

SOCI 3334/01
RELIGION AND SOCIETY
Spring 2008

(prerequisite: SOCI 2201 or ANTH 2201)

This is an online class but students are required to conduct field trip* to various religious services around the Atlanta area. Please do not take this class if you do not have access to the Internet, if you do not have your own transportation, or if you are unable to attend religious/spiritual services of religions different than your own.

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Please use WebCT Vista email for all class communication

Catalogue Description: Examination of religion as a social institution in historical, comparative, and contemporary terms. World religions and new religious movements are studied as sociocultural processes involving the need to know, to deal with problems and to adapt to change.

Overview:

This course provides students with a sociological understanding of religion. We will be looking at the diversity of religious groups, but the truth or falsity of given religions will not be discussed. Being a believer or unbeliever is irrelevant to this sociological study of religion. The sociological view requires objectivity on the part of the observer, and while the insider's view must be respected and considered, our focus is sociological and not doctrinal. The interaction between society and religion is central in our exploration of religion as a cultural phenomenon.

The major part of this course is online at a time that is convenient for you. Course requirements include weekly online discussions, tests, a research paper, fieldtrips and field notes. Weekly discussions and field assignments should take approximately 2-3 hours a week, not including reading, writing and studying time.

This course requires individual fieldwork*, which includes visiting religious and spiritual services that are new to you. For example, if you refuse to visit a gay or lesbian service, a Muslim service, or a Wiccan event, you do not want to take this class. You must visit at least five services or events from a list I provide. Please check the WebCT Vista event weekly (on Friday) to verify that the service has not been changed. Sometimes the services or events change due to circumstances beyond my control, and I post this information on Friday. Fieldwork will be conducted individually or in groups, but not as a class. This means you will go to the services you choose to attend on your own or form your own carpool. Carpools are organized by students online. I will post protocol for you to follow in all your trips and waiver forms you must sign and turn in at the first mandatory meeting. You will not get a grade for field notes if I do not have a signed waiver from you.

* If you are unable to attend field trips you may write a 15-page field thesis paper (not the same as the final research paper) for each field trip not attended. This option must be accepted by the professor prior via an email confirmation BEFORE the field thesis paper is submitted

All assignments are due by midnight on Thursday. Every Friday from 9-11 am, I will check WebCT Vista for any assignments that are due, discussion board postings, new emails, and to answer your emailed questions. I will be on the board periodically during the week at other times to update the course material and check on the discussion boards. It is your responsibility to check WebCT Vista sometime during the week and specifically on Friday after 12 noon for all details and updates. Please see my standard process for late tests, field notes and papers below.

Course Objectives

1. Describe how sociology contributes to a liberal arts understanding of social reality.
2. Describe and apply some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.
3. Write a research paper in an area of choice related to religion.
4. Define, give examples, and demonstrate the relevance of the following: culture, social change, socialization, stratification, social structure, institutions, and differentiation by race/ethnicity, gender, age, and class.
5. Identify underlying assumptions in particular theoretical orientations or arguments.

The course objectives are measured through the unit learning objectives using an iterative model. Learning objectives are learned in the first unit, reinforced and learned more in-depth in the next unit, and applied in the third unit.

(Week 1 is for introducing the course and Q&A)

Unit One: weeks 2-8 are devoted to learning how to view religion through a sociological perspective or “lens” and applying this perspective in your discussion and exam. The measurable learning objectives in this unit are:

- Write papers using the sociological perspective on religion.
- Apply sociological concepts in your writing about different religions.
- Explain how religion is a social institution that both affects and is affected by society.
- Distinguish how religion meets some basic needs of individuals and groups.

(Week 9 is Spring Break)

Unit Two: weeks 10-14 are devoted to learning how to analyze one social issue (sex) through a sociological lens when viewing different religions. In addition, this unit includes visits to different religions for observation and applying sociological concepts in writing field notes (or thesis papers). The measurable learning objectives in this unit are:

- Write papers using the sociological perspective on religion.
- Apply sociological concepts in your writing about different religions.
- Explain how religion is a social institution that both affects and is affected by society.
- Observe, analyze and write objectively about religions that may be unfamiliar to you.
- Distinguish how religion meets some basic needs of individuals and groups.

Unit Three: weeks 15 and 16 are devoted to learning how to write an academic research paper incorporating all you have learned and a sociological perspective. The measurable learning objectives in this unit are:

- Write papers using the sociological perspective on religion.
- Apply sociological concepts in your writing about different religions.
- Explain how religion is a social institution that both affects and is affected by society.
- Distinguish how religion meets some basic needs of individuals and groups.
- Observe, analyze and write objectively about religions that may be unfamiliar to you.
- Compare two or more religions in a research paper with a sociological focus.
- Write a research paper that includes a literature review, and overview of at least two religions and their views, beliefs and practices on your focused topic, and a concluding discussion that applies sociological concepts.

Resources and Materials

Textbook: Zuckerman, Phil. 2003. *Invitation to the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Routledge.

