

Course Syllabus

Effective Date: Spring 2016

Instructor: Kimberly Murray – Kmurray@tamut.edu

I. Course Number: SOCI 485.001

II. Course Title: Religion & Society

III. Semester Credit Hours: 3

IV. Course Description: This upper division course reviews the major lines of classical and contemporary sociological thinking on religious consciousness and religious practice. How does society influence religion? What is religion's social significance in contemporary society? The course will consider these and other questions by exploring a variety of social expressions of religion around the world. It will also examine the social bases of churches, sects, and cults, and focus on the state of religion in the United States. The course is to be taught at an advanced level but does not require previous work in Sociology.

We will meet every Wednesday (unless otherwise noted) from 4:00-6:45PM in UC249. Regular and punctual attendance is required.

- We will have eleven in-class small group assignments covering course material. This will count as your attendance grade, but essays will be graded for content and knowledge of each week's assigned readings. I will drop the lowest grade.
- We will also have four in-class exams. You will not be able to make up an exam unless you have a doctor's note or other documentation acknowledging you had to be somewhere else on the date AND time of the missed exam. If you *do* have an excused absence, you will be required to take a lengthy make-up exam.
- Finally, each of you (or groups of you, depending on the amount enrolled) will have a presentation on one chapter. During the first week, students will pick from the chapters assigned on the syllabus. On the class day we cover their chapter, they must present a chapter summary with PowerPoint presentation and/or handout, an in-class exercise, and at least three discussion questions from which we will focus our in-class discussion. On the week of your presentation, you will be expected to facilitate class discussion on your chapter.
- You will write one paper divided into two parts: the paper topic and the final paper.
- In addition, I will have extra credit assignments available during the semester. You may earn up to 20 points on TWO of these available assignments.

Presentations:

During the first week of class, students will choose a chapter from the syllabus that they will later present to the class on the day the chapter is assigned. If we have a small class, one student will present per chapter. If we have a big class, more than one student will present per chapter. If more than one student has chosen to present on a chapter, then the two students assigned to present on the same day should collaborate with each other. You may

divide the material in half and each of you may have distinct presentations, or you may develop a group presentation in which both of you take turns speaking during one presentation put together by the two of you. If you decide to develop a group presentation, you must have the amount of work presented for two people (i.e. two in-class exercises, 6 discussion questions, etc.). The presentations are flexible in nature. However, a brief summary of key points, definitions, theories, and concepts must be presented. You may use handouts, PowerPoints, media enhancements (i.e. music, songs, books, magazines, TV/Movie clips), in-class exercises (i.e. writing, quizzes, interactional) and or guest speakers in your presentation. However, the majority of the talking during the presentation must be from the presenter. Make sure you've rehearsed ahead of time so that the presentation comes across as professional and well-planned. Finally, you must present three questions for the class to discuss during that day.

Writing Assignment:

You must write one paper covering a sociological topic of interest to you. This assignment is used to help you apply what you have learned in class to your own life. You must have your topic approved before you turn in your final paper. You may only use the class textbook and lecture materials—no outside sources may be used for this paper. The paper must be five and a half pages long (**double spaced, one inch margins, Times New Roman 12 point font**). DO NOT PLAGERIZE. All papers will be examined by plagiarism software detectors. If you are not a strong writer, e-mail me. I will review rough drafts for you. Papers must be turned in via the Discussions tab in Blackboard. Potential paper topics may include:

- Compare and contrast two religious traditions and the sociological factors that influence them.
- Use a sociological theory to understand how religion works as an institution in society.
- Create a research proposal to investigate religion in society.

Your **paper topic** includes your thesis statement, a brief summary of what you want to write about, and a brief outline of your paper (i.e., I will have four body paragraphs covering topic 1, topic 2, topic 3, and topic 4). Finally, you must submit at least one sentence that discusses why this paper topic is important to the field of sociology. The assignment should be no less than half a page and no more than one page long (Times New Roman, 1 inch margins, double spaced, 12 pt. font). THIS WILL BE CHECKED FOR PLAGARISM WITH TURN IT IN SOFTWARE!

Extra Credit:

You are allowed to write papers over two news articles and relate the article to concepts you have learned in this class. The assignment and the news article you use to write the paper must be turned in via the Discussions tab on Blackboard. You will **not** receive credit for writing a summary of the article. You must relate the information to a sociological concept or theory. The critical reflection paper must be one and a half pages (double spaced, one inch

margins, Times New Roman font, and 12 point font) long to receive full credit. Class members are encouraged to read and reply to these assignments.

