

Sociology 303/Religion 221 Religion and Society

Instructor: Dr. Kristin Park
Office: Patterson 301
Office Hours: MWF 1-2
and by appointment

Class Time/Place: 10:30-11:30 MWF
Class Location: Patterson 205
Fall, 2015

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"One need not be a believer, but one must understand how belief is possible"

Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, "A Rational Approach to the History of American Cults and Sects," p.123

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 (Religion in News reports, 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, 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, although students should note that they may fulfill no more than two different IPs from courses within their major or minor. 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 expected to do foundational reading and participate in an out-of-class session to overview these readings early during the semester.

Course requirements consist of the following:

Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
Socratic Seminar	10%
Fundamentalism Paper	3%
Term Project	36% total
Proposal	3%
Annotated sources	5%
Research instruments/Dr. Park consultation	5%
Paper	18%
Presentation	5%
Mini-assignments	6%
--"Religion in the news" report (throughout semester)	
--Brief analysis paper of <i>The Magdalene Sisters</i> (Oct. 5)	
--Discussion questions on <i>The Amish</i> book	
--Reaction paper to Amish meal	
--Report on Amish reality show (Nov 6-11)	
--Final period presentations assignment	

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 one or two 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 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. In either case, you will write

up your research in a final paper that you also present to the class using appropriate technology.

There will be six short assignments related to course material ("**mini-assignments**"). These assignments are noted on the syllabus. Mini-assignments are graded on a S/U basis, and together they comprise 6% of your final grade. Thus 6 out of 6 Satisfactory mini-assignments equals a 100 grade, 5 out of 6 equals an 83, etc. *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. Your grade will either stay the same or be raised from 1 to 3 absolute points depending upon the frequency and quality of your participation in class and small group discussions or engagement in conversations with me about course material. For example, a student whose written work for the course equals a 75 (C) and who has been a very regular and quality contributor to class discussions would receive a final grade of 78 (C+) in the course.

Grade Calculation: 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 .18 becomes a 13.5. 12 plus 13.5 equals 25.5. 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 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.

Submission Guidelines for Written Work: *Written reports for mini-assignments should be typed, printed and turned in as hard copy during the class period.* 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!).

All other written assignments should be submitted electronically as a file upload to the D2L course page, Dropbox link. If you have D2L access problems, send me the file as an email attachment, but please try to do the file upload when possible. We will go over the procedure for this in class.

All assignments should use size 12 font and have numbered pages. Hard copy should be stapled. Assignments should generally have a professional presentation. Points may be deducted for not meeting these criteria.

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.

Academic Integrity: There are few greater rewards in life than being a person of integrity. 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.

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.*

The *College Handbook* and *Handbook for Students* have further discussion of college policies on and procedures for academic integrity. See me if you are unclear about the meaning of any of these policies.

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

Emerson, Michael O., William A. Mirola and Susanne C. Monahan. 2011. *Religion Matters: What Sociology Teaches Us About Religion in our World*. Allyn and Bacon.

Kraybill, Donald B., Karen M. Johnson-Weiner and Steven M. Nolt. 2013. *The Amish*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Schaefer, Richard and William Zellner. 2011. *Extraordinary Groups: An Examination of Unconventional Lifestyles* (9th edition). Worth Publishers.

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>

4. Hartford Institute For Religious Research (congregations and denominations)

<http://hirr.hartsem.edu/>

5. Beliefnet: a popular source with scholarly input

<http://www.beliefnet.com/>

6. WC Chapel Office website for listings of local places of worship (for term project)

https://my.westminster.edu/ICS/Campus_Life/Campus_Groups/Chapel_Office/Local_Places_of_Worship.jnz

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.*

Date Topic and Reading

I. Defining and Classifying Religious Experience and Institutions

M Aug 31 Introduction to course
 How do we study religion sociologically?

W Sept 2 Studying Religion Sociologically
Defining Religion

Reading: For “new to Sociology” students: Review or read “Sociological Perspectives” and “Doing Sociological Research” at My WC. RM Ch. 1

F 4 Defining Religion

Reading: Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” (use study questions to guide, do not submit) (D2L; titled “Geertz Berger”)

M 7 Religion, Meaning and Belonging

Guidelines for term project

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

W 9 The Global Religious Landscape

Religion in the News student reports #1: Profile of Pope Francis: the man; his beliefs; praise and criticism

Reading: RM Ch. 2; Ch. 3 pp. 45-52

F 11 Theodicies

Reading: RM pp. 103-105 on theodicies

Video: *Frontline: Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*

M 14 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 16 Theories of Religion
--Functionalist Theory
--Religion and Social Cohesion: Durkheim; the Civil Religion Thesis

Reading: RM Ch. 4 to p. 62

F 18 Secularism, Humanism and Atheism

Reading: LeDrew, “Discovering Atheism: Heterogeneity in Trajectories...” (D2L)

