Course Description: In this course we study religion as a social and cultural phenomenon, with a particular emphasis on the contemporary United States. We examine religious beliefs, practices, institutions and movements as they are shaped by their social context and in turn influence it. As social scientists we try to approach religious traditions objectively, critically and in a value-free manner.

Student Learning Objectives: Reviewing the student learning objectives will give you a clearer idea of the perspectives and coverage of the class. By the end of the course you will be able to:

1) analyze religious experience using sociological concepts, theories, measures and data (exams, Socratic seminar, term paper, Fundamentalism paper)

2) describe and analyze several religious traditions (that are different from one or more in which you may have been raised) in an objective and value-free manner (Term project, Socratic seminar, exams);

3) summarize the theoretical, methodological and substantive information presented within academic journal articles and critically evaluate their quality (exams, term paper).

4) analyze how the Amish maintain their identity and lifestyle within American society (exam, Amish mini-assignments);

5) elaborate the main characteristics of “new religions” and apply these characteristics to specific examples (e.g. Scientology or Wicca) (exam, Socratic Seminar) and

6) identify the defining characteristics of fundamentalism and sociological explanations for its current resurgence (Fundamentalism paper).
The course fulfills the Intellectual Perspectives requirement in the area of Religious and Philosophical Thought and Tradition. Also, note that this is an upper-level IP course, with associated work load expectations. Since the major skill outcome for the RP IP is problem-solving and critical-thinking, much of your work in this class aims to refine your skills in these areas. We also focus on the more general Intellectual Perspectives objectives of conducting research and practicing and improving collaborative skills. In addition, the course offers elective credit for the Peace Studies minor.

Since this is an upper-level sociology course, I expect that you previously have taken a lower-level Sociology course. If this is not the case, you are required to complete and outline foundational reading and participate in an out-of-class session to overview these readings early during the semester. Students who have been authorized to take the course without the usual Sociology prerequisite should expect to work harder than those students who possess more Sociology background.

Course requirements consist of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exam 1</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam 3</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Socratic Seminar</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fundamentalism Paper</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Project</td>
<td>36% total</td>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annotated sources or research instruments/Dr. Park consultation</td>
<td>8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mini-assignments</td>
<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>--Brief analysis paper of The Magdalene Sisters (W Oct 3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>--Report on Amish reality show (W Oct 31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>--In-class reflections on Amish meal (or substitute) (W Nov 7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>--Final period presentations assignment</td>
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The exams will have a mixed format of objective questions and especially definitions, short answer questions and essays. Each exam will include a take-home essay due about a week after the in-class exam.

For the Socratic seminar you will work with several other classmates to create different levels of questions to help the larger class describe, analyze and discuss an “extraordinary” religious group.

The Fundamentalism paper will be a short summary and analysis paper that tests your understanding of related reading and course material.
For the term project, you will complete ONE of three options: 1) collect and analyze your own data on the religious lives of a particular sample of individuals or of a religious organization using participant observation and/or indepth interviews, and interpret this data sociologically, with reference to course materials and the literature OR 2) do content analysis of “texts” with religious content (television shows, feature films, popular music, etc.) and sociologically analyze your conclusions, also with reference to course materials and academic studies, OR 3) do library and perhaps Web research to describe and interpret sociologically the beliefs, practices, and relationship to the larger society and government of an “alternative religion” (to be explained in class). For all options, you will write up your research in a final paper that you also present to the class using appropriate technology.

There will be four short assignments related to course material ("mini-assignments"). These assignments are noted on the syllabus. Mini-assignments are graded on a S+(100), S (85), S-(70) and U (0) basis, and together they comprise 4% of your final grade. No make-ups are allowed for these assignments except in the case of documented, excused absences. Otherwise if you miss the class period in which the assignment is due you will not receive credit for it. Authorized make-ups must be completed no later than the following class period.

