**SOC301: Sociology of Religion**

Spring 2013

Instructor: Danielle Kane

Class meetings: TR 2:20-3:50 JSC 156

Office hours:MWF 10:30-11:30 Asbury Hall 205C

This course aims to provide students with a sociological lens on religion as well as some skills that can be used in conducting research on religion (and other topics!). In particular, we will examine sociological ideas about the origin and outcomes of religious belief and nonbelief; how belief spreads; and trends in the US and worldwide, such as the increase of Protestantism in Latin America and the growth of atheism in the West. Along the way, we will also consider religious conflict as well as religion and the state.

**Major Projects**

The course is organized around four major projects and will give students the opportunity to collect and analyze data. In a first project, students will apply a sociological theory to analyze a social conflict. A second project gives students the opportunity to conduct a small piece of independent research on data from the US General Social Survey, using as a departure point Mark Chaves’ analysis of contemporary trends in religion and Phil Zuckerman’s analysis of atheism.

The third project will give students the opportunity to collect and analyze their own data, as we conduct a small study of DePauw students’ religiosity and compare our findings to those of Christian Smith and Patricia Snell in their study of religion among emerging adults. Part of our research will focus on how DePauw students arrived at their current beliefs, and here we will draw on David Smilde’s account of conversion in Latin America for inspiration. This section of the course involves some collaborative work, as we collectively present our findings to DePauw’s Director of Spiritual Life.

In the final section of the course we will move from the micro- and meso- levels to the macro-level, where we consider the relationship between religion and the state. For our main example, we will consider the French law forbidding girls from wearing headscarves in schools. For the final project, students will conduct independent research on a topic of their choice related to religion and the state.

Taken together, the course will acquaint students with a variety of topics and theories that are important for the study of religion as well as with the major methodological approaches used in this field.

**ASSESSMENT**

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| --- | --- |
| Writing Project 1 | 20% |
| Writing Project 2  Presentation | 10%  15% |
| Writing Project 3 | 20% |
| Writing Project 4 | 20% |
| Participation | 15% |

**Participation and Attendance**

You’ll notice that the **participation grade** weighs heavily in the assessment of your performance; this reflects the importance I place on ongoing effort and achievement throughout the semester. The participation grade captures in-class assignments; homework; response papers; and quizzes. Both in-class work and homework are designed to develop the skills and mastery to do successful work in the major projects. Periodic quizzes and regular response papers will test understanding of the readings and class material. Finally, because the success of this class depends on collaboration, as part of your participation grade, I will be soliciting feedback from your colleagues on your contributions to group work.

Although the University requires students to attend every class meeting, I offer you two absences for any reason without penalty. Because of the collaborative nature of this class, absences are disruptive, so any absences beyond those two will lower your final grade. For the third and fourth absences, your final grade will be lowered by two percentage points for each absence; for the fifth and sixth absences, your final grade will be lowered by an additional four percentage points per absence. Additional absences will incur additional penalties of eight percentage points per class. For example, if you miss six classes, the highest final grade you can achieve is 88%.

**TEXTS**

Bowen, John Richard. 2008. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. Princeton.

Chaves, Mark. 2011. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Princeton.

Smilde, David. 2007. *Reason to Believe: Cultural Agency in Latin American Evangelicalism.* University of California.

Smith, Christian and Patricia Snell. 2009. *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults.* Oxford.

Zuckerberg, Phil. 2012. *Faith No More: Why People Reject Religion*. Oxford.

Selections from Hamilton, Malcolm. 2008. *Sociology of Religion*. Routledge. **\*\*\*available online through DePauw’s ebrary\*\*\***

Additional readings are on Moodle.

**Schedule Overview**

**Weeks 1-3** **Sociological Theories of Religion:** **What is religion, and where does it come from?**

Readings: Hamilton, chapters 1, 6,8, 12-13; Collins, *Four Sociological Traditions*, chapter 3 “The Durkheimian Tradition” (on Moodle)

**Writing Project 1: Durkheimian Analysis of Conflict**

* Screening: *Jesus Camp*
* Pre-writing
* Drafting
* Workshopping
* Revision
* Class discussion: do religious conflicts differ from secular conflicts?

**Weeks 4-8 Trends in Religion at DePauw**

Readings: Smilde, David. 2007. *Reason to Believe*. California; Smith, Christian and Patricia Snell. 2009. *Lost in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults.* Oxford.

**Writing Project 3: Analyzing Religion at DePauw**

* Design of interview instrument
* Conducting interview
* Drafting
* Workshopping
* Revision
* Presentations for the DePauw’s Director of Spiritual Life

**Weeks 9-12 Trends in American Religion**

Readings: Chaves, Mark. 2011. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Princeton;

Zuckerman, Phil. 2012. *Faith No More*. Oxford.

**Writing Project 2: Analyzing a Trend in Religion**

* Introduction to Data Analysis
* Pre-writing
* Drafting
* Workshopping
* Revision
* Class discussion: what does religion look like today?

**Weeks 13-15: Religion at the Macro-Level: Religion and the State**

Readings: Bowen, John Richard. 2008. *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space*. Princeton; selections from Schwartz, Sally. 1987*. “A Mixed Multitude:” The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania*. NYU.

**Writing Project 4: Analyzing Religion-State Relations**