2014

305-01 Sociology of Religion

Lisa Monast

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Theo 305  
Sociology of Religion  
Course Syllabus

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Office Hours: by appointment – please contact Lisa via email to schedule

This syllabus is subject to change. The instructor will communicate all changes in a timely manner. It is imperative that students check their email daily for course updates on assignments and information.

Course Description and Objectives
In this course, students will undertake the study of the following:
1. the major components of religion
2. the prominent and formative theories regarding the purpose and function of religion in society
3. the interdependence between religion and other social institutions, and
4. contemporary trends in American religious practice and thought.

Students will acquire tools for the critical observation and study of religion in its social context. In so doing, students will discover and develop a more complex understanding of religious experience as a component of human experience and communal experience and will increase their ability to think critically and contextually about their world.

To facilitate these course objectives, we will employ a blend of tools and assessments for classroom learning, including: assigned readings and reading questions; small group projects in class; lectures and class discussion; slides, films, and photo essays; student presentations; field observation; essays; and testing.

Required Texts
Two texts are required for the course:
1. American Religions: Contemporary Trends, by Mark Chaves
2. Eight Theories of Religion, second edition, by Daniel Pals

Additional required readings and suggested readings are (or will be) available on blackboard or on reserve in the library.

Assignments and Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiz on Terms and Concepts</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Article/&quot;Soft&quot; Field Observation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Observation Question Worksheets &amp; Reading Guides (9 of these)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm (online)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Presentation</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>SME</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>Final Presentation</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>12</td>
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</table>
Grading Policy

For Late Work:

- Field Observation Question Worksheets & Reading Guides: It is expected that students submit their weekly work at the beginning of class on the day due. In the event the student is absent that day, it is expected that the student will submit the work electronically no later than the start of class time.

  If a student is unable to meet this requirement, he or she should discuss the situation with the instructor prior to or on the day the work is due. Students submitting late work will lose up to 10 points per day late up to one week, after which a grade of zero will be granted.

- Presentations: It is expected that students have their presentations completed by the due date and that they present in class as scheduled. Because the flow of the course is dependent upon students giving their presentations as scheduled, late work will be heavily penalized; thus, any student not having his or her presentation prepared and presented in class as scheduled will receive an automatic 50-point deduction for the presentation.

- Midterm: the midterm must be completed in the time allotted online. Late work will not be accepted and will receive an automatic grade of 0.

- Attendance at the Final Exam time is mandatory. Students may not use that class meeting as their one “free” absence. Missing the final exam day will result in an automatic penalty of one letter grade.

In General:

Grading policies for all assignments will be clearly explained with each assignment. Some initial basic information is outlined in the section “Assignments and Grade Distribution.”

In general, grades reflect the accuracy, clarity, relevance to the subject being studied, and thoroughness of answers.

For further explanation on grading policies for essays and participation, this course will follow the Theology Department Grading Guidelines, posted at the end of this syllabus.
Attendance Policy
Role will be taken at the beginning of each class. If you arrive late, it is up to you to get with the instructor to have your status changed from absent to late. Excessive tardiness will equate to a missed class.

Regular attendance is each student’s responsibility. The following attendance policy will be strictly followed.

Everyone is allowed one absence, regardless of the reason. Past that, there are steep penalties for missing class, as follows:

- Upon the second absence, regardless of the reason, there will be a penalty of 1 letter grade.
- Three absences, regardless of the reason, will result in a grade of F (or, if possible, W) from the course.

When a student is absent, it is the student’s responsibility to keep up with the class. In the case of absence, students should not ask the instructor for missed notes and information; rather, they should ask a fellow student.

Exchange contact information with three students. Make sure you ask for the best way to reach them.

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Also, students are required to go to ALL THREE FIELD OBSERVATIONS at their assigned religious community. Absence at one of the three of the field observations will result in a penalty of 1 letter grade, and absence at two of the three field observations will result in a grade of F (or if possible W) from the course. There are no exceptions to this policy, because a significant percentage of the work in this course is dependent upon this fieldwork. Refer to Field Observation handout for more information on attendance policies.

Participation Policy
This class is a partnership. What students bring to it will in part determine what they receive from it. In this light, each student is responsible for every other student’s class experience. Students are therefore encouraged to make the class meaningful for one another by actively engaging the material and one another with questions and discussions.

Formatting Written Work
All written work must be formatted as follows: Times New Roman, 12-point font, and double-spaced. Hard copies are preferred and expected for submission of all written work.
Electronic submission is permitted in the event of extenuating circumstances, in which case the student must communicate his or her situation to the instructor. Written work submitted electronically must be in MS Office Word format only.

