
SOC 376 (B1): SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Jonathan Simmons

jssimmon@ualberta.ca

Office Hours: by appointment

Summer 2018

Monday & Wednesday (BUS 1 6)

1:30 – 4:20 pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course provides an introduction to the study of religion from a sociological perspective. You will learn about the classics of the discipline, as well as the main theoretical discussions that inform contemporary trends in research. Although we will examine religious beliefs, practices, and experiences, this is not a religious studies or world religions course. Instead, we will focus on social behavior and how religion interacts with other factors of society.

OBJECTIVES: The sociology of religion differs from other scholarly approaches to religion, in that it is primarily interested in examining the social role of religion. Consequently, this course will introduce you to an exploration of why religious beliefs and practices are a central feature of society. By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- identify the essential doctrines of a variety of religious groups
- describe a range of religious and non-religious practices
- explain trends in religious disaffiliation and attendance in North America
- make explicit aspects of your religious/non-religious identity that you might never have expressed before

REQUIRED TEXTS AND RESOURCES:

- Zuckerman, Phil, and Frank L. Pasquale. *The nonreligious: Understanding secular people and societies*. Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Urban, Hugh B. *New age, neopagan, and new religious movements: Alternative spirituality in contemporary America*. Univ of California Press, 2015.
- Other required and supplemental readings will be available on the course website (eClass). There is a file on the course webpage called "Course Readings" which lists the readings and when you should do them. I may modify the required readings during the term.
- Selected readings will be on reserve in the library.

COURSE WEBSITE: You can access the course website using your normal CCID and password through the University of Alberta's E-learning portal: <https://eclass.srv.ualberta.ca/portal/>. There you will find materials relevant to the course including links to both required and suggested readings, brief video clips and course grades.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Deadlines for all assignments are listed in the description of each assignment and on the course website. Details on the requirements for each assignment will also be available on the course website.

Online Discussion..... 15%

Starting on July 15th, each week you will be responsible for posting a discussion post about the assigned readings to the relevant eClass discussion forum by 11:59 p.m. Sunday evening for the following Monday and Wednesday. To earn full credit, you must identify three key ideas that emerged as most salient/significant to you from the readings; two ideas/topics from the readings that you would like to explore or discuss further; and one element/issue/concept that you see as a problem. I will not accept late submissions under any circumstances.

Religious Autobiography 20%

Whether one is religious, a-religious, or anti-religious, everyone has a "religious autobiography." In this assignment, you will discuss your religious/non-religious journey. There is no "correct" formula for completing this assignment: you may want to start with your early childhood and then trace the development of your religious/non-religious views and practices up to the present, or you may decide to focus on an event in your life that had a profound impact on your religious/non-religious identity. The assignment is due July 18th by 11:59 p.m.

Exam Question Assignment 10%

You will come up with two original multiple-choice exam questions (worth 5% each) consisting of a question stem and four possible answers (only one of which is correct), with an accompanying explanation. The assignment is due on July 25th by 11:59 p.m. Your questions will focus on all assigned reading material prior the midterm.

Mid-term Exam..... 25%

The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. Bring a pencil and eraser, and your student ID card to the exam. Be advised that anything in your readings, assignments, videos, and in-class discussions can show up on the exam (e.g., examples, jokes, meaningless digressions, handouts, demonstrations, videos, magic tricks, in-class assignments, and even material in this syllabus!). The exam will be held in-class on July 30th during the first part of class. A lecture will follow!

Final Exam..... 30%

As with the midterm, the final exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. The final exam will not be cumulative. It will include only the information taught from the date of the previous exam until the end of the class. The final is tentatively scheduled for Friday, Aug 17th at 11:30 a.m.

DISCUSSION ETIQUETTE: In-class discussions are an excellent opportunity to present information as well as ask questions. If you disagree with something, make it clear that you disagree with the idea, not the person (who may not even agree with the idea they have presented). In short, treat people and their remarks with respect, even when disagreeing. Raise your hand to speak, don't interrupt others.

TAKING NOTES: You are responsible for taking your own notes. If you miss class, you may borrow notes from a fellow student. I do not post my notes online. I will post my slides, but they are not a substitute for being in class and taking good notes (they are mostly pictures with brief captions).

