

RELIGION AND SOCIETY – SOCI/RELI 429 (001), 3 CREDITS, FALL 2019

MWF in Peabody 311, 10:10am-11:00pm

INSTRUCTOR:

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Office: 210 Hamilton Hall

Office Hours: MW 11:15am-1:15pm and by appointment



COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS:

This course is an introduction to the sociological study of religion and society. In the beginning of the course, we will investigate answers to a seemingly simple question: what is religion? How does it differ, if at all, from spirituality or magic? Next, we will learn how sociologists study the topic of religion. How do sociologists assess the religious beliefs, rituals, and behaviors of individuals, groups, or institutions? Building on this foundation, we will learn the dominant theories of religion. What does religion actually do? What makes people religious? This important background sets the stage for the remainder of the course, in which we will continue to answer big questions such as: how does religiosity change throughout individuals' lives? Why do some religious institutions endure while others fade? How does religion contribute to social inequality? How does religion interact with race, gender, and sexuality? Has the world become more or less religious over time, and what is the future of religion?

This course also has a major research component in which students will use data from both surveys and interviews to write a research report on the religiosity of UNC undergraduates. This project will develop students' abilities to collect data, conduct a literature review, propose testable hypotheses, analyze data, present results, and summarize findings. More information on this project will be provided in separate documentation.

Finally, it should be noted here that this course will be heavy on discussion. We will constantly be engaging with the material during class – which means that all students will have numerous opportunities to share their opinions, interpretations, critiques, arguments, and experiences with the material throughout our time together. As our goal is to think *sociologically* about religion, having multiple perspectives is an asset for learning. However, we must all keep in mind that religion is, and can be, a sensitive, personal, political, and controversial topic. Accordingly, it is expected that students will be thoughtful and considerate when providing their own opinions and will always exercise respect for the opinions of others.

PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course, though the course is described as for “juniors and seniors” in the course catalog. Accordingly, it is designed for students who have already taken a number of courses in college, and I will assume that students are comfortable with, and willing to engage with, abstract ideas and critical thinking. There is also a major research component. Notwithstanding these considerations, all undergraduate students, regardless of background knowledge, should be able to succeed with diligent study.

TEXTS AND READINGS:

The textbook below is required. All other readings will either be available through UNC libraries or on Sakai. The textbook is available at the bookstore in a variety of formats and covering a wide

range of price options. We will be reading the entire textbook and using it extensively in class, so ***please bring the book to class with you every day.***

Roberts, Keith A. and David Yamane. 2016. *Religion in Sociological Perspective*. Sixth Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

GRADING (100 POINTS TOTAL)

- 1) Quizzes (20 points)
- 2) Visiting congregations assignment (5 points)
- 3) Midterm (20 points)
- 4) Research project (30 points)
- 5) Final exam (25 points)

QUIZZES (20 POINTS)

There will be 12 weekly quizzes throughout the semester, all of which will take place on Sakai and will be announced in advance on the syllabus. They will become available after class (11:30 a.m.) on Fridays and will be due before class on Mondays (with one exception – see schedule). They will be based on material from the prior week, which includes anything covered in class and all assigned readings. ***They are open note and open book***, but you must complete them independently. All quizzes will be worth 2 points, and the two lowest scores will be dropped. No make-ups will be administered unless a student has a [University approved absence](#) (or multiple) regarding circumstances that prohibited attendance in class or advanced planning. In all excused cases, it is the student's responsibility to arrange a make-up quiz as soon as possible after the missed quiz.

VISITING CONGREGATIONS ASSIGNMENT (5 POINTS)

During the semester, students will make one visit to a religious congregation (other than their own, if they attend one), document their observations (take field notes), and write a short report on their experience. Specific instructions and a rubric will be provided in a separate document.

MIDTERM (20 POINTS)

One midterm will be given approximately halfway through the course. It will cover all material assigned or discussed up to that point. No make-up exams will be administered, except under extreme conditions supported by a [University approved absence](#).

