

223.32 Sociology of Religion (3 hrs.)
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Providence College
Winter Session, 2010
Mondays 11:10 & Thursdays 3:20

SYLLABUS

A. Calendar Description of the Course

An analysis of the characteristics, organization, and function of religious experience at the individual, organizational, and societal levels from the perspective of social science. Special attention is given to religion in Canada and to Christianity.

B. Purpose of the Course

Upon completion of this course, the student should be able to:

1. describe the nature of the social scientific study of religion in contrast with spiritual or faith-committed approaches to religion;
2. summarize and characterize the empirical dimensions of religion in general, and demonstrate particular familiarity with both religion in Canada and Christianity;
3. outline various factors in the formation and functioning of religiousness for the individual;
4. identify and describe how socio-cultural and structural aspects of collectivities shape and are shaped by particular forms of religion;
5. evaluate the role, effect, and directions of religion in the modern/postmodern world by integrating social scientific and Christian perspectives;
6. interpret his or her own experience of and contribution to Christianity, and thereby enhance self-understanding;
7. express encouragement toward her or his own potential for more enlightened religious faith through awareness of its human aspects;
8. display an appreciation for the necessity and value of religious faith for the personal and social well-being of human life.

Note re. Syllabus:

It is the student's responsibility to retain their course syllabi for use as support for possible future applications to other educational institutions for transfer of credit.

C. Textbooks

REQUIRED TEXT:

Swenson, Donald S. 2009. *Society, Spirituality, and the Sacred: A Social Scientific Introduction*. 2nd ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

All assigned collateral readings are available as PDF documents in your Blackbaud student portal under “Shared Documents” for this course.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS:

Balmer, Randall H. 2006. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*. 4th ed., New York: Oxford University Press.

Bibby, Reginald W. 2002. *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada*. Toronto: Stoddart.

Flanagan, Kieran, and Peter C. Jupp, ed., 2007. *A Sociology of Spirituality*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Monahan, S. C., W. A. Mirola, and M. O. Emerson, ed. 2001. *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

A **Selected Bibliography** for this course is posted under “Shared Documents” on your Providence Student Portal for this course. It is comprised of separate sections on 1) Religion in General, 2) Religion in Canada, 3) Evangelicalism, 4) Leading Journals, and 5) Leading Websites.

Note the **Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Religion** at

<http://www.hartfordinstitute.org/ency/index.html>

D. Course Requirements

1. Personal Reflections 20% (4 x 5%)

For each reflection, write a 2-3 page informal reflection on selected course material that demonstrates your personal interaction with it, and functions as a form of journaling. No further study beyond doing the assigned readings and participating in class discussion is required. Comment on ideas or analyses presented in the preceding unit of the course that have interested or impressed you the most, explaining why you think they are significant. In order to develop your reflections meaningfully, you should probably limit your focus to the topics of one or two classes/readings.

	<i>Due Date:</i>
Unit I: The Nature of Religion	February 1
Unit II: Religion and the Individual	March 11
Unit III: Religion as a Social Institution	March 29
Unit IV: Religion and Change	April 15

2. Reading Checks 20%

At the beginning of each class, questions about each of the readings assigned for the previous class will appear on the PowerPoint screen, to be answered on a slip of paper and submitted immediately. There will be 1-2 questions per chapter of the Swenson text, and one question per collateral reading assigned. These questions will enable you to demonstrate whether you have completed the assigned reading on time with rudimentary comprehension. They can only be answered at the time they are given to the whole class; late-comers or absentees will forego the opportunity for credit for that reading. Your grade for this component of the course will accumulate throughout the semester.

3. Book Review 15%

DUE DATE: February 25

Write a formal book review (i.e. 3rd person, etc. – 4 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font) of any one of the following, or any other relevant book that you have not read prior to this semester, and for which you have received **prior** approval from me. Your review should **not** focus on outlining the contents of the book, but rather should demonstrate that you have interacted critically with the material, identifying its strengths and weaknesses while bringing fresh observations to it. How did the book relate or contribute to your understanding of sociology, Christianity, and/or the sociology of religion?

Your paper will be graded on the quality of its content and composition. Help in all aspects of essay writing can be found in the *Providence College Academic Formation Guide* available in the Providence Bookstore. See also the study help posted under Shared Documents in your Blackbaud student portal entitled “How to Write a Book Review.”

