



REL 4141, Fall 2015
RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE
Tues. 4th period, Thurs. 4-5th periods
Matherly 14

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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 factors shape the social character and role of religion? How does religion relate to other forces for or against social change? And how do different theoretical frameworks help us understand all these different processes?

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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 ensure that your written work 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 due on Friday, September 26. 1500 words for undergraduates; 2000 words for grad students. 30% of final grade.
4. Second essay due on Wed., October 28. 1500 words for undergraduates: 1000 words; 2000 words for grad students. 30% of final grade.
5. Third essay due on Tues., December 1. 1500 words for undergraduates: 2000 for grad students. 30% of final grade. We will have discussions during the last two class sessions based on this essay.

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*

* **IMPORTANT:** Please purchase the Talcott Parsons translation

This book is the most important book by the influential German sociologist Max Weber – and possibly the most significant work on religion and social change ever. Weber analyzes the relationship between Calvinist Protestantism and the emergence of a capitalist social-economic order, highlighting unintended and sometimes paradoxical connections.

2. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Basic Books)

This compact book by influential anthropologist Clifford Geertz explores Islam's role in dramatic social changes over many centuries in two very different societies, Morocco and Indonesia. Geertz analyzes the ways the same religious tradition takes diverse forms, with sometimes contrasting consequences, in different cultures.

3. Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (W. W. Norton & Co.)

This anthology includes many of Marx's important works, including a number in which he develops his multi-faceted critique of religion. We will read several of the pieces in which Marx focuses most on religion, in order to understand both his critique of religion and its place in his larger theoretical approach.

4. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*

This is the most important book by E. P. Thompson, an influential English historian. He applies a Marxist theoretical perspective to understand the emergence of the distinctive attitudes, culture, practices, and institutions that make up the English working class in the 18th and 19th centuries. We will read sections that focus on religion's role in these developments.

5. Reynaldo Ileto, *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*

Ileto is a Filipino historian, who examines the ways that popular political movements in the 19th and early 20th centuries. He emphasizes the way that the Catholic ritual of the via crucis (ways of the cross) provided a model for practice and thinking about the sacrifices necessary for social change.

6. Rowan Ireland, *Kingdoms Come: Religion and Politics in Brazil*

Ireland, a sociologist, explores the political values and culture encouraged by three major religions in Brazil – progressive Catholicism, Pentecostal Protestantism, and African-based Candomblé. He argues that each religion provides resources for helping believers think critically about Brazilian politics and the possibilities of creating a more just and democratic society.

We will also read the following articles, which are available on the course website (on Canvas):

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.

This is a highly influential statement about the "civil religion" that has developed in US society, shaping political thinking about what our society values.

2. David Laitin, "Religion, Political Culture, and the Weberian Tradition." *World Politics* 30, no. 4 (July 1978): 563-592.

This review essay analyzes several different books about religion and social change from the perspective developed by Max Weber. It emphasizes Weber's concept of "practical religion" and the dynamic interplay between ideas, institutions, and historical context.

3. Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in Latin America*, Chapters 1-2, 8-14

Taussig, an anthropologist, analyzes the ways that Colombian farmers and Bolivian tin miners use the figure of the devil to try to influence their living and working conditions. We will read sections from this book, in which Taussig develops a Marxian analysis of religion's role in expressing and perhaps reinforcing workers' alienation.

GRADUATE STUDENTS!

Grad students will have additional readings, to be determined at the start of the semester. We will have grad-only meetings to discuss these readings on Sept. 24, Oct. 27, and Dec. 8.

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.

Tuesday 8/25 Introduction to class; no assigned reading

I. WEBER AND WEBERIANS

Thurs 8/27 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: Author's Introduction and Chapter 1

Tues 9/1 Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, Ch. 2-3

Thurs. 9/3 Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, Chapter 4

Tues. 9/8 Weber, *Protestant Ethic* Ch. 5

Th 9/10 Geertz, *Islam Observed*, Chapters 1-2

Tu 9/15 Geertz, *Islam Observed*, Ch. 3

Th 9/17 Geertz, *Islam Observed*, Ch. 5; Laitin, "Religion, Political Culture, and the Weberian Tradition"

Tu 9/22 Bellah, "American Civil Religion"

Th 9/24 * Grad students only meet *

Friday, Sept. 26: * First essay due by 4 pm in my mailbox in the Religion Department, 107 Anderson Hall *

II. MARX AND MARXISTS

- Tu 9/29 Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" and , "The German Ideology, Part I" (in *The Marx-Engels Reader*)
- Thurs 10/1 Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right" (in *The Marx-Engels Reader*)
- Tu 10/6 Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" (in *The Marx-Engels Reader*)
- Th 10/8 Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" (in *The Marx-Engels Reader*)
- Tu 10/13 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 17-76, 350-400
- Th 10/15 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 711-832
- Tu 10/20 Selections from Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in Latin America*, Ch. 1-2
- Th 10/22 Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, Ch. 8-14
- Tu 10/27 * Grad students only meet
- Wed. 10/28 * Second essay due, by 4:00 in my mailbox in 107 Anderson *

III. RELIGION AND RESISTANCE

- Th 10/29 Ileo, *Pasyon and Revolution*, Ch. 1-2
- Tu 11/3 Ileo, *Pasyon and Revolution*, Ch. 3
- Th 11/5 Ileo, *Pasyon and Revolution*, Ch. 4-5
- Tu 11/10 Ileo, *Pasyon and Revolution*, Ch. 6
- Th 11/12 Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, Ch. 1-2
- Tu 11/17 Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, Ch. 3-4
- Th 11/19 Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, Ch. 5-6
- Tu 11/24 Ireland, *Kingdoms Come*, Ch. 7-8
- Thurs. 11/26 Thanksgiving break – no class

Tu 12/1 Theorizing religion and social change: Group discussions/presentations
* Third essay due at the start of class *

Thurs. 12/3 Theorizing religion and social change: Group discussions/presentations

Tu 12/8 * Grad students only meet