

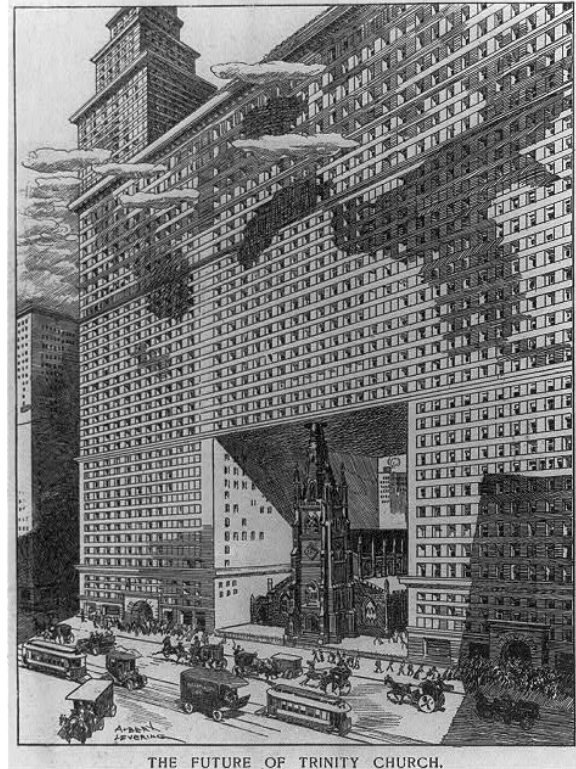
SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

SOC 375, SECTION 1

Spring 2021
(online/asynchronous)

Department of Sociology
and Social Work
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

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Religion in modern society: in threat or resilient?

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

“...the more we understand about the depth and the height and the width of the human experience, the more puzzling and ‘baffling’ both man and his experience seem to be.”

Andrew Greeley, 1972

Course Summary

What does it mean to be a religious person? What roles and functions do religions and religious organizations have in society today? How has it changed, over time and space? Does religion continue to be a relevant part of the, expanding on Greeley’s term, *modern* ‘human experience?’ The purpose of this course will be to *sociologically* explore these questions by examining religion as a social institution in modern(izing) society.

Since religion, in all its forms and variations, is a multi-faceted and complicated phenomenon, it is vital that we approach the study of it in an intentional way. In general, this course is rooted in the discipline of sociology so our approach toward the study of religion will be sociological. However, efforts from other disciplines (comparative religion, history, psychology, political science, etc.) are included to provide a comprehensive analysis. As outlined in the course schedule, we will tackle a diversity of issues and topics under four analytical levels: individual (micro), group (meso), societal (macro), and civilizational (mega). While there is certainly overlap between these levels (e.g., the relationship between religious identity and nationalism), this format will nonetheless provide an organized structure for the course.

In particular, we will explore issues surrounding religious identity (both among individuals and groups), the relationship between religion and politics (e.g., in terms of policy, nationalism, and national heritage), religions as trans-national institutions (i.e., organizations spanning across national boundaries and the consequences of globalization and technology), the presence of secularization (or desecularization) in modern societies, and others. To illustrate these topics, relevant historical and contemporary examples will be used. In doing so, I hope to facilitate a culture of meaningful discussions and learning experiences that capture the main questions and methodological problems inherent in the scientific study of religion.

Learning Outcomes

Students can/will be able to...

- 1. Describe and recall major concepts and methods used by social scientists, across multiple disciplines, to investigate religion in modern society.**
- 2. Apply major ideas and theories to real-world problems and issues related to religion in society.**
- 3. Develop sociological and global perspectives that can help identify how individuals and groups are influenced by religious social forces (e.g., institutions, cultural norms, political economies, etc.).**

REQUIRED TEXT

- (1) Roberts, Keith A. and David Yamane (2016) *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (6th edition). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- (2) Supplementary material will be provided throughout the semester

COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

Format

The format of each class is different from a conventional college-level sociology course. Since the main objective of the seminar is to provide a safe platform to discuss the internship experience and overall professional development, the seminar format is centered exclusively on these goals. The seminars are relatively small, so expect lots of conversation and hands-on activities.

Note on Online/Asynchronous learning: Due to the unique nature of this instructional modality, this course will have a semi-structured feel. New content will be posted each week, leaving the consumption of that material up to the student. It is vital that you do not get behind from week to week for obvious reasons. Assignments will continue to have hard deadlines, just like a ‘normal’ semester.

Academic Integrity

To ensure that the highest level of academic and personal integrity is upheld, it is important that you understand your rights and responsibilities as a student at UWSP (see [Academic Integrity: A Guide for Students](#)). For a complete overview of UWSP academic

standards and disciplinary procedures, please visit: the following website:
<http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Academic-Misconduct.aspx>

Disability Services

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies. Any student who feels that an accommodation may be needed based on the impact of a disability should contact [Disability Services and Assistive Technology](#) at 715-346-3365 in Room 609 Learning Resource Center at 900 Reserve Street. Staff will work to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Technology Policy

My expectations regarding technology are simple and, hopefully, not unrealistic. I do not expect students to be without their phones, tablets, and/or computers. I completely understand that the schedule for most students may even necessitate this. In fact, our class will even utilize this as a resource at times during the semester; for instance, in-class activities that prompt students to do a quick search online. I also understand that some students prefer to take notes electronically, on a tablet or laptop. (Be warned: [research shows that students retain more information when notes are hand-written.](#)) But, *unless specified otherwise or a circumstantial agreement with me is made, phones should be silent (e.g., airplane mode), and out of sight.* As soon as a device becomes a distraction to the class, I will revoke technology privileges all together.