Textbook: Manning, Christel and Phil Zuckerman *Sex and Religion* Thomson Wadsworth: Belmont, CA.

Journal Articles (posted on Vista)

Instructor Notes (posted on Vista)

Course Technology

Websites (linked on Vista)

Video clips (downloaded or linked on Vista)

Learner Engagement

You will engage to learn in this class in the following ways:

1. Reading the assigned books
2. Writing papers.
3. Conducting field trips
4. Writing field notes
5. Online activities

Assessment and Measurement

| | Points |
|---|---------------|
| Exams/Short Papers (2 open book exams at 25 pts each) | 50 |
| Field notes* (5 at 10 points each) | 50 |
| Discussions (10 at 5 points each) | 50 |
| Research Paper (50 points) | 50 |
| Total Points | 200 |

Grading System: A=180-200; B=160-179; C=140-169; D=120-139 F=below 120

*Any field trip options may be replaced by a 15-page research report on the religion of the event.

*There are six field notes required; the first field note is practice, you will receive the professor's comments and suggestions but it is not graded. The last field notes is from a visit to an online service.

Expectations for each assessment: More detailed instructions and grading rubrics will be posted on Vista when assignments are to be completed.

Exams will be open-book and submitted in essay format. Please submit everything online through WebCT VISTA in Word (.doc). **All papers must be in word (not wdp or any other format).** If you are unable to attach a Word document, copy and paste your document in the email message space. It is your responsibility to make sure your paper arrives on time. I will send you a message when I receive your paper and can open it and read it. If you do not get this email message, you are responsible to re-send the paper in a format I can read within two days. Please use 12-pont font and double space. Be sure your name is on the paper in the upper left-hand corner. (Points will be deducted if you name is not on the PAPER or if not double-spaced.) You will be given a choice of questions to answer. The questions may come from text book material, journal articles or assigned films. Exam papers will be graded for content, clarity, grammar and evidence of your understanding of the issues.

Discussion Board Postings

There are three boards open to all students in the class; only the student discussion board has requirements for your grade.

Student Discussion Board: I will post ten discussion questions throughout the semester relating to our readings and/or field trips. You are required to post a substantial answer to each question that reflects your reading and understanding of the text. IN ADDITION, you may post questions and/or responses and comments to other student postings. Once the week is over, I will count the postings for a grade for that week. You may continue to post for that week's discussion but it will not count for a grade.

“Ask the Professor” Board: If you have any questions regarding the class, the assignments or other class-related questions, please post them here. If you email me a question that I think all the class needs to know the answer, I will copy it and post it on this board.

Carpooling Board: Students may form teams or carpools on this board. Carpools and teams are NOT required. This board is for your convenience.

Participant Observation and Field notes

You are required to attend five religious services or events chosen from at least ten services/events that I provide and one online service. Please choose one of these events early so you have time to complete your five mandatory religious field trips and field notes. The first field notes are practice and will not receive a grade.

I provide a tentative schedule, so you can plan ahead. Some times events change that are beyond my control. Each Friday, I will post any changes or additions to the service/events and any updates for the following week. I will attend the events with an asterisk (*). You will take notes according to guidelines I will provide. It is preferable to take your notes immediately after you leave the service, but notes should be written as soon as possible. Be ready to answer the questions I ask about your observation your field notes. Individual confidential grades for field notes are posted on WebCT Vista each week. I will email back your paper with my feedback, edits and comments using tracking. Your first field notes will be given a grade that is not counted; I will grade it and comment on why the grade was given, but this grade will not count. This is your “practice” field notes. You can use this to help you write field notes for your graded

notes in the future. Please read all edits and comments I make on these field notes and follow this advice for the remaining field notes.

You may conduct the field trip alone or in a car pool group organized by you on WebCT Vista. Field notes are due on schedule due date (always a Thursday) BY MIDNIGHT. It is your responsibility to make sure your notes or paper arrives on time (by midnight on due date). You may submit only one field notes each week. After I have graded five field notes for you, I will grade no more field notes (i.e. you cannot continue to send more field notes to increase or replace your grade). I will send you a message when I receive your paper and I can open it and read it. If you do not get this email message, you are responsible to re-send the paper in a format I can read.

*Optional field thesis papers: In place of any field trip you may submit a 15-page field thesis paper on the religion of the field trip event. For example, instead of attending the Hindu Temple, you may submit a thesis paper on the Hindu religion. Each research paper should include at least 10 references (at least five from academic journal articles). Papers will include the following sections: Literature Review, History of Religion, Contemporary Characteristics of Religion, and Conclusion. Further field thesis paper format will be posted on Vista. If you are choosing to write a field thesis paper in place of a field trip, you should notify the professor and receive a confirmation approval before submitting the paper.

Please use 12-pont font and double space. Be sure your name is on the first page. Be sure you remember to attach it in your email. Use ONLY Vista email. Send only in .doc (Word).

