

# Bellevue College

## SOC 246 Religion & Our Social World

Sara Sutler-Cohen, Ph.D.

Spring Term April 2<sup>nd</sup> – June 12<sup>th</sup>  
Mon-Thur\* 11:30a – 12:20p C208  
Office Hours T, Th 12:30 – 1:30

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\*This course has an online component on Facebook. If you do not have a Facebook account, please create one and then let me know so I can add you to our group. We'll have Friday WebExercises on our Facebook page.

**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 MyBC. It is your responsibility to download all required material. We're saving trees, so there will be no mass printing!

**STRONGLY RECOMMENDED:**

- Any current Dictionary of the English Language
- Any current Sociology Dictionary
- *A Writer's Reference*, 6<sup>th</sup> Ed. By Diana Hacker. See the companion website here: <http://www.dianahacker.com/>

**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 at <http://bellevuecollege.edu/drc/>

**EXPLORE THE LMC!** The Library Media Center is at your fingertips! I *strongly* encourage you to visit the LMC at least once a week, but you can also access it via the web. Talk to a Reference Librarian at the Library (D-126), by calling (425) 564-6161, or by email [bccref@bcc.ctc.edu](mailto:bccref@bcc.ctc.edu).

- Main Library Media Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/>
- For the LMC online catalog: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/catalogs.html>
- For article databases: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/lmc/periodicals.html>

**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:



- Come to class every day and ***on time*** (yes – I do keep track!).
- Complete readings and homework assignments ***on time***.
- Emailed assignments ***are not accepted*** without prior arrangement.
- Late homework assignments ***are accepted***, but make-up exams and make-up in-class assignments ***are not***.
  - Late homework is docked 10% for every day the work is late, including Saturdays and Sundays.
  - If you miss an in-class assignment, you

may not make it up. **Please see me if you participate in extracurricular activities at BC that take you away from campus.**

- I expect that your behavior in our classroom be respectful. Continued disrespectful behavior in my class may result in your being asked to leave and will result in your grade lowering. **Electronic devices are *not allowed* without permission.**
- **There are no extra credit assignments for this class.**

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION*:	200 POINTS
KEY TERMS ASSIGNMENTS (5):	100 POINTS
YOUR TURN ASSIGNMENTS (3):	75 POINTS
NEW RELIGION PROJECT (3 IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS):	300 POINTS
NEW RELIGION CLASS PRESENTATION:	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):

**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. A lot. There are also many mini-assignments done throughout the quarter that go into your participation grade. Yet another reason to never miss class! ☺

**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 write a definition in your own words and demonstrate your understanding by explaining by a real-world example. There are a series of Power Point presentations we'll go over in class. Your examples will draw from these.

**Your Turn Assignments:** These short assignments are an opportunity to put your learning to use as you explore the world of religion and popular culture around you using the Sociological Imagination.

**Exams:** Your Exams cover everything up through the week they're given, and are generally 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**. In lieu of study guides for our short exams, you can rely solely on the material presented in class and the Furseth/Repstad text.



**In-Class Mini-Assignments:** The work done in class will have you engage course material and have you work closely together. You will be working in pairs or groups for these assignments in order to generate critical discussion to be reflected on in the assignments. Occasionally the assignments will take more than one class period so again, it's imperative that you do not miss class. **Assignments partially completed receive partial credit (if you miss 1/3 of the assignment, you get 1/3 of the grade).**

**New Religion:** You will have one large course-long assignment with a group this term, where you'll create a New Religion and present it at the end of class. Directions for this we'll go over in the third week of class. There are three in-class assignments worth 100 points each that you'll do with your group throughout the quarter. You'll turn in an individual write-up on this project at the end of the quarter.

**For all of your written 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: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/academicsuccess/>
- Academic Tutoring Center: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/tutoring/>
- TRiO Student Support Services: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/TRiO/>
- Writing Lab @ BCC: <http://bellevuecollege.edu/writinglab/>

**Below is a checklist for you to go over before you hand in each written assignment.**

- Twelve-point sized Times font, double-spaced
- 1" margins all around
- MLA 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
- Student information is at the top left of the page, single spaced
- There are no extra spaces between paragraphs.
- 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 written work is evaluated on:**

- 1) Content
  - a. Fulfilling the assignment.
  - b. Developing your argument and making use of examples and evidence to support your argument.
  - c. Flow of thought throughout the paper, with strong analyses and conclusions.
- 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.
  - g. Dude, like totally don’t write **colloquially**. A conversation is a conversation. A paper is an entirely different set of discussions. ☺

**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. You will receive a Numerical Grade from me, with little-to-no commentary. This is only because I've found that most students do not read written comments from their professors. 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.