M 21 Discussion of Secular Student Alliance petition at WC
Religion and Morality

Reading: "Secular Student Alliance Decision" (D2L). RM Ch. 14

W 23 **EXAM 1**

F 25 Religion and Social Conflict and Control

- Conflict theory
- Marxist Theory
- Latin American Liberation Theology

Reading: RM Ch. 4 pp. 62-66

M 28 **Consultations on term projects, during and outside of class period**

W 30 Religion and Social Conflict and Control

Video: *The Magdalene Sisters*

Exam 1 Take-Home Essay Due to D2L course page

F Oct 2 Religion and Social Conflict and Control

Continuation of video

M 5 Discussion of video
Religion and Social Change

- Symbolic interactionist theory

Submit mini-assignment analysis paper on film

Reading: RM Ch. 7

W 7 Religion and Social Change
Weber's Protestant Ethic Thesis

Reading: Cuzzort and King, "Protestant Ethic" (D2L)

F 9 Catch-up or consultations on term projects

Term project proposal/annotated sources due

III. The Religious Landscape in the Contemporary United States

- M 12 The Secularization Thesis and Debate
- Does religion disappear as a society modernizes?
 - Rational Choice Theories of Religion

Reading: RM Ch. 5

- W 14 The Secularization Thesis
European secularization

Reading: Halman and Draulans, *How Secular is Europe?* (D2L)

- F 16 An Overview
- Individual religiosity
 - Dominant organizations and forms
 - Are/why are Americans so religious?

Reading: Peruse 2008 *American Religious Identification Survey* (ARIS) (D2L)

- M 19 Text chapter/topic determined by student interest

Reading: To be determined

- W 21 Text chapter/topic determined by student interest
The U.S. Constitution and religious protections

Religion in the News student reports #2: Debates about religious freedom/discrimination for businesses and serving of gay and lesbian customers

Reading: To be determined. RM pp. 127-132

- F 23 **EXAM 2**

NO CLASS on Monday Oct. 26--- ENJOY YOUR FALL BREAK!

IV. Sectarian Case Study: The Old Order Amish

- W 28 Religious Sects: The Old Order Amish

Video: *American Experience: The Amish*

- F 30 Religious Sects: The Old Order Amish
Getting oriented and Amish faith

Reading: AM skim both Ch. 1, Ch. 4 (study questions to guide)

EXAM 2 take home essay due

- M Nov 2 The Old Order Amish
Ritual, Values, Symbols, Identity

Reading: AM skim Ch. 5 (study questions); Chs. 6, 7 (read more carefully)

Students bring discussion questions

W 4 The Old Order Amish
Diversity, population trends, organization

Reading: AM Chs. 8, 9 (read more carefully); skim Ch. 10 (study questions)

Students bring discussion questions

Religion in the News student reports #3: Amish beard-cutting/hate crimes in Bergholz, Ohio

F 6 The Old Order Amish
Gender, Life Stages, Family Life

Reading: AM Ch.11, 12 (read carefully)

Students bring discussion questions**Student reports on your Amish reality show**

M 9 The Old Order Amish
Education, Agriculture

Reading: AM Chs. 14, 15 (read carefully)

Students bring discussion questions**Student reports on your Amish reality show**

*****REQUIRED EVENING EVENT ON MON. NOV. 9: DINNER AT AMISH HOME IN GEAUGA COUNTY, OH. LEAVE CAMPUS AROUND 4:30, RETURN AROUND 9 PM (we will cover the meal's cost)**

W 11 The Old Order Amish
Businesses, Technology

Reading: AM Chs. 16, 17 (read carefully)

Student reports on your Amish reality show**Students bring discussion questions**

F 13 Be Afraid :>)
The Old Order Amish
Government and civic relations, tourism and media, negotiating modernity

Reading: AM Chs. 19, 21, 22 (read carefully)

Students bring discussion questions

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

M 16 The Mormons
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Introduction and Ch. 4

W 18 The Jehovah’s Witnesses
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Ch. 6

F 20 The Nation of Islam
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Ch. 8

M 23 Scientology
Socratic Seminar facilitates discussion

Reading: EG Ch. 9

NO CLASS on Wed. Nov. 25--- Enjoy your Thanksgiving break

M 30 Wicca/Neopaganism

Reading: EG Ch. 10 (for larger class discussion)

W Dec 2 Guest speaker Ms. Stacy Beach on Neopaganism (to be confirmed)

F 4 **EXAM 3**

V. Sectarian Case Study: Global Fundamentalisms

M 7 Religious Fundamentalism

Reading: RM Ch. 6

W 9 Religious Fundamentalism

F 11 Wrap-up of course

****Submit Exam 3 take-home essay**

****The final exam (presentations on your term project) for this class are on Tuesday, Dec. 15 from 8-10:30 am in our regular classroom. The term projects are due to the D2L course page at the beginning of the final exam period. During the exam period you will complete a mini-assignment in which you evaluate 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).