Instructor: J.B. Watson, Jr., Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology & Co-Director, William J. Brophy Sophomore Scholars Program

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Phone: (936) 468-2000

Office Hours: 3:45-4:45 pm M; 1:30-2:45 pm T; [3-4:15 pm T in MKKB Rm 357, Sophomore Scholars Ctr.]; 11:30-1 W; Other days/times available by appointment

2. Other readings as assigned.

Course Description: Social meaning, mysticism and morality in American society. Suggested background: SOC 137.

Learning Outcomes: This course is designed as an introduction to the Sociology of Religion. The focus is on the major theories, frameworks, concepts, & research methods that sociologists use to understand the social dimensions of religion. First and foremost, it seeks to help students understand the perspective from which sociologists view religion. By the time students have finished this course, they should have a general understanding of the central theories, major concepts, and methods of research in the Sociology of Religion. In addition, students should have an idea of how to apply these analytical tools to the sociological study of new religious groups and to religious trends they may encounter in the future.

The following Dept. learning objectives are also relevant for this class:

- **PLO1.** The student will be able to identify, compare, and contrast classical and contemporary theories of Sociology relevant to the study of religion.
- **PLO2.** The student will be able to identify the principles of good social scientific research design in the study of religion. Such principles include validity, reliability, precision in measurement, and sampling methodology.
- **PLO3.** The student will possess sociological knowledge as evidenced by the identification of the major concepts involved with the study of religion.
- **PLO4.** The student will be able to apply sociological knowledge and skills to a variety of social contexts related to religion.
- **PLO5.** The student will be able to read theoretical arguments and to identify their major strengths and weaknesses as applied to religion.

Student Learning Outcomes

*Student learning outcomes for this class include (but are not limited to):*

1. Students will possess knowledge of the study of religion as a multidisciplinary field.
2. Students will be able to identify unique & distinctive features of the study of religion related to the academic discipline of Sociology.
3. Students will be able to identify, compare, and contrast three major sociological theories relevant to the study of religion.
4. Students will be able to identify the basic principles of good sociological research. Such principles include identifying the common criteria used for choice of research methods, validity, reliability, and research ethics.

5. Students will possess sociological knowledge as evidenced by the identification of major concepts involved with an understanding of major social institutions, including religion and the interrelationship of religion with other major social institutions.

Program Learning Outcomes
This course addresses the following Program Learning Objectives:

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<tr>
<th>Program Learning Objective</th>
<th>Supported by Course Objective (Student Learning Outcome) Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLO 1</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
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<td>PLO 2</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>PLO 3</td>
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<td>PLO 4</td>
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<td>PLO 5</td>
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Grading:
A. **Grading Scale:** A 10-point grading scale is in effect in this course. Any allocation of “bonus points” to an exam is at the discretion of the instructor. **Typically, additional points are added only when the class average is below 70 (on a major exam).**

B. **Exams (85%):** Three (3) exams will be given during the semester. Exam #1 is 25% of the course grade, while Exam #2 & Exam #3 are each worth 30% of the course grade. Exams will cover both assigned readings and lectures. Tests will be closed-book, in-class, and the format usually includes both objective and subjective questions. Typically, major exams include multiple-choice questions & one essay question (drawing from both text & lecture). **Do not expect class lectures to cover all of the significant aspects of the topic - 2 ½ hours of class time per week is an inadequate amount of time to cover all course material in an upper-level course.** In other words, please remember that exams cover 100% of the lecture material, and 100% of the text material. Review resources for each chapter are available on the publisher’s student companion website (see web address above under text information). It is therefore your responsibility read the chapters in a timely manner & to learn the text material for the major exams. It is useful to think of the text and lecture as separate “learning paths.” To perform well on exams, plan to attend class regularly, read the text chapters when assigned, take careful lecture notes, & review them frequently. Thus, regular class attendance is important in this class. Full lecture notes are not available from the instructor should you miss class. Rather, it is suggested that students contact a fellow class member if you need “complete” notes. The instructor, however, can provide a general description of material covered in a specific class missed. Typically, a review sheet is distributed during class prior to a major exam. There is no comprehensive final exam given in this class; the third major exam is given at the scheduled Final Exam time.