**90-100 = A.** The A paper shows me you're engaged with the readings, the media, and the lectures in class by utilizing quotes and ideas. It's a paper *completely free* from grammar and spelling errors, and demonstrates 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 paper 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.** The C paper 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. 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. A D paper 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 no integration of material and you’re not responding to the questions raised in class. 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.)

#### TEACHING PHILOSOPHY:

We will set the rhythm of the class in the first couple of weeks. I am a firm believer in being a lifelong learner and to that end I often carry away a lot more information from students than I ever expect. I’m most interested, for the purposes of this class, to see how well we can all wrap our minds around the idea of thinking critically about the various issues and themes presented about the social world in which we live and you should expect to be exposed to new and various ways of thinking and knowing. As a learning community, we’ll be helping one another think through all of the ideas that connect back to course themes.

### COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

READINGS TO BE COMPLETED ON MONDAYS EXCEPTING THE FIRST WEEK

ASSIGNMENT DEADLINES ARE ALWAYS ON THURSDAY UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

FACEBOOK FRIDAYS – CHECK IN EVERY FRIDAY! THERE WILL BE ALL SORTS OF FUN STUFF TO DO.

#### Week One: April 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

##### 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”

##### Assignments:

- Facebook Friday!

##### 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: April 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>

##### 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”

Assignments:

- Key Terms Assignment I
- Don't forget Facebook Friday!

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: April 16<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup>

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"

Assignments:

- Your Turn Assignment I
- Discussion of New Religion
- Don't forget Facebook Friday!

Quote of the Week:

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

Week Four: April 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup>

Thematic Overview:

- The "great" narratives
- Who the Hell... *What* the Hell? Anti-Religion and Church Burning
- Death Metal & Black Metal: Blood, Guts & Corpse Paint

Readings:

- *An Introduction to The Sociology of Religion*: Ch. 5, "The great narratives: Modernity, postmodernity, globalization, and secularization"

Assignments:

- Key Terms II
- In-Class Assignment I: New Religion
- Don't forget Facebook Friday!

Quote of the Week:

"Lay down your soul to the gods rock n' roll" ~ Venom – *Black Metal* (1982)

Week Five: April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup>

**MIDTERM FRIDAY!**

**Covers Chapters. 1 – 6, Weeks 1 – 5**

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:**

- Your Turn Assignment II
- Midterm exam Friday
- No Facebook Friday this week. ☺

**Quote of the Week:**

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

**Week Six: May 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup>**

**No class Friday, May 11<sup>th</sup> Bellevue College OPEN**

**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:**

- Key Terms Assignment III
- In-Class Assignment II: New Religion
- Class and Professor Eval: Check-In
- Don’t forget Facebook Friday!

**Quote of the Week:**

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

**Week Seven: May 15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>**

**No class Monday, May 14<sup>th</sup>. Bellevue College OPEN**

**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:**

- Your Turn Assignment III: Bureaucratization
- Don’t forget Facebook Friday!

**Quote of the Week:**

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

**Week Eight: May 21<sup>st</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>**

**This week reserved for catching up on readings and lecture.  
If there’s nothing to catch up on, I’ll surprise you all!**

**Assignments**

- Key Terms Assignment IV

- In-Class III Assignment: New Religion
- Don't forget Facebook Friday!

**Quote of the Week:**

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

**Week Nine: May 29<sup>th</sup> – June 1<sup>st</sup>**

**Campus Closed May 28<sup>th</sup>, Holiday**

**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:**

- Key Terms Assignment V
- Begin Presentations, New Religion
- Don't forget Facebook Friday!

**Quote of the Week:**

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

**Week Ten: June 4<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup>**

**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:**

- Presentations, New Religion
- Don't forget Facebook Friday!

**Quote of the Week:**

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

**Week Eleven: June 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Last Day of Classes, June 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Final Exam Due in the Division Office (D110) by Thursday, June 14<sup>th</sup> at 5:00pm.**

**Late Final exams will not be accepted.**

**Thematic Overview:**

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

**Assignments:**

- Presentations, New Religion
- New Religion Reflections due
- Final Exam distributed Tuesday, June 12<sup>th</sup> in class

- Last class – pot luck!
- No Facebook Friday this week! We're done! ☺

**Quote of the Week:**

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

**EMAILING ME:**

When you email me using my BC EMAIL, ALWAYS put in the SUBJECT LINE the following, in this order: SOC 246 – YOUR NAME – SUBJECT

For example: **SOC 246– Jane Doe – Question about Black Metal.**

*Thank you for a wonderful term!*