Course Schedule

Week 1, Jan 16
- Syllabus and Course Overview
- Group Assignment (setting up your initial group)
- Sign-Up Sheets

Week 2, Jan 23
- Sociology of Religion Overview: terms, perspectives, methods, components of religion, religious organization
- Week 2 Assignment #1: Read Sociology of Religion, overview chapter, pages 334-357
- Week 2 Assignment #2: From your reading, compile a list of 10 questions you would like to use to do sociological observation of a religious tradition; along with each question, provide the following: a brief explanation (a sentence or two) about why you chose this question and a brief comparison (a couple sentences) of the point chosen with your own religious experience or, if you are not involved in any religious group, to the religious behavior you have observed in someone around you. Be prepared to share this with a group. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological observation of an assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)
- Week 2 assignment #3: Quiz on first reading (sociology of religion overview chapter) (4 points)
- Lecture: religious tradition #1
- Group Assignment (assigning each group to a religious community for field observation) - we will do this today if we didn't already do this on day 1
- Overview of Field Observation! Refer to handout on Field Observation.

Week 3, Jan 30 (group work done in 5 groups of 6 students)
- Week 3 Assignment #1: Read American Religion: Contemporary Trends chapters 1,2,3
- Week 3, Assignment #2: From your reading, compile a list of 10 questions you would like to use to do sociological observation of a religious tradition; along with each question, provide the following: a brief explanation (a sentence or two) about why you chose this question and a brief comparison (a couple sentences) of the point chosen with your own religious experience or, if you are not involved in any religious group, to the religious behavior you have observed in someone around you. Be prepared to share this with a group. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a
new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological analysis of your assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)

- Week 3 Assignment #3 (only 10 students will have this assignment in week 3, as in: 5 groups x 2 people per group = 10 people) Article/"Soft" Field Observation#1
  - 2 people in each group will bring in an article that deals directly and specifically with one of the subjects in the weeks reading. The field observers must provide a hardcopy one-page synopsis that compares the article’s thesis to the findings in the text followed by a one-paragraph personal reflection on the article and must be ready to verbally present the article to their group and possibly to the class. (5 points)

- Lecture: religious traditions #2 and #3

Week 4, Feb 6

- Week 4 Assignment #1: Read American Religion: Contemporary Trends chapters 4,5,6
- Week 4, Assignment #2: 1. From your reading, compile a list of 10 questions you would like to use to do sociological observation of a religious tradition; along with each question, provide the following: a brief explanation (a sentence or two) about why you chose this question and a brief comparison (a couple sentences) of the point chosen with your own religious experience or, if you are not involved in any religious group, to the religious behavior you have observed in someone around you. Be prepared to share this with a group. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological observation of your assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)
- Assignment: Article/"Soft" Field Observation#1 (reminder: only 10 students will have this assignment in week 3)
  - 2 people in each group will bring in an article that deals directly and specifically with one of the subjects in the weeks reading. The field observers must provide a hardcopy one-page synopsis that compares the article’s thesis to the findings in the text followed by a one-paragraph personal reflection on the article and must be ready to verbally present the article to their group and possibly to the class. (5 points)
- Lecture: religious traditions #3 and #4

- **Reminder: at this point, if you haven’t completed your first field observation, you need to make plans to do so in the next week or so.**

Week 5, Feb 13
• **Week 5 Assignment #1**: Read American Religion: Contemporary Trends chapters 7, 8, 9, 10
• **Week 5 Assignment #2**: From your reading, compile a list of 10 questions you would like to use to do sociological observation of a religious tradition; along with each question, provide the following: a brief explanation (a sentence or two) about why you chose this question and a brief comparison (a couple sentences) of the point chosen with your own religious experience or, if you are not involved in any religious group, to the religious behavior you have observed in someone around you. Be prepared to share this with a group. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological observation of an assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)
• **Assignment: Article/ “Soft” Field Observation#1** (reminder: only 10 students will have this assignment in week 3)
  o 2 people in each group will bring in an article that deals directly and specifically with one of the subjects in the week’s reading. The field observers must provide a hardcopy one-page synopsis that compares the article’s thesis to the findings in the text followed by a one-paragraph personal reflection on the article and must be ready to verbally present the article to their group and possibly to the class. (5 points)
• **Lecture: religious tradition #5**

**Week 6, Feb 20**
Open class / No class – To account for the time spent going to field sites, students have no class tonight; Lisa available in class for office hours if students sign up for them.

Assignment: Online Midterm on World Religions (10 points) – due date TBD

**Week 7, Feb 27**
Assignment: Class Presentations #1 (10)
Five 30-minute presentations:
1. Profile of the community.
2. The list of items identified for observation
3. The findings of the observation
4. Individual reflections

**Week 8, Mar 6**
Spring Break – NO CLASS 😊
Week 9, Mar 13

- Lecture: Strong Influences in Religion and Society – animism, magic, psychology
- Week 9 Assignment #1: Read chapter on Durkheim
- Week 9 Assignment #2: From your reading, compile a list of 6-10 questions appropriate for sociological observation that you feel represent the key ideas and concepts in Durkheim's work. The idea is to think: what would Durkheim’s questions be? (What would Brian Boitano do?) For each question, provide an explanation of why you think this question is important. Be sure to provide the definition for any new terms. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological observation of an assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)
- Class Discussion: Durkheim and Functionalist Perspective
- Group: Presentation/SME Group (SME is Assignment #3; only 5 students will be SME in Week 9; 15 points)
- Reminder: at this point, if you haven’t completed your second field observation, you need to make plans to do so in the next week or so.

