

**THEOLOGY / SOCIOLOGY 344: RELIGION AT THE CROSSROADS,
SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES PAST & PRESENT
Boston College, Fall 2006**

Course Information	Instructor: Michael Agliardo, SJ
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Classroom: Fulton Hall 425	(617) 552-4645 (office), 552-8218 (residence)
Class time: Tuesday, Thursday 9:00-10:30 AM	Office: McGuinn Hall 519B
Section: 01 Exam group: 09	Office hours: Wednesday 1:30 - 3:30 PM, Thursday 1:00 - 2:45, and by appointment
Course website: Please consult your WebCT	

Course Overview and Goals

So many developments in society today have come about in defiance of all prediction. Technical change and scientific discoveries that no one had anticipated continue to transform our world. The social world, too, has evolved in ways few would have predicted. A few decades ago overpopulation was seen as a dire threat, while today demographic decline is a problem in an ever-expanding number of countries. Representatives of tribal cultures once consigned to the sidelines of history now plead their cause in cyberspace and advance their struggle to take their place alongside high-tech superpowers in the global village. And religion, too, has defied all predictions.

Two centuries ago, many social thinkers thought that religion was incompatible with modernity and would soon pass from the social scene. Indeed, in the nineteenth century Europe many a campaign was waged to hasten the process. Yet at the same time religious missionaries from Europe evangelized the globe and renewed religious life at home, and America, the most "modern" of nations, was experiencing a religious revolution of its own. In the twentieth century a series of iron-fisted regimes from the Third Reich to Moscow and from China to Mexico attempted to subdue or even extinguish religious faith. Those regimes are now gone or have been forced to accommodate religion.

In American society today, religion can seem utterly prosaic, a crashing bore, yet suddenly ignite passionate pros and cons. In one breath religion is critiqued as a set of assumptions lying dormant and irrelevant; in the next it is charged with inspiring "culture wars". Precisely because the religious groups that once dominated society have lost their dominance, new religious groups are springing up. In America by mid-twentieth century, Protestant hegemony had given way to the triumvirate of Protestant, Catholic, and Jew; and today a far wider array of traditions claim legitimacy and the limelight. What from one perspective looks like decline, from another seems the occasion for religious opportunity. Some observers of the religious scene argue that non-traditional religion is standard fare for "Generation X", while others note that pious traditions that seemed to have died out a generation ago are making a comeback among today's "new faithful".

In order to discuss these developments intelligently and sort out all the issues, this course will provide an introductory review of the sociology of religion since its founding in the early nineteenth century. It will also chart important religious changes during the same era.

In our study, one of the first things we note is that all this talk about religion is itself a strange phenomenon. In pre-modern Europe people rarely thought about "religion". They did and said many things that we would consider religious, but those things were so integrated into the whole fabric of life that creating a separate category for them, "religion", did not seem meaningful or relevant.

However, as the early modern period opened, differences among Christians broke out regarding how to live their Christian faith; then rulers made decisions about which of these differences to enforce. Not long after, European explorers encountered profound differences in the cultures of other peoples they met, and this led Europeans to think more deeply about religion as a category. Finally, throughout Europe a whole range of institutions from government ministries to schools to the arts asserted their independence from Church control. They established various "secular" spheres alongside the sphere of "religion".

Our understanding of religion was shaped by these processes which focused intense scrutiny on religion and separated it out from the rest of life. Western social scientists were then faced with the task of making sense of this thing called "religion".

Over the course of the semester we consider theories which arose in the wake of the Enlightenment critique of religion, anthropological reflections occasioned by nineteenth century European contact with other cultures, sociological theories prompted by the breakdown of traditional culture in Europe, and the great syntheses of Max Weber, who examined the role of religion in shaping Western civilization and the other widespread civilizations of the world. We look at other classical ideas about religion as a cultural system or worldview, and characteristic American forms of religious expression at mid-century. We review religious philosophy crafted as a response to the challenges of modernity and popular religious practices which seem completely indifferent. During the 1960s, a series of "cultural revolutions" of sorts shook much of the globe, and whereas in the past religion often had been that component of culture which shaped social change, in these developments it played a marginal role or merely struggled to keep up. In our own day we continue to debate whether religion is or should be a major player in the public life of a modern society. Topics we consider include secularization, cultural disestablishment, pluralism, religion in the public sphere, and religion in today's "postmodern" context.

Our goals will be:

- 1) to understand key concepts in the development of the sociology of religion;
- 2) to place these concepts in their historical context;
- 3) to understand the role, or roles, of religion in the larger culture of a society;
- 4) to examine how religion has responded to changes in modern society, especially in America;
- 5) to take stock of religious trends in our society today.