Tentative Exam Dates Are:
Exam 1 - THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18 (25%)
Exam 2 - TUESDAY, APRIL 5 (30%)
Exam 3 - TUESDAY, MAY 10, 10:30 AM (FINAL EXAM TIME) (30%)

Make-up exams will be given during Dead Week. If you miss an exam for any reason, please plan to take the exam at that time. Please check with the instructor regarding the exact time of make-up
exams. The format of make-up exams may change.

C. **Project (15%)**: The details of this requirement will be presented on a separate handout by the 2nd week of classes. The project involves learning about the Sociology of Religion experientially by studying some aspect of religion. The project will be due at the last regularly scheduled class meeting of Dead Week.

D. **Attendance**: Regular class attendance is extremely important, in order to gain exposure to course material to the fullest extent possible. In an upper-level Sociology class, discussions provide a valuable opportunity for “peer teaching,” as class members contribute to scholarly discourse. There are no “excused” absences in this course. Grade reductions may be made for excessive absences, i.e., three (3) or more. Absences related to late registration, drop/add, or pre-registration count in the total. Class meets on a regular schedule immediately before and after University holidays. There is no provision for “making up” an absence. Class attendance may not be recorded at every class meeting.

E. **Other Important Matters**:

**Use of Cell Phones & Computer-related Electronic Devices**: Please limit your use of cell phones in class, including text messaging. Laptop computers & tablets may, however, be used for notetaking, but their use should be class-connected, not of a personal nature. Excessive use of such devices during class is potentially disruptive to other students & the overall dynamics of the class.

**Audio Taping**: Please inform the instructor if you desire to audiotape lectures. Please pause the audio taping during class discussions (since some students often find it somewhat intimidating).

**Written Communication Skills**: In a 300-level course students should possess strong written communication skills. As a minimum standard, spelling/grammatical errors, or other writing problems (on any work in the course) may result in a grade reduction, with a 20-point maximum per assignment/exam for writing-related errors.

**Accommodation for Disabilities**: To obtain disability related accommodations, alternate formats and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities must contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS), Human Services Building Room 325, 468-3004/468-1004 (TDD) as early as possible in the semester. Once verified, ODS will notify the course instructor and outline the accommodation and/or auxiliary aids to be provided. Failure to request services in a timely manner may delay your accommodations. For more detailed information, please go to: http://www.sfasu.edu/disabilityservices.

**Cheating and Plagiarism**: Academic integrity is a responsibility of all university faculty and students. Faculty members promote academic integrity in multiple ways including instruction on the components of academic honesty, as well as abiding by university policy on penalties for cheating and plagiarism.

**Definition of Academic Dishonesty** - Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the
words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit.

The availability of the Internet is a double-edged sword: it greatly assists in the research process, but it is a tempting source of seemingly “ready-made” information. When a student uses three (3) or more words from another source without proper attribution, it is generally considered plagiarism. Cheating & plagiarism, including failing to properly attribute work, is a serious breach of academic integrity & can lead to failure on an assignment. Please read the complete Academic Integrity policy at: http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/academic_integrity.asp

**Tentative Course Outline**

*Week of/Chapter & Topic*

*Note: Class lectures typically cover 1-1½ chapters per week.*

**JAN. 19 - FEB. 18:**

2. A Social Scientific Approach to Studying Religion

1. What Do We Mean by the Term “Religion”?

3. Religion in the Larger Society: Macro Perspectives

4. The Cultural Construction of Religion: Experience, Myth, Ritual, Symbols, and Worldview

14. Religion Outside the (God) Box

~ EXAM #1, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18 ~

**FEB. 19 - APRIL 5:**

5. Becoming and Being Religious

6. Conversion and Switching

7. Organized Religion: Churches, Sects, Denominations, and "Cults"

8. Organized Religion: Denominationalism and Congregationalism

11. Religion, Gender, and Sexuality

~ EXAM #2, TUESDAY, APRIL 5 ~
APRIL 6 - MAY 10:
9. Religion, Economics, and Social Class
10. Religion and Race
12. Religion, Inequality, and Social Activism
13. Secularization: Religion in Decline or in Transformation?
15. Religion and Globalization

~ TUESDAY, MAY 10, 10:30 AM (FINAL EXAM TIME) ~