

Spring 2007
SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
SOCY 4121

Section 001 meets at 2:00 - 3:15 p.m.

Section 002 meets at 3:30 – 4:45 p.m.

Meeting Place: Hellums 211

Dr. Jen Hlavacek (pronounced lah-vah-check)

Office Hours:

(I will also meet with students after class or by appointment. I am very flexible on meeting times when you make an appointment with me.)

E-mail: Jen.Hlavacek@colorado.edu

As students of the sociology of religion, you will explore the complex role of religion in society. The focus of the course will be on the influence that various religions have on the society in which they exist and, in turn, on the effect of that social structure and culture on religion. Because globalization has brought about unprecedented changes throughout the world, you will explore how this process has also affected religion. Since religious pluralism will be a necessary pre-condition of the global village for the foreseeable future, you will explore other major religious traditions in cultures other than the U.S. In your intellectual journey, you will also learn some factors contributing to the tremendous conflict that engages social actors in the world today. We will look at case studies of some convicted terrorists and attempt to understand why religion would fuel acts of violence.

However, this is NOT a philosophy course and will NOT spend time on the question, “Is there a God?” As sociologists we will start with the assumption that millions of people across the planet practice various forms of religion and their actions shape the social world around us, just as the society affects religion. Also, this is NOT a course in theology on particular religious beliefs. This course will NOT attempt to argue for the legitimacy of one set of religious beliefs over another set of beliefs. It does not matter if you are Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu, Atheist, or a None of the Above. You are expected to show respect for beliefs that are different than your own. Above all, you are to be a sociologist in this class and attempt to the best of your ability to objectively analyze ALL religious behavior and religious actors within their particular social, cultural and historical context. Because we use scientific methods to study religion does not mean that sociology attempts to deny the relevance of theism.

You will develop your own skills of personal autonomy as you take responsibility for your own education. Because research shows that an **INTERACTIVE** model of learning is more effective for **HIGHER LEVEL LEARNING** than a more passive pedagogical model, this is not merely a lecture based class. I will present additional information in class to add to the reading material, but we will also engage in discussions, watch DVD's, and participate in exercises that personalize and enhance the reading material. You are an active participant in **BUILDING YOUR OWN** knowledge base. As your instructor, I act as your learning guide in this particular field of study. Although I have perhaps

studied more of the research in sociology of religion, I inevitably learn from all of my students who are engaged in our learning process. Because this class is an **interactive** seminar, its measure of success for you will be broadly based on **your involvement**. **(Life Lesson: This is the way of all great knowledge that you acquire throughout your life.)** This class should hone your sociological skills, which will help you throughout your life experiences.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES:

At the end of the course, each student who is successful will be able to

- Evaluate major theories of society and explain how each theory approaches religion in society.
- Learn the different methods that sociologists use to study religiosity and religious behavior.
- Explain the complexity of religion—including the relationships between rituals, myths, symbols, ethos, and worldview. How does religion affect one's worldview? How does one's worldview affect other parts of social life, in addition to religion (economic, political)?
- Be able to explain how race, class and gender intersect with religion. What are some of the major conclusions drawn from previous sociological research?
- Understand and be able to articulate how the political sector and the religious merge, showing awareness of the continuing effort by those with power and privilege to make the current system appear uniquely right and just (even ordained by God).
- Explain how Judaism, Christianity and Islam have broad commonalities as well as differences. How does this affect their religious ethos? Their ethics?
- Understand how religion can motivate people to violence.
- Become familiar with some of the research that has been conducted in the field of the sociology of religion in the United States.
- Articulate whether the U.S. has become a more or less religious society in the last fifty years? The rest of the world? What are the consequences?
- Learn how different worldviews, based on religion, affect one's behavior individually, as well as influence international relations.

ASSIGNED TEXTS:

Roberts, Keith A. 2004. Religion in Sociological Perspective. Thomson Wadsworth Publishing.

Kurtz, Lester. 2007. Gods in the Global Village. Second Edition. Pine Forge Press.

SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS:

Several articles are available on electronic reserve in the library. Among other topics, we will be reviewing case studies of convicted terrorists from several religious traditions.

EVALUATION CRITERIA:

Each student will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Course **INVOLVEMENT**: You are expected to **ATTEND** class every session. You are expected to **READ** the assigned material **BEFORE** the class session and be ready to be **ACTIVELY INVOLVED** in **CLASS DISCUSSION** under the rules of **CIVIL DISCOURSE**. See CU's policy on disruptive behavior in class. We will be discussing some sensitive issues. Each student is to show respect for me, fellow students and other points of view. If someone breaks the rules of civil discourse, they will be asked to leave the class and will lose two points off of their grade.
- You will be given the opportunity to earn up to 100 points on take-home essay questions designed to exhibit your critical thinking skills. These essay questions will be assigned in class. If you miss the day of class that the essay question is assigned, it is your responsibility to get the information **FROM A FELLOW STUDENT**. Please exchange phone numbers with several people in this class during the first day of class. The essay will still be due on the date I assign. No late essays will be accepted. Therefore, if you miss an essay, you miss the potential of earning those essay points toward your final grade.
- In addition, you can earn another 100 points toward your final grade by staying current in your reading and successfully completing several in-class quizzes. These will be unannounced quizzes and must be completed in class the day the quiz is given. In other words, you must be in class in order to take the quiz and there will no make-ups. This is designed to **REWARD** those students who come to class and are **ACTIVELY ENGAGED** in their own education.
- Three **EXAMS** on material covered in the text, the supplemental readings, class discussions, videos, outside speakers and anything else that occurs in class. You have the potential of earning 300 points on the three exams given. None of the exams will be comprehensive for the year. These exams will be composed of mostly multiple choice questions designed to measure your understanding of text material and other subjects covered in class. There will also be a few short, fill-in-the blank questions. There will no essay questions on the exam.