At the end of the course I rank students on a class participation scale. Some degree of in-class student participation is expected. We will use a “talking box” in class to ensure that students are doing the reading and coming prepared to contribute thoughtful comments on or questions from the day’s reading. Students receive between 1 to 3 total points added to their final course grade for the amount and quality of participation that they contribute to the class (e.g. 75 C becoming a 78 C+ based on regular, quality participation). Your grade includes participation in whole-class discussions, small group exercises, emailed comments to me about course material and conversations with me about class material before or after class or during office hours.

Grade Calculation: I will use the D2L gradebook for the class. To calculate your final grade, simply multiply the grade that you earned on a particular requirement by the percentage of the grade that it is worth. For example, if you earned an 80 on the first exam you multiply it by .15 which becomes a 12. A 75 on your “Term Project paper,” which is worth .20 becomes a 15. 12 plus 15 equals 27. Do the same for all your other course requirements and add them up and you will have a number that is a percentage of 100. Put in hypothetical values for remaining requirements to reach the 100 total possible points to get a sense of where you stand. I do not usually give extra credit opportunities.

Policy on Attendance: Regular attendance is necessary for us to have engaging and meaningful discussions across class periods. After three class absences (excused OR unexcused) your grade will be negatively affected. Also, attendance is required on days that we have guest speakers or student
presentations unless you contact me, in advance whenever possible, with an excused absence. You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet that is distributed around the class. Chronic lateness also counts as an absence. If you miss more than 6 classes, as excused OR unexcused absences, you will not pass the class.

Policy on Make-up Work: All coursework must be completed by or on the date specified in the syllabus, unless special arrangements are made in advance with me. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified due date. Assignments submitted before 4:00 on that same day will be docked 5 points, with 10 points subtracted for each day later thereafter. Normally the only acceptable excuses for turning assignments in late without this penalty, or for taking a make-up exam, are medical excuses and family emergencies, for which you need to provide documentation. See the Undergraduate Catalog for further discussion of academic policies on these matters.

Please see me early on if you are having personal or medical difficulties that are affecting your attendance or course performance.

Class Cancellation Policy: If I must unexpectedly cancel class, due to illness of myself or a family member, bad weather or another emergency, please check your email for announcements for the next class period. Sometimes you will be given an assignment to complete using the D2L course page.

Submission Guidelines for Written Work: All assignments should be typed, double-spaced and stapled, with size 12 font and 1-inch margins and numbered pages. All assignments are due as hard copy at the beginning of the class period, as well as submitted to the D2L Dropbox, in the designated folder, at the course D2L page. Online submission does not substitute for hard copy submitted in class, but is in addition to it. You are allowed and encouraged to both double-side print your work or to print on the “other” side of existing work (just cross out what I should ignore!).

Technology Policy: I expect you to come to class with the intention of learning. This means that distracting activities including text messaging, replying to emails and listening to music should be put aside at the classroom door. All digital devices must be completely switched off once class begins and remain off for the entire period. If you are found using a digital device for purposes not related to class (e.g. NOT for taking class notes or pulling up the day’s readings on a tablet, which IS allowed) you will be penalized by that class period’s being designated as an unexcused absence for you. Repeated violations of this policy will lower your course grade.

Inclusion Policy: Westminster College actively strives for the full inclusion of all our students. Students with disabilities who require access solutions for
environmental or curricular barriers should contact Ms. Faith Craig, Director of Disability Support Services in 209 Thompson Clark Hall, at 724-946-7192 or at craigfa@westminster.edu.

The Academic Success Center is located on the fourth floor of Thompson Clark Hall. The Director of the Center is Ms. Jessica Shelenberger. The Center can assist you with tutors for classes, time management and study skills and writing papers. Book an appointment at http://www.westminster.edu/academics/learning-center/index.cfm

Academic Integrity: There are few greater rewards in life than being a person of good character. I expect all your work for this course to be conducted according to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Academic dishonesty includes such well-known violations as plagiarism (in written or oral communication), cheating, purposely altering the work of another without that individual’s permission, misrepresentation of attendance in class or at college events, misrepresentation of work, facts or experimental results, unauthorized use of or intentional intrusion into another’s computer files and/or programs, intentional damage to a computer system, unauthorized use of library materials and privileges, or engaging in any activity which attempts to alter or harm another’s academic standing. These are just examples; you are expected to be familiar with the College policy that is outlined in both the Undergraduate Catalog and Handbook for Students. See me if you are unclear about the meaning of any of these policies.