Other extra credit opportunities may be announced during the course. Remember, you may only do two extra credit assignments.

V. Course Delivery Method: Face-to-Face

VI. Required Textbooks/Resources:

Smith, Huston. 1994. *The Illustrated World's Religions: A Guide to Our Wisdom Traditions*. San Francisco: Harper Collins. ISBN-10: 0060674407; ISBN-13: 978-0060674403

Recommended Books:

This course requires the ability to communicate both verbally and in writing. If you feel like you could use some direction in writing, you will probably find the following recommended text helpful:

Schmidt, Judy H., et al. 2002. *Six Steps to Effective Writing in Sociology*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

The following text has a wide selection of much shorter readings. Either the 3rd or 4th edition is fine:

Fieser, James, and John Powers. 2008. *Scriptures of the World's Religions*, 3e. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Also, at times during the semester, there will be other materials given that are not necessarily in a text, but that are important nevertheless. These materials will either be on the class website at learn.ou.edu or may be handed out in class.

VII. Student Learner Outcomes: Students successfully completing SOC 485 will 1) understand the classical statements on religious consciousness, 2) comprehend the contemporary theoretical initiatives in the field, and 3) learn the methodologies used in the analysis of religion. Additionally, they will survey the main precepts that make up the foundation of a variety of religious traditions.

VIII. Course Outline:

1. Introduction, studying religion, and method & theories
2. Cultural construction of religion, becoming religious, formation of organized religion
3. Religious organizations, religion and stratification, religion and social change
4. Alternative forms of religion, religion and globalization

Tentative Course Schedule:

January 20	Introductions, Syllabus, Class Review
January 27	Chapter on Hinduism
February 3	Chapter on Buddhism
February 10	Exam 1
February 17	Chapter on Confucianism
February 24	Chapter on Taoism
March 2	Exam 2
March 9	Chapter on Judaism Paper Topics Due at Midnight Via Blackboard
March 16	Spring Break! No Class
March 23	Chapter on Christianity
March 30	Exam 3
April 6	Chapter on Islam
April 13	Peer Review Final Papers
April 20	Chapter on Native Traditions Final Papers Due at Midnight via Blackboard
April 27	Class Review & Making Connections
May 4	Exam 4

Students are required to read corresponding chapters in the text prior to each class meeting. Teacher reserves the right to make changes to the course syllabus and will notify students accordingly.

IX. Methods of Evaluation:

Exams	(3 at 100 pts each)
In-class assign.	(10 at 50 pts each)
Presentation	(1 at 100 pts each)

Paper	(1 at 100 pts)
Total points	(100 pts total)
Extra Credit	(2 at 10 pts each)

X. Grading scale:

A: (90-100%)	900-1000 pts
B: (80-89.99%)	800-899 pts
C: (70-79.99%)	700-799 pts
D: (60-69.99%)	600-699 pts
F: (0-59.99%)	599-0 pts

XI. Student Participation:

- a. Participation Policy:** The completion of assignments, readings, and participation in classroom discussions and group work are routine expectations. Participation includes frequently volunteering for class and group discussions, practicing effective listening skills while others are talking, and being tolerant of others' ideas and opinions.
- b. Course etiquette:** The following is expected of each student:
- appropriate attendance and promptness
 - ability to meet deadlines.
 - ability to utilize constructive feedback
 - appropriate organizational skills
 - appropriate collaboration skills
 - respectful attitude towards professor and other students
 - professional and ethical behavior throughout the semester

c. Discussion Board

Students are encouraged to submit extra credit assignments via the discussion board. Other students are also encouraged to read and reply to these assignments.

XIII. Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities may request reasonable accommodations through the A&M-Texarkana Disability Services Office by calling 903-223-3062.

XIV. Academic Integrity: Academic honesty is expected of students enrolled in this course. Cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, falsification of research data, plagiarism, and undocumented use of materials from any source constitute academic dishonesty and may be grounds for a grade of 'F' in the course and/or disciplinary actions. For additional information, see the university catalog.

XV. A&M-Texarkana Email Address: Upon application to Texas A&M University-Texarkana an individual will be assigned an A&M-Texarkana email account. This email account will be used to deliver official university correspondence. Each individual is responsible for information sent and received via the university email account and is expected to check the official A&M-Texarkana email account on a frequent and consistent basis. Faculty and students are required to utilize the university email account when communicating about coursework.