Research Paper

You will conduct research on a particular aspect (topic) of social life and compare two religions (or religious groups) on this topic. Follow the format in the Manning and Zuckerman and book on “sex and religion” using at least two different religions to compare on a topic of your choice. For example, if you want to study “alcohol use and religion,” you will research at least two religions and explain their views on alcohol. **Be sure to use the guidelines I post. There are three parts of the paper (1) research on the two religions (2) research on how the religions view the topic (3) a sociological perspective on why or how these views were affected by society and how these views affect social life for the members of the religion.** You need to include a minimum of five references (at least three should be academic journal articles). I will provide further guidelines for the paper and references. Papers will be a minimum of five pages double spaced.

I suggest you choose your topic very early in the semester. I will provide a list of topics that were well-done in the past in this course. Look up your topic and various religions on Galileo and Library resources to see if there is much written about this topic. If you cannot find at least three good journal articles on this topic and different religions, then choose another topic. It is your responsibility to choose a topic that allows you to find research papers. I need to approve of your topic (see schedule for approval below). You have plenty of time to do this if you start early. You might also need to read some books, so give yourself some time for research work. Please email me privately to discuss your topic if you are having difficulty. I will probably suggest you change the topic.

Final research reports are emailed through Vista. It is your responsibility to make sure your paper arrives on time. I will send you a message when I receive your paper and can open it and read it. If you do not get this email message, you are responsible to re-send the paper in a format I can read. Please use 12-pont font and double space. Be sure your name is on the first page.

The Reading Schedule below will be followed for reading assignments, test dates, field assignments and research paper due dates.

Late Papers: I will not accept late papers without official documentation of illness or other emergency. Official documentation and a hard copy of late paper MUST be turned in at the Sociology office. Please do not email me your excuse or papers. The email with excuses or late papers will be deleted.

A note on writing:

Your grade depends on how well you provide what is instructed for the assignments and paper. Some writing in this class is low-stakes writing (discussion board and field notes). This means that I am focusing on one or two areas and the writing is a method to reinforce your learning in this area. Others are high-stakes writing (research paper), which implies a well-written paper. Grammar, spelling, organization, and structure, as well as content are graded. Please refer to The Writing Center if you need help with writing.

The Writing Center

Room 242 Humanities

(770) 423-6380

<http://www.kennesaw.edu/english/WritingCenter/index.shtml>

The Writing Center is more than a free service available to all members of the university community; it is a place where anyone who writes—those who love it, those who struggle with it, and everyone in between—can come for help in becoming a better writer. In fact, that is the goal of the Writing Center: to produce not just better writing but better writers. The Writing Center is also a welcoming place—we have coffee, comfy chairs, and a computer lab for general use. Our tutors (faculty and students) are friendly and eager to sit down and discuss any aspect of your writing with you.

Netiquette Rules:

- Avoid writing messages in all capital letters. THIS IS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD AS SHOUTING.
- Be careful what you put in writing. Even if you are writing an e-mail message to one person, assume that anyone could read it. Though you may send an e-mail to a single person, it is very easy to forward your message to hundreds or thousands of people.
- Grammar and spelling matter. Online courses demand the same standard of academic communication and use of grammar as face-to-face courses.
- Never use profanity in any area of an online course. The transcripts of online course bulletin boards, e-mail, and chat sessions are savable.
- When responding to messages, only use "Reply to All" when you really intend to reply to all.

- Avoid unkindly public criticism of others. Publicly criticizing others in an inappropriate way is known as "flaming."
- Use sarcasm cautiously. In the absence of nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and voice inflections, the context for your sarcasm may be lost, and your message may thus be misinterpreted.

<http://www.distancelearning.org/howtosucceed.html>

Academic Integrity Statement: Every KSU student is responsible for upholding the provisions of the Student Code of Conduct, as published in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs. Section II of the Student Code of Conduct addresses the University's policy on academic honesty, including provisions regarding plagiarism and cheating, unauthorized access to University materials, misrepresentation/falsification of University records or academic work, malicious removal, retention, or destruction of library materials, malicious/intentional misuse of computer facilities and/or services, and misuse of student identification cards. Incidents of alleged academic misconduct will be handled through the established procedures of the University Judiciary Program, which includes either an "informal" resolution by a faculty member, resulting in a grade adjustment, or a formal hearing procedure, which may subject a student to the Code of Conduct's minimum one semester suspension requirement.

Disability Clause: Kennesaw State University provides support for students with disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to identify himself/herself as an individual with a disability. A qualified individual in the area of the identified disability must provide the documentation of the disability. This documentation must show how the disability creates a significant impact on the individual's academic performance; it should include suggested accommodations that are reasonable to provide in an academic setting.

For more information on KSU's institutional policies for disability services visit:

http://www.kennesaw.edu/stu_dev/dsss/policies.html

Please email professor privately for all personal hardships.

Since this is an online class I need to be assured that you have read and understand the syllabus and requirements above. I posted a check list on Vista called "I understand and agree." Please send an email to me with this checklist affirming that you have read and understand all the requirements of this class. I will not start your grading until I receive your "I understand and agree" statement via Vista email.