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COURSE TITLE: REL 3100: INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION AND CULTURE  

Description: 
This online course explores religion from sociological and anthropological perspectives. Students will examine the ways in which sociologists and anthropologists try to explain the phenomenon of religion [that is, religious beliefs, religious behavior, and religious institutions]. The course exposes students to a range of sociological and anthropological theories that explore the origins of religion as a social and cultural phenomenon and the interplay between religious belief, ritual, and religious institutions, and their social and cultural contexts. Note that this is not a course in theology! We will not focus much attention on the content of beliefs and practices of specific religious traditions. Our interest is in the social and cultural dimensions of the phenomenon of religion.

Four objectives underlie the course:  
• To introduce students to socio-cultural concepts relevant to the understanding of religion as a dimension of societal life.  
• To examine the dynamics of the relationship between religion and other aspects of society such as politics and the economy.  
• To develop critical thinking skills by analyzing and evaluating theoretical perspectives on religious belief and action.  
• To encourage students to apply socio-anthropological concepts in the understanding of their personal religious lives and past and contemporary religious issues in their societies.

TEXT: *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion,*  
Ronald L. Johnstone,  
Prentice Hall, the latest edition,  
ISBN-10: 0131884077  

ESSAYS AND QUIZZES: There will be a multiple choice quiz or essay assignment after each chapter or combination of chapters. Each assignment will be worth a total of 25 points. Each essay assignment will consist of 1, 2, 3 or 4 essay questions out of which a student will be required to answer a specified number of questions. If the chosen question has sub-divisions [e.g questions 1 a, 1 b, etc] the student must address all questions in the subdivisions to be awarded full points for the question. The essay questions will be based on the lectures, class discussions, and assigned readings. The purpose of these essays is to test the student’s knowledge of the vocabulary, issues, theoretical perspectives and ability to apply the ideas covered to the understanding of
lived religious experience. A student has only 2 attempts at answering the multiple choice questions. The highest score will be recorded.

**DISCUSSION BOARD ASSIGNMENTS:** Throughout the semester the instructor will post messages to the discussion board that require a response or activity from each student. Each post will be graded. Each discussion is worth 25 points. To receive all possible points, a posting must be on time, be easy to read, free of careless mistakes, and appropriately address the issue(s) or question(s) presented by the instructor. Also each student must address or respond to viewpoints of at least three others in the class.