Week 10, Mar 20

- Weber
- Discussion: Weber and Macro Analysis
- Week 10 Assignment #1: read chapter on Weber
- Week 10 Assignment #2: From your reading, compile a list of 6-10 questions appropriate for sociological observation that you feel represent the key ideas and concepts in Weber’s work. The idea is to think: what would Weber’s questions be? For each question, provide an explanation of why you think this question is important. Be sure to provide the definition for any new terms. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological observation of an assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)
- Group: Presentation/SME Group (SME is Assignment #3; only 5 students will be SME in Week 10; 15 points)
- It is strongly recommended that you meet some time in the following week or so with your subgroup to begin planning the format for your Final Presentation.

Week 11, Mar 27

- Marx
- Discussion: Marx and Conflict Perspective
- Week 11 Assignment #1: Read chapter on Marx
- Lecture: Liberation Theology
• **Week 11 Assignment #2**: From your reading, compile a list of 6-10 questions appropriate for sociological observation that you feel represent the key ideas and concepts in Marx’s work. For each question, provide an explanation of why you think this question is important. Be sure to provide the definition for any new terms. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological observation of an assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)

• **Group**: Presentation/SME Group (SME is Assignment #3; only 5 students will be SME in Week 11; 15 points)

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**Week 12, Apr 3**

- Feminist Perspective
- Discussion: TBD
- **Week 12 Assignment #1**: reading TBA
- **Week 12 Assignment #2**: From your reading, compile a list of 6-10 questions appropriate for sociological observation that you feel represent the key ideas and concepts in the feminist theorists’ work. The idea is to think: what would this theorist's questions be? For each question, provide an explanation of why you think this question is important. Be sure to provide the definition for any new terms. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological analysis of an assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)

• **Lecture**: Women in Early Christianity – A Look Into Socio-Religious Context

• **Group**: Presentation/SME Group (SME is Assignment #3; only 10 students will be SME in Week 12; 15 points)

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**Week 13, Apr 10**

- Eliade
- **Week 13 Assignment #1**: read chapter on Eliade
- **Week 13 Assignment #2**: From your reading, compile a list of 6-10 questions appropriate for sociological observation that you feel represent the key ideas and concepts in Eliade’s work. The idea is to think: what would Eliade’s questions be? For each question, provide an explanation of why you think this question is important. Be sure to provide the definition for any new terms. Divided into groups, you will use your individual work to then create a new and improved group-generated list of 15 questions to use to do sociological analysis of an assigned religious tradition. (4 points, 2 points for your work and 2 points for the group work)

• Discussion: Reality as Sacred

• **Lecture**: Exploring Sacred vs Profane

• **Group**: Presentation/SME Group (SME is Assignment #3; only 6 students will be SME in Week 13; 15 points)
• Reminder: If your group is presenting on May 1, that means between now and April 27 (the Sunday before May 1) is the time to complete your final field observation. If your group is presenting at the Final Exam time, that means between now and May 4 (the Sunday before Finals Week) is the time to complete your final field observation. It is not advisable to wait until the last minute. The sooner you complete your field work, the longer you have to factor that into your Final Presentation in a meaningful way.

Week 14, Apr 17
Easter Holiday – NO CLASS

Week 15, Apr 24
Open class / No class – To account for the time spent going to field sites, students have no class tonight; Lisa available in class for office hours if students sign up for them. It is strongly suggested that you use this time as a group work session for your final presentation.

Week 16, May 1
Presentations 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b (25 points) – a grading rubric will be made available well in advance

Final Exam
Presentations 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6a, 6b (25 points)
Take-Home Final Reflection Essay: What theorist(s) do you identify with or find interesting? If so, which one(s) and why? Are there any that you take issue with? If so, which one(s) and why? How has studying sociology of religion impacted your understanding of both society and religion? (3-4 pages, 10 points)

For your convenience, the academic calendar for Spring Semester, 2014 is provided below:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 13</td>
<td>Full-term classes begin</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 20</td>
<td>Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday, University closed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 24</td>
<td>Deadline to submit Application for Graduation for Spring 2014 graduation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 3-7</td>
<td>Spring Break. No classes March 3-7.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17-21</td>
<td>Easter Holiday, No classes April 17-21, with the exception of Monday once-a-week classes, which will meet on April 21.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 18-21</td>
<td>Easter Holiday, University Closed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 14</td>
<td>Final day for withdrawal from full-term classes for Undergraduate students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2</td>
<td>Last day of full-term classes. Final day for withdrawal from full-term classes for graduate students</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>Study day</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 6-9</td>
<td>Final examinations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>Last day of Spring Semester. Official Spring 2014 graduation date.</td>
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