

INTRODUCTION TO RELIGION AND CULTURE [REL-3100]

Professor Information



Instructor:

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By appointment

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Course Description

This course explores religion from a sociological and anthropological perspective. 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.

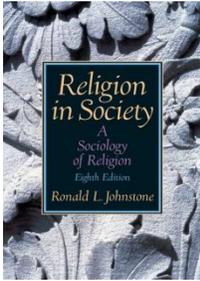
Course Objectives

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.

Textbook



Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion (8th Ed)
Ronald L. Johnstone
Prentice Hall (2007)

ISBN 10: 0131884077

ISBN 13: 9780131884076

[Click here](#) to buy your textbook online at the FIU Bookstore.

Expectations of this Course

This is an online course, meaning that most of the course work will be conducted online.

Expectations for performance in an online course are the same as for a traditional course; in fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills that can make them more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:

- Review the how to get started information located in the course content
- Introduce yourself to the class during the first week by posting a self introduction in the appropriate discussion forum
- Take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with Blackboard
- Interact online with instructor/s and peers
- Review and follow the course calendar

Discussion Forums

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 respond to viewpoints of at least three others in the class.

Keep in mind that forum discussions are public, and care should be taken when determining what to post.

Quizzes

There will be a multiple choice quiz or essay assignment after each topic or combination of topics. Each assignment will be worth 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 certain number of questions. If the chosen question has sub-divisions [e.g questions 1 a, 1 b, etc] the student must address all questions and sub-divisions to be awarded full points for the question. A student has only 3 assessments, it is very important that you take the "Quiz" from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum [hardware requirements](#).

Assignments

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 the ability to apply the ideas covered to the understanding of lived religious experience.

How to respond to essay questions:

All essay questions must be thoroughly answered. A thorough response is one that shows evidence of familiarity with the text and the power-point notes and shows the student's own originality. The points in the essay must be discussed thoroughly and illustrated with practical examples from the readings or the author's own experiences. The essay must be written in grammatically correct prose. It must be very well structured and organized. **YOU WILL SCORE A ZERO IF YOU SUBMIT WORK THAT IS POORLY WRITTEN.**

Read the questions ahead of time. Read the text and power point notes and draft your responses. Read the question again to make sure you are on the right course. Proof read your work before you submit it.

Final Grade

The Final Grade will be determined by a tally of points scored throughout the semester. These points will be converted into percentages [**that is, Points scored by student/total number of points [200] x 100**]. Please keep printed copies of all

assignments and graded material. If you cannot produce your class material in a grade dispute, the grade recorded in the instructor's grade book will take precedent.

Students are required and responsible for all assigned text readings and material from Blackboard. Students are expected to check the Announcement and Assignment sections of Blackboard for this class at least every other day. Students who take this course are expected to have the skills necessary to complete all assignments. **Essay Assignments must not be sent as attachments to the professor. They must be posted in the Assignment drop box. I will not grade them if you send them to me as attachments.** If you have computer technology questions during the semester, you should contact the FIU Computer

Weekly Schedule

Module Chapter and Tasks

Week 1

There are no assignments this week.

January 7 - Class introductions and acquisition of textbooks.
13

Chapter 1 & 2: Introduction to Sociology of Religion & The sources of Religion

Week 2

Read Chapter 1 and 2.

January 14 - Read the corresponding Lecture summaries/supplements (located in the Course
20 Content section of Blackboard).

Quiz 1 Due: January 20th at 11:55pm

Week 3 Start reading Chapter 3 – “Religion as a group phenomenon” & Chapter 5 –
“Becoming Religious”

January 21 -
26

There are no assignments this week.

Week 4 Based on Chapter 3 - Religion as a group phenomenon & Chapter 5 - Becoming
Religious

January 27 -

February 3 **Quiz 2 Due:** February 3rd at 11:55pm

Week 5

February 4 - There are no assignments this week.

10

Week 6

February 11 - **Discussion based on Chapter 3 - Religion as a group phenomenon**

17

Week 7 Read Chapter 4 on the church/sect continuum.

February 18 - **Essay 1** based on Chapter 4 on the church/sect continuum, due February 24th
24 11:55 pm.

Week 8 **Watch the Documentary movies “ The People’s Temple” and “The Secret Swami Satya Sai Baba”[a 2004 BBC documentary] and respond to the discussion questions. Due on March 3rd, 11:55 pm**

February 25 -
March 3

Week 9 Read Chapters 6 & 9

March 4 - 10 **Essay 2** based on Chapters 6 & 9, due March 10, 11:55pm

Week 10

March 11 - Spring Break - No Classes
17

Week 11 Read Chapter 11

March 18 - **Quiz 3 Due:** March 24th at 11:55pm
24

Week 12 Read Chapter 8

March 25 - **Essay 3 Due:** March 31st at 11:55pm
31

Week 13 Read Chapters 12 & 13

April 1 - 7

Week 14 **Essay 4,** based on Chapters 12 & 13, due April 14, 11: 55pm

April 8 - 14

Week 15 Week for completing all Quizzes and Late Essays

April 15 - 21