- [Writing Lab @ BC](#)

Below is a checklist for you to go over before you hand in each written assignment. These include your Discussion Board assignments; consider these very short papers – even at one or a few paragraphs, I expect your work to be college-level.

- Twelve-point sized Times font, double-spaced
- 1" margins all around
- MLA or APA Citations where appropriate – credit is given even where any *ideas* presented in the paper are not your own
- Title pages and bibliographies are not counted in final page count (no need to do this for DBs)
- Student information is at the top left of the page (no need to do this for DBs)
- Paragraphs contain no less than four sentences.
- Magazines, newspapers, journals, and books are *italicized*. Movie titles, article titles, song titles, etc. are “in quotation marks.” Quotes inside of a quotation use ‘single quotation marks.’

Your work is evaluated on:

1) Content

- a. Fulfilling the entire assignment. Doing the minimum amount of work expected will likely get you a passing grade, but not an outstanding one. You're expected to go the extra mile.
- b. Fully developing your argument(s) and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument(s).
- c. Flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions.
- d. Assignments eligible for high marks must present evidence that all material has been reviewed.

2) Writing Style

- a. Excellent command of the written English language. In other words, most excellent grammar. **NOTE: If you struggle with grammar and spelling or are an ESL student, please let me know! I'm happy to work with you and point you in the right direction.**
- b. Clarity of thought.
- c. Good organization and attention to detail.
- d. Persuasiveness of your argument/s.
- e. Creativity. Make it an interesting read!
- f. **PROOFREAD** your work. Please do a spell/grammar check before you hand it in. Read it out loud to yourself, too! It really helps.



- g. Dude, like totally don't write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different way of presenting your research and ideas. ☺

Preventing Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty occurring when students use information or material from outside sources and do not properly cite those sources. This is grounds for disciplinary action. It is your responsibility to understand plagiarism and its consequences. Plagiarism occurs if:

- a. You do not cite quotations and/or attribute borrowed ideas.
- b. You fail to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks.
- c. You do not write summaries and paraphrases in his/her own words and/or doesn't document his/her source.
- d. You turn in work created by another person.
- e. You submit or use your own prior work for a current or past course, or work from one current course in another course *without express permission* from your professors. This may also be considered academic dishonesty.
- f. Consequences: If it is determined that you have plagiarized or engaged in other forms of academic dishonesty, you will likely fail the assignment and possibly the course, despite points earned through other work. Acts of academic dishonesty are reviewed for disciplinary action.

Grading:

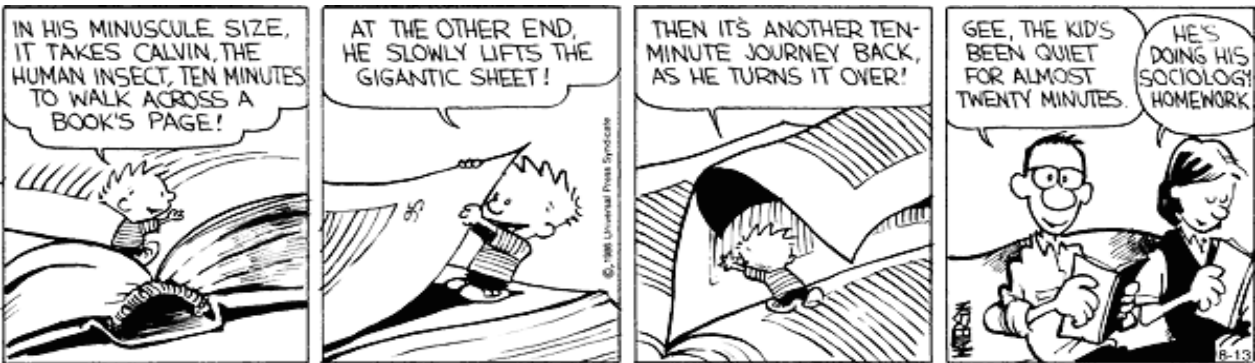
Please use the following rubric to help explain the grade you're given for a given assignment. Please do not hesitate to come to me with any questions you ever have on a grade you receive. There is no limit to how many times you email me! My email door is *always* open and I'm always happy to go over grades with you. I'm also on campus Monday through Friday and am available to meet in person during my office hours or by appointment.