RESEARCH PROJECT (30 POINTS)

Throughout the course, we will be developing a research project that focuses on the religiosity of UNC students. We will use data from both surveys and interviews that we develop in class and administer to students outside of this class. Students will then analyze this data, both quantitatively and qualitatively, culminating in a research report due at the end of the semester. Students will have some flexibility on their research questions and topics, as we will design the data collection process to reflect the interests of our class. Rubrics for the surveys (5 points), interviews (5 points), paper draft (2 points), and final paper (18 points) will be provided in separate documents.

FINAL EXAM (25 POINTS)

The final exam will be given in compliance with UNC final exam regulations and according to the UNC final exam calendar. It will be cumulative and cover all material assigned or discussed throughout the course.

GRADING SCALE

Below 60: F		
60-67: D		68-69: D+
70-72: C-	73-77: C	78-79: C+
80-82: B-	83-87: B	88-89: B+
90-92: A-	93-100: A	

Raw grades will be rounded to the *nearest whole number* when assigning a letter.

RULES AND POLICIES

CLASS RULES

1. We start and end class on time. Please arrive on time and refrain from packing up early.
2. Cell phones and laptops are **not allowed** unless otherwise instructed or unless an individual student has discussed the matter with me and has been given permission.
 - a. As a matter of respect, please do not attempt to secretly use your cell phone in class. While you may get away with it, if I notice it I will address it with you directly. Further, I humbly ask that you respect my request so that we can create a focused and professional learning environment.
3. All readings are required and it is expected that you will do the readings **before** class.
 - a. Make sure to read **all parts** of assigned readings. For example, do not skip boxes, illustrations, callouts, and so on, unless I explicitly instruct you to do so.
4. Although I do not take attendance, I expect you to be in class every day. I care deeply about my students – if I notice you are not in class, I will likely email you just to check in and make sure everything is okay.

COMMUNICATION

Office hours: I would love to get to know all of you throughout the semester. Feel free to stop by my office or email me at any time, even if you want to talk about something unrelated to class (e.g., graduate school, jobs, research, career goals). Office hours are **not** just for struggling students and, in fact, it is often the strongest students who use office hours the most.

Email: please allow up to 48 hours for a response, even though I will likely reply much sooner. Also, please also use your academic email address and **proper email etiquette** (e.g., subjects and greetings).

FIVE TIPS FOR GOOD GRADES

1. Attend class.
 - a. I do not take attendance, but poor attendance will lead to poor quiz scores. Further, some exam questions will come directly from class and not from readings.
2. Consider using a bibliographic management software to keep your readings organized.
 - a. Some options include Endnote, Mendeley, and Zotero.
 - b. These could also help with your final paper (especially citations and references).
3. Consult with me often on your assignments and follow the directions.
 - a. I am happy to look over your assignments (including the final paper) before you submit them. Also, assignments in this course have penalties for not following

- directions; if you do not want to lose easy points, it would be wise to read the directions carefully and follow them.
4. Proofread your work.
 - a. Your writing is often a reflection of your **diligence, attention to detail, and professionalism**. Take it as seriously as you take all other academic tasks.
 - b. If you are having trouble with writing or grammar, please use the writing center (writingcenter.unc.edu), which even provides online feedback.
 5. Think and plan ahead.
 - a. As much as I want to help at the end of the semester if your grades will fall short of your expectations, scholarship requirements, parental desires, etc., **it will be too late**. If you want or need a certain grade in this course, start planning for it on day one, keep track of all of your grades as they come in, and talk with me regularly about it.

UNIVERSITY APPROVED ABSENCES

According to the University, “No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings, except for these University Approved Absences...” [See this link](#) for what constitutes a University Approved Absence and helpful resources for obtaining one. It is the student’s job to obtain University approval for any absences or extenuating circumstances that affect class performance.

HONOR CODE

The University Honor Code will be in effect through all exams, quizzes, and written assignments. Please read carefully the provisions of the Honor Code (instrument.unc.edu), make certain you understand and adhere to them, and ask me to clarify any questions you have regarding it.

Be sure that you also [understand plagiarism and the consequences of it](#). There is no excuse for plagiarism (e.g., you were in a rush, your high school did not teach you about plagiarism, you were afraid of failing the course). **This is your warning**. If you have any doubt at all about how to cite something, talk to me **before** submitting your work.