Texts for Purchase and Course Reserves

Assignments for this course entail your reading significant parts of the following books. They are available for purchase at the Boston College bookstore under "required texts":

- Berger, Peter L. 1990. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*.
Casanova, José. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*.
Weber, Max. 1998 [1904-05]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Several of the books from which readings have been taken have been made available at the Reserve Desk in O'Neill Library. In addition to the above Course texts, the reserve list includes the following:

- Albanese, Catherine. 2006. *America: Religions and Religion*.
Cox, Harvey. 1965. *The Secular City*.
Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark. 2005. *The Churching of America, 1776-2005*.
Herberg, Will. 1960. *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*.
Pals, Daniel L. 1996. *Seven Theories of Religion*.
Smith, Christian. 2005. *Soul Searching*.
Weber, Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*.

See "Course Bibliography" (toward the end of this document) for complete bibliographic information on all course readings.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

"Course text" refers to a book available for purchase from the Boston College Bookstore.

"eText" refers to a reading available on the "Readings" webpage of the course website, which you can access via your WebCT.

"ERS" refers to the Encyclopedia of Religion and Society, published online by the American Association for the Sociology of Religion. It is available at <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/ency/index.html>.

See "Course Bibliography" (toward the end of this document) for complete bibliographic information on the readings in this outline. Note: Be sure to use the format in the bibliography (or a similar recognized format) for citations you include in your papers.

9/5 Introduction & overview

- Albanese, "Religion and boundaries" (from *America: Religions and Religion*). eText.
Evans-Pritchard, "Nuer symbolism" (from *Nuer Religion*). eText.

9/7 The Enlightenment & the new Science

- Comte, "On the Three States of Social Evolution" (from *The Positive Philosophy*). eText. (optional)
Marx, "Selections on religion" (from "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law", "Theses on Feuerbach", and "The Germans Ideology"). eText.
See ERS entries on Comte, Marx, Feuerbach.

9/12 Empire and anthropology

- Pals, "Animism and Magic: Tylor & Frazer" (book chapter). eText.
Smith, excerpts on religion and community life (from *The Religion of the Semites*). eText.
See ERS entries on Totemism, Anthropology of Religion, Tylor, Frazer, (W. Robertson) Smith.

9/14 Religion and social solidarity

- Tönnies, "On *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*" (from *Community & Society*). eText.
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Durkheim, "On Mechanical and Organic Solidarity" (from *Division of Labor in Society*) and "On society as a reality sui generis" (selections from various works). eTexts
See ERS entry on Durkheim.

9/19 Religion as social solidarity

Durkheim, Selections from *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. eText.

9/21 Ideal and material interests, and religious dynamics

Weber, Selections from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Course text.
See ERS entries on Weber, Charisma, Protestant Ethic Thesis.

9/26 Civilizational dynamics, rationalization, and modernization

Weber, "Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions". eText.

9/28 Religious formations

Troeltsch, "Church and Sect" (from *The Social Teaching of Christian Churches*). eText.
Niebuhr, "On the 'denomination' " (from *Social Sources of Denominationalism*). eText.
See ERS entries on Troeltsch, Church-Sect Theory.

10/3 [Option A1] Further Reflection on Church, Sect, and Religious Formations

Johnson, "On Church and Sect" (article). eText.
Stark & Bainbridge, "Of Churches, Sects, and Cults" (book chapter). eText.
See ERS entries on (Benton) Johnson, Eschatology.

10/3 [Option A2] Religious experience

Otto, "The Holy" (from *The Idea of the Holy*). eText.
James, selections from *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. eText.
See ERS entries on Otto, James.

10/5 Religion and culture

Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System" (from anthology). eText.
See ERS entries on Parsons, Geertz.

10/10 Religion as sacred canopy

Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, chapters 1, 2, and 5 only. Course text.
See ERS entry on Berger.

10/12 The Americanization of faith and American Civil religion

Herberg, "The Religion of Americans and American Religion" (book chapter). eText.
Bellah, "Civil Religion in America" (from anthology). eText.
See ERS entries on Herberg, American Religion, Bellah, Civil Religion.

➔ First unit review / critical essay due on 10/17.

10/17 Popular religion

Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street*, chapters 2 & 3. eText.

10/19 Existential theology

Rahner, "Theology & human existence" (from *Foundations of Christian Faith*). eText.
Dych (on Rahner), "Theology in a New Key" (from anthology). eText.
Tillich, "Faith as Ultimate Concern" (from *Dynamics of Faith*). eText.
See ERS entries on Tillich, Buber.