Academic dishonesty breaks the sense of trust that is central to a vital educational community like Westminster. Dishonesty in any of these forms will not be tolerated. Students who engage in academic dishonesty face penalties such as failure in the course involved or expulsion from the College. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs. In addition, work that you submit in this class may be submitted to Turnitin.com, a plagiarism prevention service that also provides educational information on how to practice honesty in the conduct of research and writing of papers.

For the purposes of this course, I expect you to do your own work unless collaboration with others is required, encouraged or deemed permissible for a particular assignment. I also expect you to do original work for this course. This means that you may not submit assignments used for another course for the purpose of fulfilling requirements in this course, except when you have advance permission from me and the other instructor to do so. Finally, I expect you to contribute your fair share of effort for group work done in the class.
Grading Scale:

94 - 100  A  "Outstanding"
90 - 93   A-      
88 - 89   B+     "Superior"
84 - 87   B      
80 - 83   B-      
78 - 79   C+     "Satisfactory"
74 - 77   C       
70 - 73   C-      
68 - 69   D+     "Passing but Inferior"
64 - 67   D       
60 - 63   D-      
Below 60  F       "Failure"

Readings


Readings at the D2L course page

Recommended websites for general information and sources for term project:

1. The Harvard University Pluralism Project (explores religious diversity in the U.S.)
   
   http://pluralism.org/

2. Religious statistics from around the globe
   
   http://www.adherents.com

3. Association of Religion Data Archives. Statistics on affiliations, survey results, religious group profiles and more.
   
   http://www.thearda.com
Tentative Course Outline

*All readings are due for the day on which they are listed. RM = Emerson text. AM = Amish text. EG = Extraordinary Groups text. D2L = article available at course page in D2L Learning Management System.

*Bring the assigned readings for the day to class so you can refer to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic and Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>I. Defining and Classifying Religious Experience and Institutions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Aug 27</td>
<td>Introduction to course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 29</td>
<td>Studying Religion Sociologically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 5</td>
<td>The Global Religious Landscape</td>
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**Reading:** For “new to Sociology” students: Review or read “Sociological Perspectives” and “Doing Sociological Research” at D2L. Outline readings and bring notes to submit at out-of-class review session. RM Ch. 1

| M Sept 3 | Religion, Meaning and Belonging |
| Guideline for term project |

**Reading:** Berger, “The Sacred Canopy” (D2L titled “Geertz Berger”) (study questions to guide, do not submit)

| W 5 | The Global Religious Landscape |
| **Reading:** RM Ch. 2; Ch. 3 pp. 45-52 |
| F 7 | Theodicies |

**Reading:** RM pp. 103-105 on theodicies

**Video:** *Frontline: Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*
M 10 Discussion of film
Religious Collectivities
  --The Church-Sect Typology and its Revisions
  --Discussion and Critique

Term Project proposal due

Reading: McGuire, “Church-Sect Typology” (D2L)

II. Theories of Religion and Society Interfaces

W 12 Theories of Religion
  --Functionalist Theory
  --Religion and Social Cohesion: Durkheim; the Civil Religion Thesis

Reading: RM Ch. 4 to p. 62

F 14 Secularism, Humanism and Atheism

Reading: LeDrew, “Discovering Atheism: Heterogeneity in Trajectories…” (D2L)
(use study questions to guide; do not submit)

M 17 Discussion of Secular Student Alliance petition at WC
Religion and Morality

Reading: “Secular Student Alliance Decision” (D2L).

