

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
SOCIOLOGY 441-B1 (Winter 2017)  
Sects and Deviant Religions  
Tu/Th 2-3:20; T1-104

prerequisites: Sociology 376 or permission of professor.

Instructor: Dr. Stephen A. Kent  
Office: 6-16 Tory  
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30 to 5:00, or by appointment  
Telephone: 492-2204 (my office and messages)  
e-mail: <[steve.kent@ualberta.ca](mailto:steve.kent@ualberta.ca)> website: <<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~skent/>>

Required Books:

William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style. (any edition). New York: Macmillian, 1979 (or more recent).

Gibaldi, Joseph. 2003. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. New York: The Modern Language Association. [Note: You can substitute this manual of style with another one from a previous course, BUT you must have one that contains information about proper citation style FOR SOCIOLOGY.]

Required Articles: Please see the attached list, all of which you can download. From time to time I will be recommending STRONGLY that you check out certain sites on the Internet.

Course Purpose and Objectives: The lectures and readings are designed to provide an overview of the prominent theoretical issues in religious sectarianism along with an examination of sectarian activities in Canada and elsewhere.

Course Outline: 1st exam on Thursday, February 16th  
2nd (final) exam on the regularly scheduled exam date (probably on April 17<sup>th</sup>, but please confirm on Beartracks)

Papers:--due on the day of the final exam.

Each exam will take no more than about one hour and twenty minutes, and will require essay answers. The second exam will not cover material that had appeared on the first exam, although much of the material, by its very nature, is cumulative. All students must take all exams.

PLEASE NOTE: If a situation arises that will affect your performance in the course, then I expect to be informed immediately. Either speak with me directly or leave a note or phone message with instructions as to how I can contact you. Only approved absences from exams, according to a strict interpretation of university rules, will be allowed. FOR MISSED EXAMS, I require a WRITTEN note of explanation, clearly signed (with an accompanying phone number) from an `official' of some sort (i.e., a doctor's slip, a tow truck or mechanic's bill, a police report,

etc.).

Grading: The two exams will be based on a combination of readings, documentaries, and class lectures. Each one will count 33 1/3%, as will the term paper. The paper will involve extensive library research on a religious group or topic of your choice, subject to my approval. It will be at least 15 pages of text in length, and my standards for research and writing are high but reasonable. You are to type me a note that contains your proposed research topic, along with a tentative line of argument that you plan to pursue. If I approve of your topic and idea, then I will return the note to you, signed and with comments. You must assume responsibility, however, for ensuring that sufficient library material exists for you to complete your paper successfully. Each person must meet with me and show me your major sources, your manual of style, several pages of text, and several bibliography entries.

On Tuesday, February 28rd, each person will bring to class at least 5 typed pages of his or her term paper and exchange it with another student, who will offer helpful comments about writing, style, coherence of argument, etc. Feedback about style, grammar, etc., will depend heavily on advice found in *The Elements of Style*, as will my own assessment of the final product. Students who do not show up at this class with at least five typed pages for peer review will be penalized one grade decrement (for example, from a “B” to a “B-”) on the term paper. I will provide examples of typical writing problems that will help facilitate the peer feedback process. I also will provide a style-and grammar checksheet for each student you use to review his or her term paper before signing it and turning it in. **I WILL NOT MARK YOUR PAPER UNTIL I HAVE THE SIGNED CHECKSHEET.**

I will read the exam answers and term papers, assign letter grades to them, and then translate the grades into the multi-layered four-point scale for the final grade (see below). For the exam questions, primarily I am looking for facts that help analyse the questions that I ask. I give a point for each factual statement, a point for every time you use a particular source among the readings or the documentaries, and sometimes I give a few extra points for answers that are especially well-organized and clearly presented. I count the number of points in each answer, compare them to other answers, determine what the class average is for the number of points, and then make the grade determinants. I try to ensure that students who identify at least the key elements to the questions receive an acceptable grade.

The term papers receive their grades according to: organization (clear introductions, factual presentations that link theories with facts, and conclusions), the range and quality of sources, writing quality (as we will discuss in class), and any unique or important dimensions to the overall argument. The according to the following scale:

The professor reserves the right to lower the cut-off points but not to raise them.