- Angrosino, Michael V. 2003. *The Culture of the Sacred: Exploring the Anthropology of Religion*. Waveland Press.
- Balmer, Randall H. 2006. *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America: An Evangelical's Lament*. Basic Books.
- Baum, Gregory. 2006. *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology*, 2nd ed. Orbis Books.
- Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Doubleday.
- Bibby, Reginald W. 2002. *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada*. Stoddart.
- Budde, Michael L. 2007. *Christianity Incorporated: How Big Business is Buying the Church*. Wipf & Stock.
- Carson, Don A. 2005. *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications*. Zondervan.
- Carter, Craig. 2006. *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*. Brazos Press.
- Chidester, David. 2005. *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture*. University of California Press.
- Covington, Dennis. 1995. *Salvation on Sand Mountain: Snake Handling and Redemption in Southern Appalachia*. Penguin Books.
- Cowen, Douglas E. 2005. *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet*. Routledge.
- Dawson, Lorne L. 2006. *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*, 2nd ed. Oxford University Press.
- Dawson, Lorne L. and Douglas E. Cowan, eds. 2004. *Religion Online*. Routledge.
- Einstein, Mara. 2008. *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. Routledge.

- Heelas, Paul, and Linda Woodhead. 2005. *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Herrick, James A. 2003. *The Making of the New Spirituality: The Eclipse of the Western Religious Tradition*. InterVarsity Press.
- Jardine, M. 2004. *The Making and Unmaking of Technological Society: How Christianity Can Save Modernity from Itself*. Brazos Press.
- Kimball, Charles. 2003. *When Religion Becomes Evil*. HarperCollins Canada.
- Miller, Vincent. 2004. *Consuming Religion*. University of Toronto Press.
- Penner, Myron, ed. 2005. *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views*. Brazos Press.
- Penning, James M. and Corwin E. Smidt. 2002. *Evangelicalism: The Next Generation*. Baker Books.
- Reimer, Sam. 2003. *Evangelicals and the Continental Divide: The Conservative Protestant Subculture in Canada and the United States*. McGill-Queens University Press.
- Stark, Rodney. 1996. *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History*. Princeton University Press.
- Stark, Rodney. 2006. *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success*. Random House.
- Stark, Rodney. 2004. *Exploring the Religious Life*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Taylor, Daniel. 2000. *The Myth of Certainty: The Reflective Christian and the Risk of Commitment*. InterVarsity Press.
- Wuthnow, Robert J. 2003. *All in Sync: How Music and Art are Revitalizing American Religion*. University of California Press.
- Wuthnow, Robert J. 2000. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950's*. University of California Press.

4. Research Paper 25%

DUE DATE: April 5

Write a research paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font) on any relevant topic of your choice, using a formal style of writing (i.e. 3rd person, etc.) and a social scientific style of documentation (see “The Bare Basics of ASA Documentation” in your Blackbaud student portal under “Shared Documents” for this course). As a general guideline, you should have approximately the same number of references as there are pages to your paper, and no more than half of the references may be from internet sources other than on-line academic journals, government agencies, or credible public organizations. See also the *Providence College Academic Formation Guide* for general writing guidelines. Topics that are significantly different than those covered in the classes of this course should have prior approval. Your paper should demonstrate that you have done independent research and reading beyond the assigned readings, that you have thought carefully and/or reorganized your topic in an original manner, and that you can express yourself in writing clearly and effectively. It will be graded on the quality of its content (15%), rhetoric (5%), and technical competence (5%).

5. Case Study 20%

DUE DATE: April 12

Select one person, organization, religious group, or religion and apply selected, pertinent concepts and theory from this course to him/her or it. You may choose to go into detail with one analytic framework (the material from one lecture or reading), or pursue a more comprehensive application of theory with multiple analytic frameworks. No further research or documentation is required, but sufficient evidence should be present to show that your descriptions are accurate. Your 5-6 page (double-spaced, 12 point font) analysis may be written informally (i.e. 1st person, etc.). It should demonstrate that you have mastered course material, and that you can use it to make sense of a particular manifestation of religion/spirituality/faith that you have experienced, encountered, or know about. It will be graded on the quality of its content (15%) and composition (5%).