An undergraduate professor of mine once gave a beautiful and succinct reminder about academic honesty. After passing out an exam one day, he said, **“There are some things in life worth losing your integrity over. This is not one of them.”** When completing work or exams for this course, consider that upholding your integrity is more important than the grade you will receive.

DISABILITY SERVICES

Students with relevant disabilities or special needs should contact the UNC Department of Accessibility Resources & Service (<https://accessibility.unc.edu/>). They can write a letter to the professor recommending accommodations for completing the course.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE AND REQUIRED READINGS

The current schedule is posted below, but this may be modified as the course progresses. I will notify you in writing (via email and on Sakai) of any changes and will allow ample time for any adjustments in readings or assignments you will have to make. The textbook (*Religion in Sociological Perspective*) is simply referred to as “RSP” in the table below. Days designated for our research project have the prefix “RP” before the topic name and are shown in **red**. Online quizzes are shown in **green**. All other assignments are shown in **blue**.

Day	Date	Topic	Reading(s) Due	Due
W	8/21/19	Introduction	-	-
F	8/23/19	What is religion?	RSP Ch. 1	-
M	8/26/19	What is religion?	-	-
W	8/28/19	Studying religion	RSP Ch. 2	-
F	8/30/19	Studying religion	-	-
M	9/2/19	NO CLASS - Labor Day	-	-
W	9/4/19	Religion in the larger society	RSP Ch. 3	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
F	9/6/19	Religion in the larger society	-	-
M	9/9/19	The cultural construction of religion	RSP Ch. 4	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	9/11/19	The cultural construction of religion	-	-
F	9/13/19	<i>RP: Survey development</i>	-	-
M	9/16/19	<i>RP: Interview guide development</i>	-	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	9/18/19	Becoming and being religious	RSP Ch. 5	-
F	9/20/19	Becoming and being religious	-	-
M	9/23/19	Conversion and switching	RSP Ch. 6	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	9/25/19	Conversion and switching	-	-
F	9/27/19	Organized religion: CSDC	RSP Ch. 7	-
M	9/30/19	Organized religion: CSDC	-	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i> <i>Congregations due (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	10/2/19	Organized religion: DC	RSP Ch. 8	-
F	10/4/19	Organized religion: DC	-	-
M	10/7/19	Review for Exam 1	-	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	10/9/19	Exam 1	-	-
F	10/11/19	TBD	-	-
M	10/14/19	Religion, economics, & social class	RSP Ch. 9	<i>Surveys due (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	10/16/19	Religion, economics, & social class	-	<i>Interviews due (9:45 a.m.)</i>
F	10/18/19	NO CLASS - Fall break	-	-
M	10/21/19	<i>RP: Data analysis</i>	-	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	10/23/19	Religion and race	RSP Ch. 10	-
F	10/25/19	TBD	-	-
M	10/28/19	Religion and race	-	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	10/30/19	Religion, gender, and sexuality	RSP Ch. 11	-
F	11/1/19	Religion, gender, and sexuality	-	-
M	11/4/19	Religion and family	-	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	11/6/19	Religion and family	Perry Chs. 3 and 4	-
F	11/8/19	Religion, inequality, & activism	RSP Ch. 12	-
M	11/11/19	Religion, inequality, & activism	-	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	11/13/19	Secularization	RSP Ch. 13	-
F	11/15/19	Secularization	-	-
M	11/18/19	<i>RP: Paper workshop - peer feedback</i>	-	<i>Paper draft due (9:45 a.m.)</i> <i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	11/20/19	Religion outside of the God box	RSP Ch. 14	-
F	11/22/19	Religion outside of the God box	-	<i>Paper due 11:55 pm</i>
M	11/25/19	Religion and globalization	RSP Ch. 15	<i>Weekly quiz (9:45 a.m.)</i>
W	11/27/19	NO CLASS - Thanksgiving	-	-
F	11/29/19	NO CLASS - Thanksgiving	-	-
M	12/2/19	Religion and globalization	-	-
W	12/4/19	Course evaluations & reflection	-	-
F	12/13/19	Final exam at 8 a.m.	-	-