

# Saints, Sects, & Society

SOAN 232

SPRING 2019

TTh 11:00  
AM

Larsen 224

UNIVERSITY  
OF  
REDLANDS



Photo by Jim Spickard

## Course Description and Objectives

In this course, we explore contemporary religion from a sociological point of view.

Religion is a key part of every society on earth. From the Stone Age to the Space Age, religion has given people a sense of themselves and of their cosmos. It has held societies together and has torn them apart. It is both a source of meaning and a source of confusion, both to individuals and to groups!

Through lectures, readings, discussions, films, group research projects and field trips, we will attempt

to understand the structure of modern religious life, its recent changes, and the significance of those changes for society at large. In the process, you will be invited to:

- Appreciate religious perspectives other than your own
- See the effects of social organization on religious life
- Understand the role that religions and religious notions play in society at large
- Understand the different ways that sociologists approach religion (and religions)

### What's in this syllabus

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#### Resources:

**Course Website:** <http://SOAN232.CoolSociology.net>

#### Required texts:

- Meredith McGuire: Religion: The Social Context 5th edition (Waveland, 2002; ISBN: 978-1577665779)
- Mark Chaves: American Religion: Contemporary Trends, 2nd edition (Princeton, 2017; ISBN: 978-0691177564)
- One case study, to be assigned in class.

**Library Reserve Reading:** <http://library.redlands.edu/coursereserves>

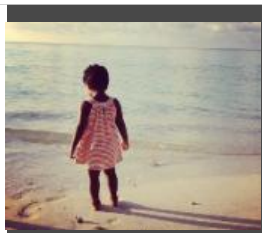
## how to take this course

It's not what you "get" in this course, it's how deep you go. People take GenEd courses for lots of reasons, usually variations on "it's required." Think about why someone has decided that learning this material might be essential to your college experience, and what that means for you personally.

It is entirely possible to do well in the class without being letting your new-found knowledge change the way you see the world. But it would be a shame.

– Tona Hangen

## How deep will you go?



Photos by Ibrahim Shihab, Rico Forgaard, & Andrew Love

## Course Activities

Attendance & Course Leadership (10%)

Minor Writing (10%)

- Religious Autobiography
- Weekly Blog Reflection

Book Presentations (in Groups) (10%)

Contemporary Issue Paper (10%)

Major Reports (30%)

- Two Congregation Visits
  - Written paper
  - Oral Report (3 min)
- Religious Specialist Interview
  - Written paper
  - Oral report (3 min)

Exams (30%)

- Midterm
- Final

**Your Instructor: Dr. Jim Spickard**

**Office: Larsen 232**

**Phone extension: x8713**

**email: [jim\\_spickard@redlands.edu](mailto:jim_spickard@redlands.edu)**

**Email is the best way to reach me**

**Office Hours: MW 3-5 and by appt**

**Reserve a 20-minute slot at [www.calendly.com/jim\\_spickard](http://www.calendly.com/jim_spickard)**

## Assignment Overview *(more details can be found at <http://SOAN232.coolsociology.net>)*

**Attendance:** You need to be in class and ready for learning each day. I expect class discussion to be lively, respectful, substantive, and that you will have done that day's assigned reading. Life happens, but you only get to have it happen twice before it hurts your grade. Show up.

**Course Leadership:** This course works best with student participation. Unlike television programs or other non-interactive learning situations, its success depends on you. Though I shall lead and structure the material, I want you to bring your own experiences, insights, and intelligence to bear on the course topic. You are all teachers as well as learners.

**College is not a spectator sport.**

### Minor Writing:

- **Before the second day of class** write a 2-page religious autobiography (about 500 words). Come ready to share some portion of that autobiography with the class. It would be wise to connect the autobiography to some of the ideas contained in the first chapter of McGuire's text.
- **By 8pm each Monday** post a 250-word reflection on our course blog. This essay should explore some aspect of the course reading, and should identify an issue in the reading that is suitable for class discussion. Bring a copy to class.

**Case Study Presentation:** Each student will be assigned to a group of 3-4, to read one of the case studies listed on the **course website**. Read the entire case study. Then meet outside of class to plan how you will teach that case study to the class. Each presentation should take about half of a class period. *Any group that simply divides up the chapters for its presentation gets an automatic "F".*

**Contemporary Issue Paper:** Students will each write a short paper (1500 words / six pages) on the role that religion plays in some contemporary controversy. There are many possibilities: religion in politics, religion and science, religion and sexuality, etc. **This involves outside research**. The paper should summarize the issue, describe some of the details, and indicate its significance both for religion and for society as a whole..

**Reports on Two Congregational Visits:** Students will visit two local religious congregations, from a tradition that is not their own. One should be relatively **denominational**. The other should be relatively **sectarian**. Attend and observe a major religious service, using your sociological eye to see what is going on. Write up your visit in about 1000 words and present a summary to the class in 3 minutes (3-5 slides).