W 19 EXAM 1

F 21 Religion and Social Conflict and Control
  • Conflict theory
    o Marxist Theory
  • Priest abuse in the Catholic Church

Reading: RM Ch. 4 pp. 62-66. Read and be prepared to summarize and discuss summary report on priest abuse at https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/779/article/what-caused-crisis

M 24 Consultations on term projects, during and outside of class period (also during office hours from 2-3 and continuing)

W 26 Religion and Social Conflict and Control

Video: The Magdalene Sisters

Exam 1 Take-Home Essay Due to D2L course page

F 28 Religion and Social Conflict and Control
Continuation of video
M Oct 1  Discussion of video
       Religion and Social Change
           • Symbolic interactionist theory

Submit mini-assignment #1 analysis paper on film

Reading: RM Ch. 7

W 3  Religion and Social Change
     Weber’s Protestant Ethic Thesis

Reading: Cuzzort and King, “Protestant Ethic” (D2L)

F 5  Catch-up or consultations on term projects

Term project proposal/annotated sources/research instruments due

III. The Religious Landscape in the Contemporary United States

M 8  The Secularization Thesis and Debate
     • Does religion disappear as a society modernizes?
     • Rational Choice Theories of Religion

Reading: RM Ch. 5

W 10  The Secularization Thesis
      European secularization

Reading: Kaufmann, Goujon and Skirbekk, The End of Secularization in Europe…? (D2L)

F 12  An Overview
     • Individual religiosity
     • Dominant organizations and forms
     • Are/why are Americans so religious?

Reading: Peruse 2008 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) (D2L).
and bring to class a couple of interesting findings. Review RM pp. 45-52 on megachurches

M 15  In-class consultations on term project sources and research instruments

IV. Sectarian Case Study: The Old Order Amish

W 17  Religious Sects: The Old Order Amish

Video: American Experience: The Amish
F 19  Discussion of video
       Amish History and Overview

Reading: AM to p. 39

M 22  Amish Institutions and Rumspringa

Reading: AM pp. 40-79. Start reading for Monday

W 24  Amish Work, Technology, “English” Integration and Images in America

Reading: AM pp. 80-118

F 26  The Old Order Amish

In-class viewing of Amish Reality TV show clips, with student summary and evaluation. Submit 1-2 page single-spaced outline of summary notes on content and evaluation (in terms of accuracy and cultural sensitivity) in class on W Oct 31, as Mini-assignment #2.

NO CLASSES OCT 27 through 30… Enjoy your fall break!

W 31  The Amish in the News
       --The Nickel Mines Forgiveness Story
       --Beard and hair cutting in Bergholz, OH

Reading: TBA

F Nov 2  EXAM 2

M 5  No class, but attend Amish Meal at Sarah Miller’s home in Middlefield, OH (5 pm dinnertime, leave campus at 3:45; arrive back by 8 pm). Mini-assignment #3: Jot down some notes to share in class on Wed. about your observations, also connecting to course materials. Substitute assignment for those who cannot attend

V. The “Cult” Type: New Religions, as well as contemporary sects and other “extraordinary groups”

W 7  Discussion of Amish meal
       Overview of New Religions

Reading: Dawson, excerpts from Comprehending Cults (D2L)

F 9  The Mormons
       Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Introduction and Ch. 4
EXAM 2 take home essay due

M 12  The Jehovah’s Witnesses  
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Ch. 6

W 14  Christian Science  
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: Selection at D2L

F 16  The Nation of Islam  
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Ch. 8

M 19  Scientology  
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Ch. 9

Term project due to designated folder at D2L page by 4 pm on Tues Nov. 20

NO CLASS WED NOV 21 THROUGH SUN NOV 25 ---- ENJOY YOUR THANKSGIVING!

M 26  Wicca/Neopaganism  
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Ch. 10

W 28  EXAM 3

F 30  Guest speaker on Neopaganism and Atheism.  Class meets at 11:40 in our classroom. Required attendance, unless excused absence.

V. Sectarian Case Study: Global Fundamentalisms

M Dec 3  Religious Fundamentalism

Reading: RM Ch. 6

W 5  Religious Fundamentalism

F 7  Religious Fundamentalism  
Wrap-up of course

**The final exam (presentations on your term project) for this class are on Tuesday, Dec. 11 from 11:30-2 in our regular classroom. During the exam period you will also complete a mini-assignment in which you evaluate some of your fellow students’ presentations.
The Fundamentalism paper is due to the D2L course page by no later than 3 pm on Thursday, Dec. 17 (end of final exam period).