

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF WEST GEORGIA  
Fall 2016

## **Sociology of Religion**

SOCI 6182, Section 02

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Tuesday, 5:30-8:00 PM, Pafford 306

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Dr. Emily McKendry-Smith

Office: Pafford 319

Office hours: Monday 1-3, Tuesdays & Thursdays 11-3, or by appointment

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“Religion’ is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define. It is a second-order, generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as “language” plays in linguistics or “culture” plays in anthropology. There can be no disciplined study of religion without such a horizon.” – Jonathan Z. Smith

“Is there a God? [pause] If not, what are all these churches for?” – Michael Scott, “The Office”

### **Course Description and Goals:**

The course is divided into three sections. In the first section of the course, we will consider what religion is and what it means to study religion sociologically. In the second section, we will examine religion at the individual level. In the third section, we will examine institutions, the roles they sometimes play in religion, and how to study them. Finally, in the fourth section, we will consider broader issues in sociology of religion, such as theories (or the lack thereof) and how religion and its scholarship intersect with other social issues.

As a result of fully participating in this class, students will be able to:

1. summarize, write, and verbalize key theories and concepts within the sociology of religion,
2. recall and describe substantive findings in the sociology of religion,
3. critically assess a range of existing research and formulate sociological questions that address a substantively relevant area of religion, culture, and society,

### **Expectations:**

- **Attendance is required for this course.** This is a discussion-based class and will only work if everyone is present in class, prepared, and engaged in the class session.
- **Reading is required for this course.** In order to manage the reading for this and your other classes, I encourage you to read “smart,” by practicing reading and understanding

a book or article without having actually read every word. Read for the main argument, skimming some sections and reading others carefully, particularly the introduction and conclusion.

- **In-class participation is important for this course.** You will personally get more out of the class and it will be more interesting for everyone if everyone participates in our class discussions. In order to remain fully engaged, please do not use your cell phone during class. Also, I expect everyone to practice sensitivity and respect in course discussions, particularly in regards to, race, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, etc.
- **Adherence to the Honor Code is required for this class and all class work.** While you are welcome to use this course as an opportunity to work on your master's thesis, the work that you turn in should be substantially different from papers written in other courses. "Recycling" papers from previous courses is a form of academic dishonesty and will be treated as such. If you have questions about this, it is much better to contact me *\*before\** turning something in

You can review the Honor Code and other UWG policies online here:

[http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common\\_Language\\_for\\_Course\\_Syllabi.pdf](http://www.westga.edu/assetsDept/vpaa/Common_Language_for_Course_Syllabi.pdf)

Initial instances of academic dishonesty (ie plagiarizing on an assignment) will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment. Additional instances of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course.

### **Readings:**

I have assigned the following books. They are available for purchase at the UWG bookstore and online.

- Brown, Karen McCarthy. 2001. *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Dubler, Joshua. 2014. *Down in the Chapel: Religious Life in an American Prison*. New York: Picador.
- McGuire, Meredith B. 2008. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pearce, Lisa and Melinda Lundquist Denton. 2011. *A Faith of Their Own: Stability and Change in the Religiosity of America's Adolescents*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wilson, Jeff. 2012. *Dixie Dharma: Inside a Buddhist Temple in the American South*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

- Wuthnow, Robert. 2015. *Inventing American Religion: Polls, Surveys, and the Tenuous Quest for a Nation's Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press.

All other readings will be available on CourseDen.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

Your grade will be calculated on the basis of your performance on the written work in the following way:

- 10 Quote Analyses (20%)
- Interview Assignment (15%)
- Direct Observation Assignment (15%)
- Research Topic & Data Collection Memo (5%)
- Annotated Bibliography (15%)
- Research Paper (30%)

Details for assignments will be provided in class on the day they are assigned and will be available on CourseDen.

I do not grade on a curve. You will receive point values, but not letter grades, for individual tests and assignments. I will award final grades using this scale:

A = 90-100    B = 80-89    C = 70-79    F = 0-69

**Quote Analyses:**

You will need to write and turn in a “quote analysis” for 10 weeks of class. (There are more than 10 weeks of class – you get to pick which ones you write for). Your quote analysis should be turned in on the day that we discuss that reading. For example, if you turn in a quote analysis on August 23<sup>rd</sup>, it should be on the Beyer/Bender/Davie/Ellison and McFarland readings. Your quote analysis should be typed, using 12 point Times New Roman font and 1 inch margins, printed out and turn in to me in person. I will not accept quote analyses over email.