**Religious Specialist Interview:** Students will interview a religious specialist from a tradition that is not their own. The topic of the interview will be the sense of personal meaning that this specialist gets from leading this religious group, and the reasons that this individual finds this particular group to be a congenial religious home. Please use the concepts you have learned so far in the course to deepen your conversation. Write up your conversation in about 1000 words and present a summary to the class in 3 minutes (3-5 slides)

**Exams:** Each exam will cover everything that we've learned to that point in the course.

**See the course website for resources and guides,** <sub>2</sub>

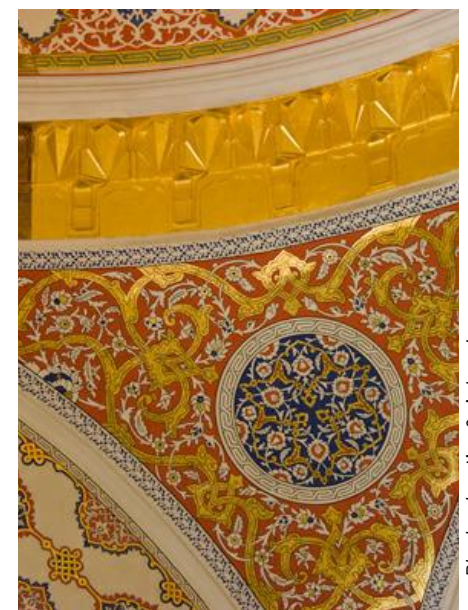
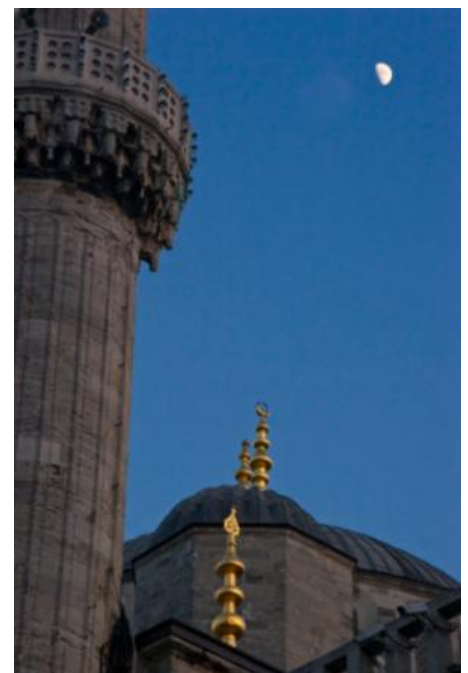
## Grading Standards

- A. You did everything I could possibly ask of you, and you did it extremely well. You worked very hard, learned a great deal, and showed conspicuous intelligence. The quality of your work was outstanding.
- B. You did all the work, and you did it well. You worked hard and learned a good deal. The quality of your work was good.
- C. You did all the work. It is clear that you learned a number of things, though those things may not hang together in a systematic and critical understanding of the course material. The quality of your work was adequate.
- D. You did most of the work, including all the major course requirements. You may have learned some things, but it is not clear that you learned anything important. The quality of your work was less than adequate.
- F. You have demonstrated an obstinate ignorance. You did not complete the course requirements. You have proved unwilling or unable to do college level work in this subject area.

## Schedule Overview

(for details, including due dates and reading schedule, see the [course website](#))

| Week         | Topic   |
|--------------|---|
| Jan 15,17    | Religion, Society, and the Individual         |
| Jan 22,24    | Meaning, Belonging, & Organizations           |
| Jan 29,31    | Overview of American Religion                 |
| Feb 5,7      | Official/Unofficial Religion / Varieties I    |
| Feb 12,14    | Varieties of Religion II & III                |
| Feb 19,21    | Local Religion / Religious Trends I           |
| Feb 25,27    | Religious Trends II / Midterm                 |
| Spring Break |   |
| Mar 12,14    | Six Narratives in the Sociology of Religion   |
| Mar 19,21    | Is Religion Disappearing or Resurgent?        |
| Mar 25,27    | Is Religion for Individuals or Communities?   |
| Apr 2,4      | Local Religion II / Is Religion Going Global? |
| Apr 9,11     | Being Religious / Investigating Trends        |
| Apr 15,17    | Evaluating the Sociology of Religion          |
| Finals Week  |   |