Descriptor	Letter Grade	Grade Point Value	Percentage
Excellent	A+	4.0	95 - 100
	A	4.0	90 - 94.9
	A-	3.7	85 - 89.9
Good	B+	3.3	80 - 84.9
	B	3.0	76 - 79.9
	B-	2.7	72 - 75.9
Satisfactory	C+	2.3	68 - 71.9
	C	2.0	64 - 67.9
	C-	1.7	60 - 63.9
Poor	D+	1.3	54 - 59.9
Minimal Pass	D	1.0	50 - 53.9
Failure	F	0.0	0 - 49.9

Please Note: The University requires that I remind you of its strict policies against plagiarism. Please read them. It requires that I report all cases of suspected plagiarism to the Faculty of Arts, and I will (and have). Also, the University requires that I inform you that taping of the classes is prohibited UNLESS you make prior arrangements with me any only use tapes for your study aides.

#### MISSED EXAMS:

Strict university rules require that I follow a rigid procedure for students seeking approval for missed exams. Here is information about the policy:

*Absence from Exams (See [Attendance](#) in University Calendar)*

*Excused absence for a missed exam is not automatic and is granted at the discretion of the instructor (in the case of term exams) or the student's Faculty (in the case of final exams).*

*Instructors and Faculties are not required to grant excused absences for unacceptable reasons that include, but are not limited to personal events such as vacations, weddings, or travel arrangements. When a student is absent from a term or final exam without acceptable excuse, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of zero for the exam missed. Any student who applies for or obtains an excused absence by making false statements will be liable under the Code of Student Behaviour.*

To apply for an excused absence from EXAMS, a student first must notify me by e-mail within two working days of the missed exam. Second, a student must provide me with supporting documentation pertaining to the absence. ALL STUDENTS WILL WRITE ALL EXAMS, and no procedures exist for replacing an exam with another kind of work. Make-up exams for the two tests will occur at a mutually agreed-upon time, as negotiated between the student, the professor, and the Teaching assistant. Please come to the next class with your excuses.

For medical illnesses, students can present one of the following:

- “[University of Alberta Medical Statement](#)” signed by a doctor (*this cannot be required, but will 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 other acceptable absences, 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 (on letterhead) from a priest, rabbi, imam, pastor, or other recognized religious congregational leader
- 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 unable to write the SECOND/FINAL EXAM, you must formally apply to your Faculty office within two working days following the missed final exam in order to be considered for a deferred final examination (or as soon as you are able in regard to the circumstance underlying the absence). The decision to grant a deferred final exam is not the instructor's. *Only the student's home Faculty can grant a deferred final exam.* 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.

Any student who is granted a deferred final exam will write the make-up at  
Saturday, May 6, 2017 at 9:00am. Location TBA.

#### ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Please review the amendments to the Code of Student Behaviour, especially Section 30.3.2(2). In a phrase, if I catch you cheating, then I'm coming down on you like a ton of bricks (and I have done it before). You likely will wind up in a hearing before a Dean. Believe me, it isn't worth it.

“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 (online at [www.governance.ualberta.ca](http://www.governance.ualberta.ca)) and avoid any behaviour which 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.” Visit the Student Conduct and Accountability website to learn more about academic integrity at <http://www.osja.ualberta.ca/en.aspx> .

A few further notes:

1. **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Students who require accommodation in this course due to a disability are advised to discuss their needs with Student Accessibility Services and see the U of A's policy for students with disabilities:

<http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca/PoliciesandGuidelines/PolicyforStudentswithDisabilit.aspx>:

E-mail: [ssdsrec@ualberta.ca](mailto:ssdsrec@ualberta.ca)

Telephone: 780 492 3381

2. "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)."

3. Policy about course outlines can be found in [Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading](#) of the University Calendar.

#### SAMPLE EXAM QUESTIONS:

1. I have provided you with a newspaper article that discusses a debate about a group variously called a sect, a cult, or anew religion. In your essay, identify various aspects of this group that contribute to controversies about it, and use theories and concepts from the course (our readings, class discussions, and documentaries) to shed academic light on various issues. Every time you use a new source, you get a point for doing so, as you also do for each new fact. I am looking for facts and details, and am not particularly worried about the overall construction of your essays (as I will be for the term papers).