You should begin your quote analysis by giving the quote from that week’s reading(s) that you think is most important or interesting. You should then write a paragraph explaining why you have chosen that quote and what is important or interesting about it. Your discussion should incorporate other course readings for that week and/or other readings from the course. Your quote analysis should be at least 1 page long, but no longer than 1.5 pages.

Based on your quote analysis, I should be able to tell that you have done the assigned readings for that week of class. If it is not clear to me that you have done the readings (ie, if you pick a quote at random or can’t explain why you chose your quote) you will receive partial or no credit.

## **August 16<sup>th</sup>: Course Introduction**

### **August 23<sup>rd</sup>: Studying Religion Sociologically**

- Beyer, Peter. 2003. "Social Forms of Religion and Religions in Contemporary Global Society," pp. 45-60 in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bender, "Religion and Spirituality: History, Discourse, Measurement"
- Davie, Grace. 2003. "The Evolution of the Sociology of Religion," pp. 61-78 in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellison, Christopher G. and Michael J. McFarland. 2013. "The Social Context of Religion and Spirituality in the United States," pp. 22-50 in K.I. Pargament (ed.), *APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality Vol. 1*. Washington DC: APA.

### **August 30<sup>th</sup>: Studying Religion Sociologically**

- McGuire, Chs 1-4
- Orsi, Robert. 1997. "Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion," pp. 3-21 in David Hall (ed.), *Lived Religion in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

### **September 6<sup>th</sup>: Studying Religion Sociologically**

- McGuire, Chs 5-8
- Edgell, Penny. 2012. "A Cultural Sociology of Religion: New Directions." *Annual Review of Sociology* 38:247-265.

### **September 13<sup>th</sup>: Religion at the Individual Level**

- Pearce & Denton
- Sherkat, Darren. 2003. "Religious Socialization: Sources of Influence and Influence of Agency," pp. 61-78 in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **September 20<sup>th</sup>: Religion at the Individual Level**

- Brown, Chs 1-6
- **DUE: Interview Assignment**

### **September 27<sup>th</sup>: Religion at the Individual Level**

- Brown, 6-12

### **October 4<sup>th</sup>: Religion at the Individual Level**

- Edgell, Penny, et al. 2006. "Atheists as 'Other': Moral Boundaries and Cultural Membership in American Society." *American Sociological Review* 71: 211-234.
- Ammerman, Nancy. 1997. "Golden Rule Christianity," pp. 196-216 in David Hall (ed.), *Lived Religion in America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Roof, Wade Clark. 2003. "Religion and Spirituality: Towards an Integrated Analysis," pp. 137-150 in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **October 11<sup>th</sup>: Religion and Institutions**

- Chaves, Mark and Laura Stevens. 2003. "Church Attendance in the United States," pp. 85-95 in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ammerman, Nancy T. 2005. *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and their Partners*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Excerpt)
- Robbins, Thomas and Phillip Charles Lucas. 2007. "From 'Cults' to New Religious Movements: Coherence, Definition, and Conceptual Framing in the Study of New Religious Movements," pp. 227-247 in James A. Beckford and N.J. Demerath III (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### **October 18<sup>th</sup>: Religion and Institutions**

- Wilson, Introduction – Ch 3
- McDannell, Colleen. 1995. *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. (Chapter 1)
- **DUE: Participant Observation Assignment**

### **October 25<sup>th</sup>: Religion and Institutions**

- Wilson, Ch 4 – Conclusion
- Ammerman, Nancy T. 2003. "Religious Identities and Religious Institutions," pp. 207-224 in Michele Dillon (ed.), *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- **DUE: Research Topic & Data Collection Memo**

### **November 1<sup>st</sup>: Religion and Institutions**

- Dubler, Preface – Wednesday
- Cadge, Wendy. 2013. "Negotiating Religious Differences in Secular Organizations: The Case of Hospital Chapels," pp. 200-214 in Courtney Bender et al (eds.), *Religion on the Edge*. New York: Oxford University Press.

### **November 8<sup>th</sup>: Religion and Institutions**

- Dubler, Thursday – Sunday
- Cowan, Douglas E. 2007. "Religion on the Internet," pp. 357-376 in James A. Beckford and N.J. Demerath III (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### **November 15<sup>th</sup>: Macro Issues in Sociology of Religion**

- Davie, Grace. 2007. *The Sociology of Religion*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. (Excerpt)
- Finke and Stark, "How the Upstart Sects Won America: 1776-1850"
- **DUE: Annotated Bibliography**

**November 22<sup>nd</sup>: Thanksgiving – NO CLASS**

**November 29<sup>th</sup>: Macro Issues in Sociology of Religion**

- Wuthnow

**December 6<sup>th</sup>: DUE: Research Paper**