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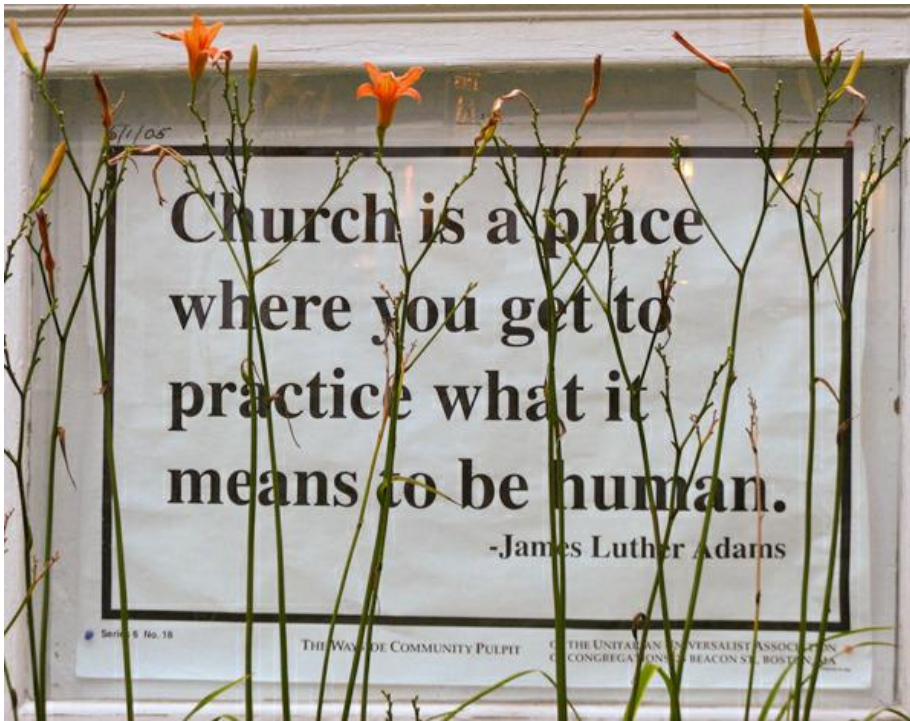


Photo by Jim Spickard

## The Fine Print

**Regarding plagiarism:** The short version is: **Do your own work.** You may borrow ideas from others, so long as you cite them properly and then extend or evaluate their analysis. You cannot clip and past text from the Internet into your papers and pass it off as your own. You cannot turn in a paper that someone else has written. Plagiarized work or exam cheating will automatically get a zero on the assignment and may cause you to fail the class. The University has an Academic Honesty Policy, which you can find in the latest **University Catalog**.

**Technology Use in Class:** Research has demonstrated convincingly that students who try to take notes electronically learn much less than do those who take notes by hand. Therefore, unless you have a documented accommodation, **do not use laptops, tablets, phones, etc. for note-taking.**

*Bring a paper notebook, have it on the desk in front of you, and use it.* You may bring your other equipment, but leave it in your book bag under the table. *Exception: a tablet, if you purchased an electronic textbook.* Unless you are a parent who needs to be available in emergencies, turn off your cell phones before you enter the classroom.

**Turning in assignments:** Different assignments get turned in in different ways.

1) Bring your discussion questions to class, on a full sheet of paper with your name on it. Write the questions on the board before class starts. Hand in the paper before you leave.

2) Post your weekly reflection and your religion-in-the-news pieces on the **class website blog**. Bring a paper copy of each to class, for discussion.

3) Submit your group presentation slide shows on the Homework page of the **Moodle site**. They are due before NOON on the day of your presentation.

4) Do the same for your 3-slide reports on your congregation visits.

5) Submit your write-ups of your two congregation visits and your specialist interview on the homework page at the course **Moodle site**. They are due before the start of class on their due date.

*Printer or computer problems are never an excuse for not having work submitted on time.*

**See the complete list of expectations on the course website.**

## Help & Resources

*If you are feeling lost or overwhelmed...*

### 1. Make an appointment with me

You are welcome to email me, or make an appointment to meet, ideally during my office hours. Many questions and issues can be easily resolved this way.

### 2. Use online resources

On the website, I've posted a series of guides to our assignments, links to useful information, and information about books you can read. Check it out!

### 3. Get to know the Reference Desk

Our library staff is eager to help guide your research and to orient you to our library's paper and online resources.

### 4. Use the Writing Center

The Writing Center is a free resource at any stage of the writing process, from getting started to revising drafts to polishing a final essay. You can make an appointment online at <https://redlands.mywconline.com/>

### 5. Visit the Academic Success Center

In some cases, students benefit from tutoring or one-on-one intervention. The Academic Success Center offers (free) tutoring in many subjects, and can also help you with general study, note-taking, or textbook reading strategies. They are located in Student Development Center the lower floor of the Armacost Library.

## Accommodations

If you have a documented learning (or other) issue, and you need a reasonable accommodation so you can learn effectively, please talk to me at the beginning of the semester. In almost every case, we can design something that will work.

I also make accommodations for parents of small children. See me.