Required readings for Sociology 441: Sects and Deviant Religions (2017)

Please note: you only need to identify and be prepared to use key concepts from each one in discussions, tests, and terms papers (although details also may be useful). On the first exam, we will cover through readings to and including number 7, and the second exam will cover the remaining material.

You can download all of the readings that I have published from my web site <https://skent.ualberta.ca/contributions/>. All others are ones that you can download by typing in their names into the Library's search engine for articles.

#### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES (for 1<sup>st</sup> exam):

1. Kent, Stephen A. "Post-World War II New Religious Movements in the West." In *The World's Religions: Continuities and Transformations*. Edited by Peter Clarke and Peter Beyer. 2nd Edition. London: Routledge (2008): 501-519. <https://skent.ualberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/New-Religions-Post-WW-II.pdf>

2. Acosta, Benjamin T. "The Suicide Bomber as Sunni-Shi'i Hybrid." *Middle Eastern Quarterly* 17 3 (2010): 13-20.

3. Kent, Stephen A. "Narcissistic Fraud in the Ancient World: Lucian's Account of Alexander of Abonuteichos and the Cult of Glycon." *Ancient Narrative* 6 (2007): 77-99, 161; Reprinted in *Cultic Studies Review* 7 No. 3 (2008): 199-227.

## II. RESEARCH DIFFICULTIES

4. Ayella, Marybeth. 1990. "'They Must Be Crazy.' Some of the Difficulties in Researching 'Cults.'" *American Behavioral Scientist* 33 No. 5 (May): 562-577; download from <Sage Sociology> through Library.

5. Langone, Michael. "The 'Two Camps' of Cultic Studies: Time for a Dialogue." *Cultic Studies Journal* 17 (2000): 79-100. Google "The Two Camps of Cultic Studies."

## III. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

### A. Biopsychosocial

6. Kent, Stephen A. 2004. "Scientific Evaluation of the Dangers Posed by Religious Groups: A Partial Model." *Cultic Studies Review* 3 Nos. 2: 101-134; download through Library or my web page.

7. Lys, Candice. 2005. "The Violence of Jim Jones: A Biopsychosocial Explanation." *Cultic Studies Review* 4 No. 3: 267-294; Download through the Library.

8. Lane, Jodi; and Stephen A. Kent. 2008. "Malignant Narcissism. L. Ron Hubbard, and Scientology's Policies of Narcissistic Rage." English Original of ". Politiques de Rage et Narcissisme Malin." *Criminologie* 41 No. 2: 117-155; download from my website under "Professional Contributions," then "Scientology."

9. Raine, Susan. "[Reconceptualising the Human Body: Heaven's Gate and the Quest for Divine Transformation](#)." *Religion*, 35 no 2 Apr 2005, p 98-117.

### B. Family Deviance Model

10. Cartwright, Robert H. and Stephen A. Kent, "Social Control in Alternative Religions: A Familial Perspective." *Sociological Analysis*. (Winter, 1992): 345-361; Download through Library or my web page.

11. Doni Whitsett and Stephen A. Kent.. "Cults and Families." *Families and Society* (October-December): 491-502; Reprinted in *Cultic Studies Review* 3 No. 2 (2004).

### C. Social Psychology Model

12. Kent, Stephen A. 1994. "Misattribution and Social Control in the Children of God." Journal of Religion and Health. 33 No. 1 (Spring): 29-43; Download through Library or my web page.

IV, SOCIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL, SOCIAL STRUCTURAL, AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES (for 2<sup>nd</sup> exam):

13. Hall, Deana. 1998. "Managing to Recruit: Religious Conversion in the Workplace." *Sociology of Religion* 59 No. 4: 393-410; download through the University Library.

14. Kent, Stephen A. 1990. "Deviance Strategies and Normative Designations Within the Canadian 'Cult/New Religions' Debate," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 15 no.4: 393-416; download from the Library.

15.. Kent, Stephen A.; and Robin Willey. 2013. "Sects, Cults, and the Attack on Jurisprudence," *Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion*: 306-360.

16. Kent, Stephen A. "Religious Justifications for Child Sexual Abuse in Cults and New Religions." *International Journal of Cultic Studies* 3 (2012): 49-73.

17. Kent, Stephen A. "Spiritual Kinship and New Religions." *Religious Studies and Theology* 22 No.1 (2003):85-100.