E. Grading Summary

1. Grade Components

Personal Reflections	20%	(5% x 4)
Reading Checks	20%	
Book Review	15%	
Research Paper	25%	
Case Study	20%	

Note: The last date for **Voluntary Withdrawal** from this course is Friday, March 12.

2. Grading Scale

Final course letter grades and their Grade Point equivalents will be calculated using the following scale:

<i>Percent</i>	<i>G.P.</i>	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>G.P.</i>	<i>Quality</i>
91 – 99 = A+	4.0	Exceptional	67 – 69 = C+	2.5	Satisfactory
85 – 90 = A		Excellent	63 – 66 = C	2.0	Adequate
80 – 84 = A-			60 – 62 = C-		
77 – 79 = B+	3.5	Superior	57 – 59 = D+	1.0	Marginal
73 – 76 = B	3.0	Good	53 – 56 = D		Poor
70 – 72 = B-			50 – 52 = D-		
			< 50 = F	0.0	Failure

F. Course Policies

The full text of the academic policies, procedures and regulations of Providence College can be found online in the Student Handbook

(http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student_life/) and the College Academic Calendar (http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/programs/registrars_office/calendar/).

1. Class Attendance

Full attendance at all classes is expected, because active listening, thinking, and discussing are primary learning experiences in this course. While I am committed to making the classes as interesting and informative as possible, it is neither my role nor my gift to be an entertainer. I am happy to give additional assistance outside the classes to students who find themselves struggling with course material, but only to those who have demonstrated the self-discipline to attend all the classes they possibly can.

2. ICTs in Class

Student use of information and communication technologies for purposes other than class note-taking is not allowed in the classroom, as students are expected to give their total attention to class activities. Use of cell-phones or ipods is never appropriate in the classroom, and use of laptop computers to play games, write blogs, chat with others, browse the internet, or engage material not related to the class is always distracting to classmates and disrespectful to the instructor. While

some instructors here at Providence College and other universities have begun banning laptop computers and other ICTs from the classroom, as have I in my Introduction to Sociology course, I am expecting you more senior students in this course not to abuse the privilege of using laptops for note-taking in class.

3. Plagiarism

Students are expected to demonstrate academic integrity in all its various forms, and will be held accountable for doing so by the policy on Academic Conduct in the Student Handbook (http://www.providencecollege.ca/college/student_life/). One particularly problematic breach of academic integrity is plagiarism, which is stealing from the ideas and writings of another person and passing them off as one's own. For an elaboration of the nature, types, and prevention of plagiarism, see the document entitled "Academic Dishonesty: The Problem of Plagiarism in Academic Writing" posted under Shared Documents in your Blackbaud student portal.

4. Late Assignments

Assignments will not be accepted after their due date; a grade of zero will be given for that component of the course. Furthermore, I will *not* receive requests for due date extensions. If you feel an extension is warranted, attach a cover letter to your assignment when you hand it in, explaining why it is late, and I will make a decision if and when your paper is graded. Assigning a late penalty (usually 10% or one letter grade per week) or waiving the zero grade will be considered only in the cases of medical or personal emergencies as detailed in the cover letter. Computer problems, conflicts with co-curricular activities, changes in employment schedules, or competition for library resources do not constitute such personal emergencies. Failure to plan ahead, or to maintain a margin of time for unforeseen events prior to the due date, does not warrant an extension either.