90-100 = A. "A" work shows me you're engaged with all course material by utilizing quotes and ideas. It is writing **completely free** from grammar and spelling errors, demonstrating your command not only of the English language, but of the form and flow of a solid piece of written work. I also like to see/read/hear your "writing voice." That is, I want your style to come through! Your arguments should be solid and backed up with intellectual ammunition. You should demonstrate a strong understanding of our readings and the in-class media and how they intersect with one another. Your ideas should be "fleshed out" and not just a series of statements, in other words.

80-89 = B. The "B" tells me you're doing very good work. You may have a couple of grammar issues, but your work is still tidy and the writing is still strong. You have a firm grasp on the themes in the course but you may not be as well-versed in the readings and/or media and/or lecture material as you could be. I should see that you're being challenged and that you're struggling with the course issues and themes, and what they represent to you in an interconnected way. Your understandings of some of the course materials are stronger than others.

70-79 = C. "C" work means that you're not as invested in the material as I would like to see. Your writing is relatively weaker than it could be and you're not thinking as critically as I would like you to. You write the bare minimum of the length requirement. Some of what you point out I may not follow logically, and your use of the course materials may not be as solid as it could be. You omit some of the important points raised in class.

60-69 = D. Ah, the “D.” “D” is for “Don’t be Discouraged.” I will work closely with each of you as much as time allows, getting you up to speed in class. Your struggles should not be with writing so much at this point but if they are please see me immediately. “D” work is not proofread, nor does it deal critically with the themes in the course. It responds, perhaps, to one part of one of the readings but there is little-to-no integration of material and you’re not responding to the questions raised in the assignment. Demonstrated understanding of the course materials is not presented clearly, or at all. (NOTE: A “D” and below may be rewritten **once** if you choose to do so. It must be turned in within 72 hours, and I enter the better grade.)



COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

READINGS SHOULD BE DONE BY MONDAY EACH WEEK

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES VARY; PLEASE SEE SCHEDULE BELOW

ASSIGNMENTS ARE ALWAYS DUE BY MIDNIGHT

DO NOT WORK AHEAD MORE THAN ONE WEEK

THE SYLLABUS SCHEDULE IS MIRRORED IN THE MODULES SECTION OF THE COURSE.

Week One: January 2

Thematic Overview:

- Introduction to this course
- The sociological imagination
- The religious imagination
- The sociology of religion

Readings (please have your reading done by Wednesday this week only):

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion*: Ch. 1, “Sociological perspectives on religion”
- Sociological Imagination Power Point presentation

Assignments:

- Participation DB I: Introductions. Due Saturday, 1/5
- Participation DB II: Sociological Imagination. Due Saturday, 1/5

Quote of the Week:

“I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do because I notice it always coincides with their own desires.” ~ Susan B. Anthony

Week Two: January 7

Thematic Overview:

- Classical theorists
- The phenomenology of religion

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion:* Chs. 2 & 3, “Religion as a phenomenon – definitions and dimensions” & “Classical sociologists and their theories of religion”
- New Religion Teams assigned (feel free to pair up on your own, just let me know you’re doing this)

Assignments:

- Key Terms Assignment I Due Friday, 1/11
- Main DB I Due Wednesday, 1/9, responses by Saturday, 1/12

Quote of the Week:

“A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots.” ~ Marcus Garvey

Week Three: January 14

Thematic Overview:

- Culture and the sociological shaping of contemporary religiosity
- Is it Real? Is it Imagined? Can it be both?

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion:* Ch. 4, “Religion in contemporary sociology and cultural analysis”
- New Religion Handouts

Assignments:

- Main DB 2: First Submission Due Wednesday, 1/16; Responses Due Saturday, 1/19
- New Religion Teams Activated by Friday, 1/18

Quote of the Week:

“We created god in our own image and likeness!” - George Carlin

Week Four: January 22

January 21st: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day; college is closed

Thematic Overview:

- The “great” narratives
- Who the Hell... *What* the Hell? Anti-Religion and Church Burning
- Black Metal Philosophy: Is there a *there*, there?