• POTENTIAL POINTS EARNED	500
Essays	100
Exams	300
In-Class Quizzes	<u>100</u>

- Points earned will be divided by total potential points of 500. The percentage you earn of the total points will determine your final grade. The normal scale for assigning letter grades is as follows:

A 93% -100%
A- 90% - 92%
B+ 87% - 89%
B 83% - 86%
B- 80% - 82%
C+ 77% - 79%
C 73% - 76%
C- 70% - 72%
D+ 67% - 69%
D 63% - 66%
D- 60% - 62%
F Under 60%

Final Exam Date: For section 1 which meets at 2:00 p.m., the final exam date is May 5, 10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Section 2, which meets at 3:30 p.m., will have their final exam on May 7, 1:30 – 4:00. Dates for exams 1 and 2 will be announced in class.

Grading exams: Please know that I go over the statistics after all grades have been assigned. If there is a question that a great majority of students missed, I will drop the question from the exam and change your grade upwards accordingly. I do not try to trick you with any of the questions. However, there are some questions designed to measure your critical thinking skills and deep understanding of topics covered in the course. Those particular questions are more difficult than ones that only measure memorization skills.

I am happy to speak with you about your grades throughout the semester. However, do not wait until the end of the semester to speak to me of any special problems you might have. Unless a math error has been made, no grades will be changed after they are assigned and recorded in university files.

EXCUSED ABSENCES: There are absolutely **NO** excused absences for any of the three exams. You will automatically get a zero if you do not take the exam. Why am I so inflexible on this point? It is simply **UNFAIR TO THE REST OF THE CLASS** for anyone to miss the exam and expect to take the same exam after the class has taken it. It is also unfair to administer another exam which may not be comparable to the one given to the other students. The exam would have to be oral and very difficult. So why punish yourself?

POLICY OF RETURNING ESSAYS, EXAMS, AND QUIZZES:

All papers should be picked up by the individual student. Measuring your skills and sociological knowledge is one objective in the evaluation process. Another goal is to improve your work as the semester transpires. Toward that goal, I write comments on your essays so that you can improve your next essay and earn more points toward your final grade. If you fail to pick up your graded papers, you lose out on part of the learning experience. In addition, it sends a signal that possibly you are not very interested in the class or your grades.

However, due to the large classes I am teaching and the location of the classroom in which we are meeting, I can only bring your graded essays, exams or quizzes and return them **ONE TIME**. After that one time, your papers are filed in my office. Although it takes some time to return the papers to each student individually, it is the most efficient way to get the papers in the hands of each student. I will only give them directly to the student; I will not give them to a fellow student. If you fail to pick up your paper for any reason, you must make an appointment with me to pick up your paper at my office. Many times I will hand the papers out as you begin to arrive to class so that we can save time. Some times I have to pass them out at the end of class. I will do everything in my power to not compromise your ability to get to your next class. While you are waiting for your paper to be returned, please take the time to read your assigned material. Also, please show respect to your fellow students by not interrupting me until I have returned all of the papers. I will be happy to talk to you about comments or answer any other questions before or after class, after all papers have been handed out.

You are required to keep all of your graded quizzes, essays and exams after they are passed out to you. You must have the copy of the graded paper if for some reason you feel I have not recorded your grade correctly. It is your responsibility to keep all graded papers returned to you.

PUH-LEEZ! NO TALKING TO OTHER STUDENTS DURING CLASS: Please be polite and do not talk to other students when either I am speaking or another student is speaking. I will not try to talk over you. I will stop whatever I am doing/saying and wait until you are finished. **YOU** will then be responsible for disseminating the information that I was going to discuss during that class period. Being quiet and attentive is good practice for your future jobs. No future boss will appreciate your chatting while they are leading a meeting. No prospective client will want to do business with someone who is not attentive to them. No grants will be awarded to a manager of a non-profit organization who appears bored and chats while there is a speaker. Being quiet and attentive is a sign of maturity, as well as a non-verbal language that says, "I care."

POLICY REGARDING STUDENT ATHLETES:

If you are a student athlete, you must bring me a typed letter from the athletic department designating you as an official student athlete with a name and number of your coach with whom I can co-ordinate should it become necessary.

FINAL COMMENT:

If you **take responsibility** and follow the assignments, participate in class discussions, and study for the exams, you will have no problem doing well in this class. Because this is a senior level class and you are sociology majors/minors, I know that you have the abilities to do very well in every aspect of the class. I also look forward to our mutual involvement in very timely and interesting topics of our day. Know that **I want you to succeed!** I welcome your comments via e-mail, after class, or in my office. Many times we think of things that are pertinent to the class discussion or questions pop in our heads when we are taking a shower. So please share any thoughts or ideas that you have with me. My e-mail address is listed on the front page of this syllabus.

Your assignments will be passed out to you in class and will be given to you in approximately one month segments so that you can plan ahead. In this way, I can adjust the rhythm and pace of the class to students I have in a particular semester. All the topics in the broad field of the sociology of religion cannot be covered in one semester. As we engage in some of the topics, the class will become interested in researching certain subjects. During the last part of the semester, I try to exercise a small form of democracy by giving you some choice about which subjects your class would wish to explore. For example, would you want to explore more information on different religious environments in other countries or would you prefer to spend that time on religious behavior within the United States.

All assignments are subject to change upon my discretion. Changes will be announced in class and each student will be responsible for these changes to the syllabus or schedule of assignments.