Assignment Submission and Late Policy

All assignments (unless specified otherwise) should be submitted by the respective deadline electronically via Dropbox on Canvas. Turnitin (originality checking software) is activated with results viewable to you and me. Please use this as a tool for writing. Late work is accepted up to one week after the specified deadline (5-point reduction), also via the appropriate Canvas folder. I will not accept assignments after this.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

Weekly Discussion Board

Weekly Discussion Posts are *critical* dialogues covering some aspect from the previous week and organized in a popular online format. This will allow your fellow students to comment/discuss in a productive and respectful manner. This interactive approach is vital for working through new material. The specific requirements and directions will be discussed in class.

10/12 Weekly Discussion Posts (10 points each) = 100 points

Unit Papers

Unit Papers are organized arguments that discuss a specific topic or problem regarding religion in society. The specific requirements and expectations for these papers

will be discussed in class. In general, these are assignments that allow you to apply what we have discussed in class, reflect on these conversations and readings, and critique and analyze. These papers will require a limited degree of research, which will help prepare you for the final paper.

3 Unit Papers (50 points each) = 150 points

Total = 150 points

Research Project

This is a more extensive research assignment that is due at the end of the semester. Overall, this is an opportunity for you to focus on some aspect of religion in modern society that we may (or may not) have covered in class and expand on that discussion by designing and implementing your own research project. In addition, this includes a brief, in-class presentation. Requirements for this assignment will be discussed in greater detail in class.

Research Project = 100

Attendance/Participation

Attendance is crucial to succeed in this class. Keeping up on your reading in order to actively participate in class will ensure that you are adequately prepared for the assignments. My teaching philosophy is based on a cultivation of *active learning*. This means that I aim to provide an environment whereby students are able to ‘experience’ the material. However, this is a dual relationship. Students must also be willing to learn in order to make this happen. By *being* in class regularly (not just present), an active and invigorating culture of learning can be developed. *Attendance and Participation will be recorded via in-class activities and quizzes.* This being said, life is always full of unexpected events and emergencies. If you think you will miss a class, please let me know as soon as possible so we can make other arrangements.

Attendance = 30

Participation = 20

Total = 50 points

Evaluation

Evaluation of this course is based on the standard UWSP grading scale.

| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| Discussion Posts = | 100 |
| Unit Papers = | 150 |
| Research Project = | 100 |
| <u>Attendance =</u> | <u>50</u> |
| Total = | 400 |

Grading Scale

| Letter Grade | Percent | Points |
|--------------|---------|---------|
| A | 92-100 | 366< |
| A- | 90-91 | 358-365 |
| B+ | 87-89 | 346-357 |
| B | 83-86 | 330-345 |
| B- | 80-82 | 318-329 |
| C+ | 77-79 | 306-317 |
| C | 73-76 | 290-305 |
| C- | 70-72 | 278-289 |
| D+ | 67-69 | 266-277 |
| D | 60-66 | 238-265 |
| F | <60 | <238 |

COURSE SCHEDULE

| Date | Topic | Reading | Assignment |
|---|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 25-Jan | Intduction and review syllabus | | |
| <i>I. The Scientific Study of Religion</i> | | | |
| 1-Feb | Disciplinary Background and History | Supp. (Berger and Smith) | |
| | Conceptualizing Religion | p.1-23 | |
| 8-Feb | Religious vs. Spiritual | Supp. (Hout) | DP1 |
| | Everyday Religion | p.101-122 | |
| 15-Feb | (I)Religious Identity | p.122-131 | DP2 |
| | Operationalizing Religiosity | p.25-48 | |
| 22-Feb | Methods of Research | Find your own! | DP3 |
| | <i>Application</i> | | |
| <i>II. Mapping Religion in Society</i> | | | |
| 1-Mar | Theorizing Religion: Classic and Contemporary | p.50-76 | UP1, DP4 |
| | Religious Organizations | p.158-185 | |
| 8-Mar | Secularization and Desecularization | p.340-361 | DP5 |
| | Religious Marketplace: Monopolies vs. Pluralism | p.132-155 | |
| 15-Mar | Religion and Inequality | Part V. Reading Assignment | DP6 |
| 22-Mar | <i>Spring Break</i> | | |
| 29-Mar | Religion and Inequality cont. | Part V. Reading Assignment | DP7 |
| | <i>Application</i> | | |
| <i>III. Contemporary Issues in the Study of Religion</i> | | | |
| 5-Apr | Religion, Politics, and the Nation | Supp.(Religious Nationalism) | UP2, DP8 |
| | Religion and Globalization | p.394-418 | |
| 12-Apr | Cont. | Supp. (Juergensmeyer) | DP9 |
| | Religion Outside of the Box | p.363-390 | |
| 19-Apr | Cont. | Find your own! | DP10 |
| | <i>Application</i> | | |
| 26-Apr | TBA | | DP11 |
| 3-May | Research Project | | DP12, UP3 |
| 10-May | Research Project | | |
| 21-May 11:59pm | Final Exam Period | | Research Project |