XVI. Drop Policy: To drop this course after the census date (see [semester calendar](#)), a student must complete the Drop/Withdrawal Request Form, located on the University website <http://tamut.edu/Registrar/droppingwithdrawing-from-classes.html> or obtained in the Registrar's Office. The student must submit the signed and completed form to the instructor of each course indicated on the form to be dropped for his/her signature. The signature is not an "approval" to drop, but rather confirmation that the student has discussed the drop/withdrawal with the faculty member. The form must be submitted to the Registrar's office for processing in person, email Registrar@tamut.edu, mail (7101 University Ave., Texarkana, TX 75503) or fax (903-223-3140). Drop/withdraw forms missing any of the required information will not be accepted by the Registrar's Office for processing. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the form is completed properly before submission. If a student stops participating in class (attending and submitting assignments) but does not complete and submit the drop/withdrawal form, a final grade based on work completed as outlined in the syllabus will be assigned.

XVII. Class Participation: Students are responsible for beginning their participation on the FIRST CLASS DAY by logging on and completing assignments according to the COURSE CALENDAR. Failure to submit online assignments between the first day of classes and the University census date (according to the University schedule) will result in an ADMINISTRATIVE DROP from the course.

XVIII. Student Technical Assistance:

- Solutions to common problems and FAQ's for your web-enhanced and web courses are found at this link: <http://www.tamut.edu/Training/Student%20Training/index.html>
- If you cannot find your resolution there, you can send in a support request detailing your specific problem here: <http://www.tamut.edu/techde/support.htm>
- Blackboard Helpdesk contacts (office hours are: Monday - Friday, 8:00a to 5:00p)
Julia Allen (main contact) 903-223-3154 julia.allen@tamut.edu
Nikki Thomson (alternate) 903-223-3083 nikki.thomson@tamut.edu
Jayson Ferguson (alternate) 903-223-3105 jayson.ferguson@tamut.edu

XVIII. Technical Requirements:

Minimum Windows PC Requirements:

- Pentium IV 1.5GHz+ (preferred: Core Duo)

- 1 GB RAM minimum (preferred: 2 GB)
- 128MB Video Card minimum - Sound Card is required for some courses
- 56K modem minimum (Cable or DSL required for some courses)
- Windows 2000, XP, Vista or 7
- Web browser (Internet Explorer 7.0+; Firefox 3.0+)
- Microsoft Word, minimum Office 97

Some courses will need plug-ins such as Flash player 10 +, QuickTime player 7.0+, Adobe Reader 9.0+, Java Runtime Environment (Java 1.6.0_15), Windows Media Player 10+, RealPlayer, and Macromedia/Adobe Shockwave.

Some online courses may also require a CD ROM (8x minimum, higher recommended)

Blackboard has certified the following browsers for computers running Windows Operating Systems:

- Internet Explorer 8 or 9 (IE is not supported on Windows XP)
- Mozilla Firefox 3.6+
- Google Chrome

Minimum Apple Macintosh Requirements:

- Intel Core 2.0GHz+
- 1 GB RAM (preferred: 2 GB)
- 128MB Video Card minimum - Sound Card is required for some courses
- 56K modem minimum (Cable or DSL required for some courses)
- Web browser (Firefox 3.0+ ; Safari 3.0+)
- Microsoft Word, minimum Office 97

Some courses will need plug-ins such as Flash player 10+, QuickTime player 7.0+, Adobe Reader 9.0+, Java Runtime Environment, RealPlayer, and Macromedia/Adobe Shockwave.

Some online courses may also require a CD ROM (8x minimum, higher recommended)

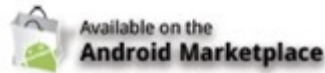
Blackboard has certified the following browsers for computers running Macintosh Operating Systems:

- Mac OS 10.2 (Jaguar): (Safari 1 is compatible)
- Mac OS 10.3 (Panther): Safari 1.2 (Firefox 1.5 is compatible)
- Mac OS 10.4 (Tiger): Safari 2 and Firefox 1.5

- Mac OS 10.5 (Leopard): (Firefox 2.0 is compatible)

I-OS and Android Devices

These devices are currently supported using the Blackboard Mobile App, available for free from your App Store or scan the code below:



To access Texas A&M University - Texarkana, there is an individual license fee of \$1.99 per year or \$5.99 lifetime. This fee gives you access to the university from all your (same platform) devices; it is not necessary to pay the fee for each device you own.