GRADING: Final marks will be neither scaled nor put on a bell curve. Individual assignments will be given a percentage grade. The final percentage will be translated to the University of Alberta's 4-point system as follows:

Percentage	Letter Grade	Point Value	Description
95-100	A+	4.0	Excellent
90-94.9	A	4.0	Excellent
85-89.9	A-	3.7	Excellent
80-84.9	B+	3.3	Good
75-79.9	B	3.0	Good
70-74.9	B-	2.7	Good
66-69.9	C+	2.3	Satisfactory
62-65.9	C	2.0	Satisfactory
58-61.9	C-	1.7	Satisfactory
54-57.9	D+	1.3	Poor
50-53.9	D	1.0	Minimal Pass
0-49.9	F	0.0	Fail

Grades will be posted online on the course website. In the eventuality that there is a discrepancy between the communicated grades and the grade listed in the professor's grade book, the grade book will be taken as authoritative. Individuals who would like to have an assignment re-evaluated should outline in writing the reasons why they believe their assignment/exam deserves a better grade. Except the final assignment, requests for a re-evaluation must be made within one week of the original evaluation. Any resubmitted assignments or exams will be wholly re-evaluated, which means that there could be a reduction in grade if I determine that errors were made in your favor in other sections of the paper/exam.

SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS: Later in the term, I will post on the course website some sample exam questions used in previous years.

EXAM BEHAVIOUR: Students may not enter the exam area after the first thirty minutes has elapsed. Students may not leave the exam area until the first thirty minutes has elapsed. I do not answer questions during exams. If an exam question is unclear, answer to the best of your ability. If you think there's a problem with a question, e-mail me following the exam's completion. For more information, see my grading policy later in the syllabus.

MISSED MID-TERM EXAM: If you have an unexcused absence from the midterm exam you will receive a zero for that exam; there will be no exceptions. For an excused exam due to illness or personal emergency, you must complete a statutory declaration form and have it signed by a Commissioner of Oaths. This is a legal document, a copy of which will remain on your permanent record.

For incapacitating medical illness, students can present one of the following:

- "University of Alberta Medical Statement" signed by a doctor (this cannot be required but must be accepted if provided in lieu of other documents).
- "Medical Declaration Form for Students" (for Faculty of Arts students).
- Statutory Declaration" (for students in Faculties other than Arts, to be obtained from home Faculty or the Office of the Registrar).

For all other cases, such as domestic afflictions or religious convictions, the student should submit appropriate documentation to the situation. This could include the following:

- For a death in the family – a copy of the death certificate
- For a religious conflict – a letter from the church or pastor
- For a car accident – a copy of the accident report
- For other serious afflictions – consult with Instructor or Department about appropriate documents

If you are granted an excused absence from an exam, you will write the make-up on a date of my choosing. I consider myself free to require that you take the same exam as the one missed, create a new exam for you, or require a written project—at my discretion. Further, do not expect that I will give you the same type of make-up exam as I gave another student who missed an exam.

MISSED FINAL EXAM: If a student fails to write the final exam, he or she must formally apply to his or her Faculty within two working days following the missed exam, or as soon as the student is able, having regard to the circumstances underlying the absence, in order to be considered for a deferral. The decision to grant a deferred final exam is not the Instructor's. Deferred examinations are intended to accommodate students who have experienced an incapacitating illness or severe domestic affliction; applications based on minor or inconsequential ailments will not be approved. Please also note that as stated in Attendance of the University Calendar, "a deferred examination will not be approved if a student (a) has not been in regular attendance where attendance and/or participation are required, and/or, (b) excluding the final exam, has completed less than half of the assigned work." There is only

one date for deferred final exams. Students granted a deferred final exam will write the exam on Friday August 22nd at 11:00 am.

OTHER: Policy about course outlines can be found in Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading of the University Calendar.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: “The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

LEARNING AND WORKING ENVIRONMENT: The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:

- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department. For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombudservice: (<http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/>). Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures can be found in the GFC Policy Manual, section 44 available at <http://gfcpolicymanual.ualberta.ca/>.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING: For further information about Academic Integrity and to access the Academic Integrity Handbook for students, visit the Dean of Students website at: <https://www.deanofstudents.ualberta.ca/en/AcademicIntegrity.aspx>

RECORDING LECTURES: Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).

ATTENDANCE: Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days, or as soon as you are able to, in regards to the circumstances underlying the absence. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult the [Attendance](#)

section of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the "attendance and participation" component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

POLICY FOR LATE ASSIGNMENTS: Late assignments will be docked a full 10% for each day they are late, including each day of a weekend. Hand-in late papers to the Sociology office (5th floor of Tory) during regular office hours. The administrative assistants in the office will date-stamp late papers. Papers that are more than 5 days late will not be marked and will receive a grade of 0.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES: If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered with Student Accessibility Services, contact their office immediately (1-80 SUB; Email sasrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB www.ssds.ualberta.ca).