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion:* Ch. 5, “The great narratives: Modernity, postmodernity, globalization, and secularization”
- **Film:** *True Norwegian Black Metal*
- Readings from **Black Metal Theory Symposium**
 - This text is available as an **ebook**.
 - Click on “Read the book online for free” or “Read the book on mobile devices”
 - “BASileus philosoPHOrum METaloricum” by Scott Wilson
 - “Transcendental Black Metal” by Hunter Hunt-Hendrix
 - “Anti-Cosmosis: Black Mahapralaya” by Nicola Masciandaro

Assignments:

- Key Terms II Due Friday, 1/25
- New Religion Assignment I Due Friday, 1/25

Quote of the Week:

“Lay down your soul to the gods rock n’ roll” ~ Venom – *Black Metal* (1982)

Week Five: January 28

Midterm Week

Assignments:

- Participation II: Mid-Term Check-In, due Wednesday 1/30
- Midterm Examination Open Friday through Sunday, 2/1 through 2/3. Covers Weeks 1-5.

Quote of the Week:

“Difference of opinion is helpful in religion.” ~ Thomas Jefferson

Week Six: February 4

Thematic Overview:

- Where does religion lie?
- The politics of religion, the religion of politics
- New ageism and saving the world through religious engagement of the “Other”

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion*: Ch. 6, “Religion in the public sphere”

Assignments:

- Main DB 3: First Submission Due Wednesday, 2/6; Responses Due Saturday, 2/9

Quote of the Week:

“A cult is a religion with no political power.” - Tom Wolfe

Week Seven: February 11

Thematic Overview:

- Religion as personal endeavor
- Religious organizations
- New Religious Movements
- The stuff of cults

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion*: Chs. 7 & 8, “Individual religiosity” & “Religious organizations and movements”

Assignments:

- Main DB 4: First submission due Wednesday, 2/13, Responses Due Saturday 2/16
- New Religion Assignment II due Friday, 2/15

Quote of the Week:

“There is no death. Only a change of worlds.” - Chief Seattle [Seatlh], (Suquamish)

Week Eight: February 19

February 18th, President’s Day, Professional Development Day; college closed

Thematic Overview:

- “Killing in the name of....”

- “Saving in the name of...”
- Schedule final presentations

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion*: Ch. 9, “Religion, social unity, and conflict”

Assignments:

- Key Terms Assignment III due Friday, 2/22
- New Religion III due Friday, 2/22

Quote of the Week:

“All you touch and all you see is all your life will ever be.” ~ Roger Waters

Week Nine: February 25

Thematic Overview:

- Inequality and identity
- Race and ethnicity in religion
- Gender and sexuality in religion

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion*: Chs. 10 & 11, “Race, ethnicity, and religion” & “Religion and gender”

Assignments:

- Main DB 5. First submission due Wednesday, 2/27, Responses Due Saturday, 3/2
- Key Terms Assignment III due Friday, 3/1

Quote of the Week:

“The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible.” ~ Oscar Wilde

Week Ten: March 4

Thematic Overview:

- The sociology of faith
- Theological sociology, sociological theology

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion*: Ch. 12, “Sociology, theology, and religious faith”

Assignments:

- New Religion Final due Friday, 3/8

Quote of the Week:

“Without deviation from the norm, progress is not possible. ~ Frank Zappa

Week Eleven: March 11

Thematic Overview:

- ...and in the end...
- Final Exam Film

Assignments:

- New Religion Reflection due Friday, 3/15

Quote of the Week:

“Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.” - Albert Einstein

Finals Week: March 18 - 20

Final Exam will be open from 8am 3/18 through midnight 3/20
Exam will time out after four hours. Do not start the exam unless you intend to
finish it during your chosen time period.

Assignments:

- Participation DB, Quarter Reflection, due Wednesday, 3/20

Thank you for a wonderful term!