



**OREL 4141/RLG 5195:
RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE
Spring 2023**

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Class schedule: Tu. 7th period/Th. 7-8th period in Matherly 108
Office Hours: Tu. 9th period (3-3:50) and Thurs. 5th (11:45-12:35)

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? We explore these in relation both to classic theorists of religion and social change, especially Weber and Marx. The last section of the class will examine contemporary studies. Students will write two short essays and a longer research paper, which will examine either a case study or a theoretical issue of their choosing. Students will present their research project with a poster or podcast during the final week of class.

POLICIES AND RULES

1. *Attendance and Participation:* Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies, found in the [online catalog](#). Please let me know about any planned absences (for religious holidays, athletic events, or other reasons) as soon as possible. For unplanned absences (due to illness or emergency), please let me know as soon as possible and provide documentation (e.g, doctor's note).
2. *Make-up policy:* I will arrange for a make-up or early in-class exam only with sufficient notice. If you do not receive an extension from the instructor, assignment will be marked down a half grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.
3. *Honor Code:* The [UF honor code](#) applies to this and all courses taken at UF: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, 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. 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 may result in judicial action and sanctions, as specified in the Student Conduct Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>).
4. *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.
5. *Counseling and Emergency Resources:* Please let me know if you need support facing challenges that affect your academic performance. There are many resources available for students, and I will be glad to help you get the assistance you need in order to thrive at UF. Some resources include:
 - 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.
 - e. For security issues, please contact the University Police Department: 392-1111, or 911 for general emergencies.
6. *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

Undergraduates: This class fulfills the University writing requirement (WR2). Undergraduates must complete at least 2000 words of writing during the semester, which will be evaluated on the basis of content as well as writing mechanics and style.

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. There will be unannounced reading quizzes during the semester to check participation and engagement. 10% of final grade.
3. First essay. 750-1000 words for undergraduates; 1500 words for grad students. Due by midnight on Sunday, **Feb. 5**. 25% of final grade for undergrads, 20% for grad students.
4. Second essay. 750-1000 words for undergraduates; 1500 words for grad students. Due by midnight on Sunday, **March 12**. 25% of final grade for undergrads, 20% for grad students. *CURE students will not do this assignment.*
5. Final research project. 1500 words for undergraduates, 4000 words for graduates. CURE students will follow the guidelines for the *Journal of Undergraduate Research*. The research paper will be on a topic of students' choosing, Due by midnight on **April 30**. 30% of final grade for undergrads, 40% for grad students. *You must submit your topic by April 2.*
6. Class presentation, based on final research project. You must create a poster or podcast reflecting the highlights of your project. This is due by midnight on **April 19**. 10% of final grade. This can be a group project; please consult with instructor if you would like to do the presentation as part of a small group. This will require coordination of your final research projects.

REQUIRED READING

The following required books are available at the UF bookstore and on reserve at Library West.

Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. There are various editions; please purchase the Talcott Parson's translation

Karl Marx, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (W. W. Norton & Co., 1978)

E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin, 1963) (not required for CURE students)

Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Basic Books, 1973) (not required for CURE students)

All other course readings will be available on the course Canvas site.

CURE STUDENTS: Please see separate syllabus for different assignments and schedule following the first two modules.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

Grad students enrolled in RLG5143 will complete a longer research paper connected to their presentation topic. Details will be provided separately.

Grad students will also have to complete additional readings, including those listed below and others to be determined at the start of the semester. We will have graduate-only meetings to discuss these readings on dates TBD.

Feb.: Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* (Chicago, 1985).

March: Judith Butler, Jurgen Habermas, Charles Taylor, and Cornel West, *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (Columbia, 2011).

April: TBD (Students' choice)

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 UF email regularly for class announcements. You are responsible for knowing about any changes that have been announced regarding assignments, class meetings, etc.

Tuesday 1/10 Introduction to the class

MODULE I. WEBER

Thurs 1/12 Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: Author's Introduction and Chapter 1

Tues 1/17 Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, Ch. 2-3

Thurs. 1/19 Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, Chapter 4-5

MODULE II. MARX

Tues. 1/24 Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" and "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction"

Th 1/26 Marx, "The German Ideology, Part I"

Tu 1/31 Marx, "On the Jewish Question"

Th 2/2 Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844"

Sun 2/5 First essay due by midnight

MODULE III. OTHER THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON RELIGION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Tu 2/7 CURE students meet with instructor; other students use the time to read Geertz, *Islam Observed*

Th 2/9 Geertz, *Islam Observed*, all

Tu 2/14 David Laitin, "Religion, Political Culture, and the Weberian Tradition." *World Politics* 1978

Th 2/16 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 17-76, 350-400

Tu 2/21 Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 711-832

Th 2/23 Jean-Pierre Reed, "Religion as Custom and Political Resistance: An Unorthodox Interpretation of EP Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*." *Critical Sociology* 39, no. 2 (2011): 239-258.

Tu 2/28 Dwight B. Billings, "Religion as Opposition: A Gramscian Analysis." *American Journal of Sociology* 96, No. 1 (Jul., 1990), pp. 1-31.

Th. 3/2 Daniel Levine and David Stoll, "Religious Change, Empowerment, and Power." *Journal of Iberian and Latin American Research* (Dec 1995).

Tu 3/7 Anna Peterson, "Religious Narrative and Political Protest." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), pp. 27-44.

Th 3/9 Jeffrey Rubin, David Smilde, and Benjamin Junge "Lived Religion and Lived Citizenship in Latin America's Zones of Crisis." *Latin American Research Review* 49 (2014), pp. 7-26.

Sun. 3/12 Second essay due by midnight

Week of March 13: Spring Break, no class

MODULE IV. CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDIES

- Tu 3/21 Ashley A. Baker and Sarah R. Brauner-Otto, "My Friend is Gay, But... The Effects of Social Contact on Christian Evangelicals' Beliefs About Gays and Lesbians." *Review of Religious Research* 57, No. 2 (June 2015), pp. 239-268.
- Th 3/23 Sophie Bjork-James, "Christian Nationalism and LGBTQ Structural Violence in the United States." *Journal of Religion and Violence* Vol. 7, No. 3 (2019), pp. 278-302.
- Tu 3/28 Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "The Post-9/11 Hijab as Icon" NPR, ["In Iran, Women are Protesting the Hijab..."](#)
- Th 3/30 Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival." *Cultural Anthropology* 16, No. 2 (May, 2001), pp. 202-236.
- Sunday 4/2 Topics due for final paper**
- Tu 4/4 Instructor out of town for a conference
- Th 4/6 Instructor out of town for a conference
- Tu 4/11 Dwight B. Billings and Will Samson, "Evangelical Christians and the Environment: 'Christians for the Mountains' and the Appalachian Movement against Mountaintop Removal Coal Mining." *Worldviews* 16, No. 1 (2012), pp. 1-29.
- Th 4/13 David C. Barker and David H. Bearce, "End-Times Theology, the Shadow of the Future, and Public Resistance to Addressing Global Climate Change." *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (June 2013), pp. 267-279.
- Tu 4/18 Wendy Cadge and Mary Ellen Konieczny, "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Significance of Religion and Spirituality in Secular Organizations." *Sociology of Religion* 75, No. 4 (Winter 2014), pp. 551-563.

V. PRESENTATIONS

- W 4/19 Posters or podcasts due by midnight**
- Th 4/20 Student presentations
- Tu 4/25 Student presentations
- Sun. 4/30 **Final papers due by midnight**

