Religion and Society Syllabus
REL3140, Sec 007H
Spring 2014
Gordon Rule 2
Class Location: TUR 2305
Tuesdays: Periods 5-6 (11:45-1:40); Thursdays: Period 6 (12:50-1:40)
Department of Religion (352-392-1625)
University of Florida

Instructor: Susan K. Shaffer, PhD Student, Department of Religion
Email: shaffer3@ufl.edu
Office Location: 119 Anderson Hall
Office Hours (held at Pascal’s Coffee House): Thursdays 10:30-12:30 or by appointment

Course Description:
In this course we will grapple with the following questions: What is the relationship between religion and society? Does religion help with social cohesion or does it bring about social strife? Does religion act as an opiate of the masses, or does it inspire social change? Does religion reinforce racism, sexism and classism, or does it help break down discrimination? Does religion help humans evolutionarily to adapt to certain locations? Or, is religion maladaptive or a sheer by-product of evolution?

This course will provide a broad introduction to the study of religion as a social phenomenon. While the term “religion” is often associated with personal feeling and belief, in this class students will be asked to examine religion from the outside by exploring its connection to other aspects of cultural, economic and political life. While the focus will largely be in the West and the United States, we will also focus some on religion in indigenous societies.

Course Objectives:
• Develop familiarity with classic and contemporary sociological approaches to the study of religion
• Develop understanding about the relationship(s) between religion and social change
• Explore ways in which religion intersects with ethnic, racial and gender identities
• Explore ways in which religion addresses the environment and interspecies relationships
• Analyze the relationships between religion and human evolution
• Develop critical reading and writing skills.

Required Texts:


4. Additional readings posted on E-learning (Sakai)

**Course Requirements:**

1. **Participation – attendance, classroom discussion, and discussion posts (25% of final grade):** Grades lack context without community. Therefore, community is held at a high standard in this class and students are expected to participate accordingly by coming to class having read the material listed for that day, ready to ask questions and to participate in discussion. In addition, weekly discussion prompts will be designed to aid students in this endeavor, and will be provided via Sakai for most weeks of class. Students’ discussion posts should range between 100-300 words and be posted by Mondays at 5:00pm. Posts will not be given a weekly grade but will rather be considered in the cumulative assessment of a student’s overall participatory efforts. Further guidelines for discussion posts and interactions on the discussion board will be given in class. Failure to show up to class or to be actively engaged will result in a lowered grade. Students are allowed up to 3 hours of unexcused absence, though it is best to always inform the professor when you know you will not be present and explain why. Chronic or excessive tardiness will be considered an absence.

2. **Midterm Exam (25% of final grade)**

3. **Final Exam (25% of final grade)**

4. **Research Paper (25% of final grade):** This paper will be on a topic of the student’s choosing but must be related in some way to the discussion of religion and society. For example, students may choose to do a case study of the way religion has prohibited or inspired social change in a specific context, or a more thorough review of literature on a topic discussed briefly in class (for instance, secularization, civil religion, religion in civil rights, etc.). Other ideas are also welcome, and all ideas must be approved by the instructor by March 16. Papers should be **2000-2500 words** and should include at least 5 peer-reviewed or primary sources (NOTE: dictionaries and Wikipedia do NOT count as sources) citing appropriately and consistently in a standard citation style of your choice (**failure to cite properly could result in academic honesty issues, so familiarize yourself with the rules!**). The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student’s written assignments.
with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization. Papers are due on Friday March 28 and should be e-mailed to the instructor before class. Papers will be returned electronically with comments.

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-83</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>74-76</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>64-66</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60</td>
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Note: The degree-granting college may require a minimum grade of C in particular courses.

Policies, Rules, and Resources:
This course fulfills 2000 words toward the university writing requirement.

Gordon Rule:
The Writing Requirement (Gordon Rule) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

Course grades now have two components. To receive writing credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

1. **Handing in Assignments**: All papers should be e-mailed to the instructor (shaffer3@ufl.edu) by the due date. Assignments should be attached in a Word document. Please double-check that attachment works when sending.

2. **Late or Make-Up Assignments**: You may receive an extension on an essay assignment only in extraordinary circumstances and with prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down ½ grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

3. **Completion of All Assignments**: You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing any assignment or requirement.

4. **Attendance and Participation**: Class attendance is required. Do not register for this class if you cannot arrive on time. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day’s readings. Tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. After the first late arrival, the instructor reserves the right to mark you absent. The instructor will not provide notes or discuss material that has already been covered for students who arrive late, barring extraordinary circumstances (which do not include failing to find a parking place or sleeping in).
5. **Common Courtesy:** Use of laptops in this course is considered a privilege, not a right, and is restricted to note-taking, classroom-related activities. If you are caught browsing the web, using Facebook, e-mailing, playing games, etc. your privilege will be revoked for the rest of the course. The instructor may ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls during class will be asked to leave. A student who is asked to leave will be marked absent for the day. Please also plan accordingly and do not leave the room during class time unless it is an emergency. Those students who leave class for more than 10 minutes will be marked absent.