G. Class Schedule

The readings listed under each class topic are to be read in conjunction with that particular class, not necessarily prior to it. All assigned readings are either from the Swenson course text or are posted under "Shared Documents" for this course on your Providence Student Portal. Readings other than the Swenson text consist of elaborations, applications, or samples of pertinent research of the respective class topics. I reserve the right to assign additional readings during the course of the term or to alter the schedule of topics as I see fit.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topics and Readings</u>	<u>Assignments Due</u>
Jan. 14	Orientation to the Course	
Unit I: The Nature of Religion		
Jan. 18	Introduction to the Social Scientific Study of Religion	
	Swenson, Ch. 1, "The Definitional and Theoretical Bases of the Social Scientific Study of Religion"	
	Lewis, Bernard. 2003. "I'm Right, You're Wrong, Go to Hell: Religions and the Meeting of Civilization." <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> . May.	
Jan. 21	The Sources of Religion	
	Smith, Christian. 2003. "On Religion." Chapter 5 in <i>Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture</i> . Oxford University Press.	
	Chernus, Ira. "Summary of Berger's <i>The Sacred Canopy</i> ." University of Colorado at Boulder.	
Jan. 25	The Elements of Religion	
	Swenson, Ch. 4, "The Dilemma of Interpretation – Religion as a World View: The Study of Mythologies"	
	Monahan, Suzanne, C. 2001. "Introduction to Belief and Ritual." In <i>Sociology of Religion: A Reader</i> . edited by S. C. Monahan, W. A. Mirola, and M. O. Emerson. Prentice-Hall.	
Jan. 28	The Role of Religion	
	Swenson, Ch. 7, "The Symbolic Dilemma: The Study of Ritual"	
	Swenson, Ch. 9, "The Dilemma of Delimitation: The Study of Ethos"	

68, 2, 165-178.

Feb. 25 Religious Experiences in Psychological Perspective **Book Review due**

MacDonald, William. 2001. "Introduction to Religious Experience." In *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*. edited by S. C. Monahan, W. A. Mirola, and M. O. Emerson. Prentice-Hall.

Myers, David G. 2009. "National Secularity, Individual Religiosity, and Human Flourishing." *Perspectives: A Journal of Reformed Thought*. August.

Mar. 1-5 Reading Week (classes cancelled)

Mar. 8 Video: *Jesus Camp*

Unit III: Religion as a Social Institution

Mar. 11 Religious Movements **Reflection Paper #2 due**

Swenson, Ch. 3, "Religious Experience and Social Institutions"
Swenson, Ch. 5, "The Dilemma of Mixed Motivation: The Study of Sacred Leadership"

Mar. 15 Church-Sect Typology

Swenson, Ch. 8, "The Dilemma of Administrative Order: The Rise of Sacred Organizations"
Hiemstra, John. 2001. "Decoding Christian Conduct: Why Christian Institutions Should Avoid Adopting Codes of Conduct." *ChristianWeek*, July 24.

Mar. 18 Religion as a Group Phenomenon

Hiebert, Dennis. 1999. "The McDonaldization of Protestant Organizations." *Christian Scholar's Review*. 29, 261-279.
Bush, Peter. 2003. "Is Bigger Better or is Small More Beautiful?" *ChristianWeek*, Spring. pp. 6 & 9 of 12.

Mar. 22 Socio-economic Status and Religion

Swenson, Ch. 12, "Religion and the Economy"

Clapp, Rodney. 1997. "The Theology of Consumption and the Consumption of Theology: Toward a Christian Response to Consumerism." In *The Consuming Passion: Christianity and the Consumer Culture*. edited by Rodney Clapp. InterVarsity Press.

Mar. 25 Prejudice, Politics, and Religion

Swenson, Ch. 6, "The Dilemmas of Interpretation and Mixed Motivation: The Study of Women as Leaders"

Swenson, Ch. 10, "The Dilemma of Power: The Relationship Between Religion and Politics, Part One"

Swenson, Ch. 11, "The Dilemma of Power: The Relationship Between Religion and Politics, Part Two"

Unit IV: Religion and Change

Mar. 29 Religion in the Modern World

Reflection Paper #3 due

Krauthammer, Charles. 1998. "Will it be Coffee, Tea, or He?" *Time*, June 15.

Lewis, David L. 1993. "Canada's Native Peoples and the Churches." Chapter 12 in *The Sociology of Religion: A Canadian Focus*. edited by W. E. Hewitt. Butterworths.

McGuire, Meredith B. 2001. "Religion and Healing: An Extended Example." In *Religion: The Social Context*, 5th ed. Belmont, CA.: Wadsworth.

Apr. 1 Religion and Social Change

Robinson, Leland. 2001. "When Will Revolutionary Movements Use Religion?" In *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*. edited by S. C. Monahan, W. A. Mirola, and M. O. Emerson. Prentice-Hall.

Smith, Christian. 2001. "Correcting a Curious Neglect, or Bringing Religion Back In." In *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*. edited by S. C. Monahan, W. A. Mirola, and M. O. Emerson. Prentice-Hall.

