

University of Waterloo
Department of Sociology and Legal Studies
Sociology 260/Religious Studies 262
Religion in Sociological Perspective
Fall 2014
Tues. & Thurs. 11:30 AM -12:50 pm, PAS 1229

Instructor and T.A. Information

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Course Description

This course will introduce you to the sociological study of religion. In that regard its primary focus is twofold: to survey how sociologists have understood the basic nature and functions of religion in society, and to survey the past, current, and likely future role of religion in Canadian society. Amongst other things we will be studying the most influential classical and contemporary theories of religion, the debate over how religion is defined, arguments over the process of secularization, and the nature and impact of various forms of religious diversity on Canada. The course gives special consideration to several recent topics of interest amongst sociologists, such as the views and practices of youth and how religious practices align with the larger social structural changes identified with “late modern” societies.

Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

In taking this course you will learn about:

- the role that religion has played, and is playing, in the lives of Canadians, and how developments in Canada contrast with what is happening in much of the rest of the world;
- some of the fundamental reasons why people are religious, and the important functions that religion has filled in all societies until recently;
- a variety of sociological theories of religion, and how to use these theories to interpret the role of religion in the world today
- the complex social factors shaping the fate of religion in the late modern world.

Required Texts

- Lorne L. Dawson and Joel Thiessen, *Sociology of Religion: A Canadian Perspective*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Readings placed on the LEARN site for the course

Course Requirements and Assessment

Note: Regular attendance will be required to succeed in this course since the test and examination will be based primarily on what is said and discussed in class.

<u>Assessment</u>	<u>Date of Evaluation</u>	<u>Weighting</u>
Test	Oct. 15	25%
Assignment #1	Oct. 22	20%
Assignment #2	Dec. 1	20%
Examination	Scheduled & in class	35%

The Test & Examination will consist of short answer and essay questions. The test will cover the course lectures and readings to that point, and the examination will be based on the material covered since the mid-term test.

Assignments:

At the end of each chapter in the textbook are a set of critical thinking questions. Choose one of the questions for each assignment and answer it. The questions chosen for Assignment #1 must be from chapters 1-4, and for Assignment #2 from chapters 5-8. Be as concise and clear as possible in your answer, citing ideas from the textbook as well as any other sources you think pertinent. These questions are designed to have you reflect further on the material and ideas discussed in the chapters, so be sure to convey your own point of view in formulating the answer or argument you provide. The assignments will be marked for their grammar and style as well as their content and logical adequacy.

Each assignment must have a proper title page, be at least 4 pages long, typed double spaced, and have an additional bibliography. Your paper should have 1" (2.54 cm) margins, and use a 12 point font. Pages must be numbered, and be sure to reference all your sources correctly (ASA style).

Late papers will lose 2% per day.

Course Outline

Week	Date	Topic	Readings
1	Sept. 15 & 17	Introduction to the Course and Topic	Video: <i>Faith & Doubt at Ground Zero</i> (Acts 1-3); David Brooks, "What Suffering Does," <i>New York Times</i>, April 8, 2014
2	Sept. 22 & 24	The View from Here: Religion in Canada and Beyond	Dawson & Thiessen, Chap. 1; Video: <i>Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero</i> (Acts 4 & 5)

3	Sept. 29 & Oct. 1	Defining Religion/Religion & the Law in Canada	Dawson & Thiessen, Chap. 2; Lori Beaman, "Aboriginal Spirituality and the Legal Construction of Freedom of Religion," <i>Journal of Church and State</i> 44 (1), 2002: 135-149.
4	Oct. 6	Dimensions of Religion	Dawson & Thiessen, Chap. 3; William C. James, "Dimorphs and Cobblers: Ways of Being Religious in Canada," <i>Studies in Religion</i> 28 (3), 1999: 275-291.
Note:	Oct. 8	Class cancelled	
5	Oct. 13	Dimensions of Religion cont'd	Wendy Griffin, "The Embodied Goddess: Feminist Witchcraft and Female Divinity," <i>Sociology of Religion</i> 56 (1), 1995: 35-48.
Note:	Oct. 15	Mid-term Test	
Note:	Oct. 20	Class cancelled	
6	Oct. 22	Classical Theories of Religion	Dawson and Thiessen, Chap. 4
7	Oct. 27 & 29	Classical & Contemporary Theories of Religion	Dawson & Thiessen, Chap. 4; Excerpt from Peter Berger, <i>The Sacred Canopy</i> (1967)
8	Nov. 3 & 5	The Debate over Secularization Theory	Dawson & Thiessen, Chap. 5 William A. Stahl, "One-Dimensional Rage: The Social Epistemology of the New Atheism and Fundamentalism," in Amarnath Amarasingam, ed., <i>Religion and the New Atheism: A Critical Appraisal</i> , 2010.

9	Nov. 10 & 12	Religion in Late Modernity	Dawson & Thiessen, Chap. 6
10	Nov. 17 & 19	The Religious Life of Contemporary Canadians	Dawson & Thiessen, Chap. 7
11	Nov. 24 & 26	The New Religious Diversity	Dawson & Thiessen, Chap. 8; Homa Hoodfar, "More Than Clothing: Veiling as an Adaptive Strategy," in Sajida Alvi et al., ed., <i>The Muslim Veil in North America: Issues and Debates</i> , 2003.
12	Dec. 1 & 3	[extra time – which we will likely need]	

Electronic Device Policy:

Please shut off cell phones during the class. Laptops are permitted only for the purpose of note-taking and other activities directly related to the course.

Cross-listed Course:

Please note that a cross-listed course will count in all respective averages no matter under which rubric it has been taken. For example, a PHIL/PSCI cross-list will count in a Philosophy major average, even if the course was taken under the Political Science rubric.

Student Policy Guidelines:

Academic Integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. See the [UWaterloo Academic Integrity Webpage \(https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/\)](https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/) and the [Arts Academic Integrity Office Webpage \(http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/current-undergraduates/academic-responsibility\)](http://arts.uwaterloo.ca/current-undergraduates/academic-responsibility) for more information.

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offences, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For

information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to [Policy 71, Student Discipline \(http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm\)](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm). For typical penalties check [Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties \(http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm\)](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm)..

Appeals: A student may appeal the finding and/or penalty in a decision made under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than regarding a petition) or Policy 71 - Student Discipline if a ground for an appeal can be established. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to [Policy 72, Student Appeals \(http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm\)](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm).

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:

The AccessAbility Services office, located in Needles Hall Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the AS office at the beginning of each academic term.