6. **Honor Code:** On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see [http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html](http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html). Any student(s) demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in any assignment for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. **Accommodation for Disabilities:** Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Please tell the instructor and teaching assistant at the beginning of the semester if you have a disability that requires accommodation (e.g., longer time for exams, note-takers, etc.).

8. **Counseling Resources:** Resources available on-campus for students include the following:
   a. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling;
   b. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling;
   c. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling;
   d. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

9. **Software Use:** All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1 - Religion as a Social Phenomenon**

**Tues 1/7:** Introduction to course and each other
Berger, “The Sacred Canopy” MME p 7-12

Week 2 - CLASSIC SOCIOLOGICAL DEFINITIONS OF RELIGION/FUNCTIONALISM
Tues 1/14: Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (selections) E-learning
Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System” E-learning (Lambek reader)
Thurs 1/16: Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America” E-learning (Lambek reader)

Week 3 - THEORIES OF SOCIAL CONFLICT/INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF RELIGION
Tues 1/21: Victor Turner, Mary Douglas, E-learning (Lambek reader)
Thurs 1/23: Weber, “Domination and Stratification” E-learning,

Week 4 - RELIGION AND CAPITALISM
Tues 1/28: Weber, selections from The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism-E-learning (Lambek reader)
Marx, selections-E-learning
Christian Smith and Robert Faris: “Socioeconomic Inequality in the American Religious System” MME pp. 125-134

Week 5 - RELIGION, POLITICS, AND SOCIAL CHANGE
Tues 2/4: Christian Smith: “Correcting a Curious Neglect, or Bringing Religion Back In” MME, pp. 338-345
Mary Patillo-McCoy: “Church Culture as a Strategy for Action” MME pp. 346-353
Micheal Taussig, “The Genesis of Capitalism amongst a South American Peasantry: Devil’s Labor and the Baptism of Money” E-learning (Lambek reader)
Thurs 2/6: Raymond J. DeMallie, “Lakota Ghost Dance: An Ethnohistorical Account” E-learning (Hackett reader)

Week 6 - RELIGION AND CIVIL RIGHTS
Tues 2/11: Marsh, God’s Long Summer, Intro, Conclusion, Afterward, and any additional 3 chapters in the book
Thurs 2/13: “Is Cross Burning a Form of Free Speech?” E-learning
http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/1211/p01s01-usju.html
Blake, “Why many Americans prefer their Sundays segregated” E-learning

Week 7 - RELIGION AND GENDER
Tues 2/18: Linda Woodhead, “Gendering Secularization Theory” MME pp. 96-100
Wendy Griffin, “The Embodied Goddess” MME p 109-118

**Thurs 2/20:** Mary Daly, “After the Death of God the Father” in *Womanspirit Rising*, pp. 53-62. *E-learning*
Edward H. Thompson, Jr. “Beneath the Status Characteristic: Gender Variations in Religiousness” *E-learning*

**Week 8 - RELIGION AND SEXUALITY**

**Tues 2/25:** James Hunter, “Culture Wars: The Challenge of Homosexuality” *MME* pp. 185-187
Laura R Olson and Wendy Cadge, “Talking about Homosexuality” *MME* pp. 188-202
Andrew K. T. Yip, “Dare to Differ” *MME* pp. 203-208

**Thurs 2/27:** Midterm Exam

**Week 9 – Spring Break!! Woohoo!! Have a great week!**

**Week 10 - RELIGION AND ANIMALS**

**Tues 3/11:** Kimberely Patton, “Caught with ourselves in the net of life and time’: Traditional Views of Animals in Religion” *E-learning*
Paul Waldau, “Seeing the Terrain We Walk: Features of the Contemporary Landscape of ‘Religion and Animals’” *E-learning*
**Thurs 3/12:** Jane Goodall, “The Dance of Awe” *E-learning*

**Week 11 – Religion and Animals - Continued**

3/20 - Last day to inform instructor or topic for research paper!

**Week 12 - RELIGION, VIOLENCE AND ETHNICITY AND SECULARIZATION (SOME READINGS DELETED FROM ORIGINAL SCHEDULE IN ORDER TO COMBINE TWO WEEKS INTO ONE)**

**Tues 3/25:** Bryan Wilson, “Secularization and its Discontents” *MME*, pp. 229-238
Thomas J. Badey, “The Role of Religion in International Terrorism” *MME* p 374-378
Mark Juergensmeyer, “Is Religion the Problem?” *MME* pp. 388-397

**Week 13 - RELIGION AND ENVIRONMENT**

**Tues 4/1:** Lynn White—“The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis” *E-learning*
Paul Waldau, “Pushing Environmental Justice to a Natural Limit” *E-learning*

Research Paper due

Week 14 - RELIGION AND EVOLUTION
Tues 4/8: David Sloan Wilson, Darwin’s Cathedral, Introduction, chpt 1
Thurs 4/10: David Sloan Wilson, Chapter 3

Week 15 -
Tues 4/15: David Sloan Wilson, chapters 4, 5, and 7
Thurs 4/17: Richard Dawkins, The God Delusion, chpt 5-E-learning
Discussion, course wrap-up

Week 16 -
Tues 4/22: Final Exam