

REL 4141, Fall 2013
RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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Course description

This course explores religion's role in both intentional social change (e.g., social movements) and other forms of cultural, economic, and political transformation. We will focus on some key questions such as the following: Is religion an anaesthetizing or motivating force in struggles for social change? What can religion contribute to modernization and democratization? What conditions help determine the social character and function of religion? What elements within a religious tradition help determine its social character and function? How do both weaker and more powerful members of society make use of religion? How does religion relate to other forces for or against social change?

Readings are heavy, and students will be expected to keep up with class assignments throughout the semester. Graduate students will have additional readings, to be determined at the beginning of the semester. Writing assignments will reflect on course readings and, for the final paper, only a small amount of additional reading.

Course Objectives and Goals

1. To become familiar with diverse approaches and debates in theory and methodology in the study of religion and society;
2. To learn about particular issues and traditions;
3. To improve students' ability to discuss and analyze theoretical claims and supporting arguments; and
4. To improve students' ability to express, in writing and orally, their own analytical arguments.

Policies and Rules

1. *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>. 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.

2. *Late or Make-Up Assignments*: You may take an exam early or receive an extension on an exam or 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. *Attendance and Participation*: Class attendance is required. Poor attendance will harm your course grade. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day's readings.

4. *Common Courtesy*: 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. You may take notes on a laptop computer, although the instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class.

5. *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.

6. *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.

7. *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.

Requirements and writing assignments

This class fulfills the **Gordon Rule** writing requirement (GR4) for undergraduates. You must complete at least 4000 words of writing during the semester. Please pay attention to your written work so that it fulfills the minimum word requirement.

Important: All written assignments should be handed in during class or left in my mailbox in 107 Anderson Hall. Under *no* circumstances should papers be left in my office (taped to the door, slid under the door, etc.).

1. Complete all required readings by the date assigned. Be prepared to spend time on these books. Read carefully, so that you are prepared to ask questions about and discuss the assigned reading in each class.

2. Participate actively in class discussions (10% of final grade).

3. First essay (undergraduates: 1500 words; graduates: 2000 words), due on Sept. 20 (30% of final grade)

4. Second essay (undergraduates: 1500 words; graduates: 2000 words), due October 28 (30% of final grade)
5. Third essay due (undergraduates: 1500 words; graduates: 2000 words), due November 26 (30% of final grade)

Required reading

The following required books are available at area bookstores and on reserve at Library West.

1. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Talcott Parsons translation
2. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Basic Books)
3. Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. R. Tucker (W. W. Norton & Co., various editions)
4. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Vintage, 1966).
5. Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Capitalism* (University of Chicago, 1985)
6. Richard Wood, *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America* (Chicago, 2002)
7. Roger Lancaster, *Thanks to God and the Revolution: Popular Religion in the New Nicaragua* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988)

The following articles are available on Sakai:

1. Robert Bellah, "American Civil Religion," from *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 168-189.
2. David Laitin, "Religion, Political Culture, and the Weberian Tradition." *World Politics* 30, no. 4 (July 1978): 563-592.
3. Anna L. Peterson, "Religious Narratives and Political Protest," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 27-44.

Graduate students only: In addition to the assignments listed above, graduate students will have additional readings and writing projects, to be assigned at the beginning of the semester.

Schedule of topics and assignments

Please note: Schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced in class and by email. Please check your ufl email regularly for class announcements. You are responsible for knowing about any changes that have been announced in assignments, etc.

Th 8/22 Introduction to class; no assigned reading

Part One: Weber and Weberians

Tu 8/27 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: Author's Introduction and Chapters 1-2

Th 8/29 Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, Ch. 3 and 4 A-B

Tu 9/3 Weber, Ch. 4 C-D and 5

Th 9/5 Geertz, *Islam Observed*, Chapters 1-2

Tu 9/10 Geertz, *Islam Observed*, Ch. 3-4

Th 9/12 Laitin, "Religion, Political Culture, and the Weberian Tradition"

Tu 9/17 Bellah, "American Civil Religion"

Th 9/19 * Grad students only meet *

Friday, 9/20 * First essay due *

Part Two: Marx and Marxians

Tu 9/24 Marx, "The German Ideology, Part I" (in *The Marx-Engels Reader*)

Th 9/26 Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" and "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right"

Tu 10/1 Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844"

Th 10/3 Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte"

Tu 10/8 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 17-76, 350-400

Th 10/10 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 711-832

Tu 10/15 Lancaster, *Thanks to God and the Revolution*, Prologue, Introduction, and Ch. 1-2

Th 10/17 Lancaster, *Thanks to God and the Revolution*, Ch. 3-4

Tu 10/22 Lancaster, *Thanks to God and the Revolution*, Ch. 5-7

Th 10/24 * Grad students only meet *

Mon 10/28 * Second essay due *

Part Three: Religion and Resistance

Tu 10/29 Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Ch. 1-2

Th 10/31 Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Ch. 3-4

Tu 11/5 Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Ch. 5-6

Th 11/7 Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance*, Ch 7-8

Tu 11/12 Wood, *Faith in Action*, Introduction and Ch. 1-2

Th 11/14 Wood, *Faith in Action*, Ch. 3-4

Tu 11/19 Wood, *Faith in Action*, Ch. 5-6

Th 11/21 Wood, *Faith in Action*, Ch. 7-8

Tu 11/26 Peterson, "Religious Narratives and Political Protest"
* Third essay due by 4:00 pm *

Th 11/28 No class - Thanksgiving

Tu 12/3 * Grad students only meet *