10/24 Midterm Exam

10/26 Secularization

Cox, *The Secular City*, chapters 1 & 3 required, chapters 5, 10, 11 optional. eText.
Stackhouse, "Today's City: Threat or Promise" (from anthology). eText.
West, "What It Means to Be Secular" (from anthology). eText.
Wilson, "Secularization and its Discontents" (book chapter). eText. (optional)
See ERS entries on Secularization, Dobbelaere, Wilson.

10/31 Cultural revolution, the "Third Disestablishment", and post-denominationalism

Wuthnow, "The Declining Significance of Denominationalism" (book chapter). eText.
Hammond, "Process of Disestablishment" & "A 3rd Disestablishment?" (book chapters). eText.
See ERS entries on Hammond, Wuthnow.

11/2 The 1960s and the Baby Boomer generation

Roof, "The Making of a Quest Culture" (book chapter). eText.
See ERS entry on Roof.

11/7 Religious Diversity and Pluralism

Eck, "Introduction to New America" & "From Many, One" (book chapters). eText
See ERS entry on Pluralism.

➔ *Prospectus for Course Essay due 11/9.*

11/9 Secularization reconsidered

Casanova, "Secularization, Enlightenment, and Modern Religion" (chapter 1). Course text.
Berger, "The Desecularization of the World " (from anthology). eText.
Bruce, "Curious Case of the Unnecessary Recantation" (from anthology). eText (optional).
Davie, "The Persistence of ... Religion in Modern Europe" (from anthology). eText (optional).
See ERS entry on the Sacred.

11/14 Religious entrepreneurs

Finke & Stark, "The Upstart Sects Win America, 1776-1850" (book chapter). eText.
See ERS entry on Warner.

11/16 Evangelicals, fundamentalists, conservative upsurge

Johnstone, "Religious Fundamentalism". eText.
Shibley, "Contemporary Evangelicals: Born-Again and World Affirming". eText.
Kelley, "Why Conservative Churches Are Still Growing". eText. (optional)
See ERS entries on Evangelicalism, Fundamentalism.

11/21 The Tocquevillian tradition

De Tocqueville, selections from *Democracy in America*. eText.
Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart*, chapter 9 required, chapters 1 & 2 optional. eText
See ERS entries on Tocqueville, Politics and Religion.

11/28 Public religion

Casanova, "Private and Public Religions" & "Catholicism in the United States: From Private to Public Denomination" (chapters 2 & 7). Course text.

11/30 [Option B1] Culture Wars

Hunter, "Cultural Conflict in America" & Competing Moral Visions. eText.
Smith and others, "The Myth of Culture Wars" (from *Culture War Debates*). eText.

11/30 [Option B2] Postmodern religion

Heelas, "Introduction" and "Evidence for Spiritual Revolution" (book chapters). eText.
Bauman, "Postmodern Religion?" (from anthology). eText. (optional)

12/5 [Option C1] Generation X, Y, Z

Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith*, chapters 1 & 3 only. eText.
OR Carroll, *The New Faithful*, chapters 1 & 9 only. eText

12/5 [Option C2] Kids these days...

Smith, "God, Religion, Whatever" (book chapter). eText.
OR Porterfield, "East University" (book chapter). eText.

➔ *Second unit review / critical essay due 12/7.*

12/7 Course conclusion: What is religion and why does it have the social impact it does?

12/12 Tuesday, 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon: Final exam (exam group 09)

➔ *Course essay due Saturday 12/16.*

About the Readings and Class Participation

The course outline indicates which selections you are asked to prepare *prior to coming to class* each day. During class we will discuss the readings. Many of our readings are selections from larger works, so during class I may outline the larger work. I may also comment on how our readings relate to the overall project and concerns of the author. And I will locate our readings in their historical context.

Our goal will be not only to understand the readings, but also to gain some critical perspective on the concepts and analyses they provide. That means being able to go beyond the written text itself. In other words, the answers are not "in the book" somewhere. With that in mind, you cannot succeed in this class if you fail to attend and participate in class. That is where this course takes place. We do this show live.

In class, I will solicit your questions and feedback concerning the readings. I will also ask questions of the class. Sometimes I will choose a person who has raised his or her hand in response to a question. Sometimes I will choose my "volunteers" at random. This interaction will help me gauge what made sense, what needs to be stressed more, and so forth. For your part, please come to class having done the reading for that day.

To get the most out of the reading, do not simply do the reading and arrive at class without having begun to pull it together. Step back and begin to think through the points the author(s) made: What were the readings about? What made sense? What questions do you have? How might this relate to previous readings or to themes we are building in the course? Do you see contradictions within a given argument or claim, or with previous readings? The more you take active command of the readings early on, the less time you will have to put in going back to review.

After each class, I will come up with three or four summary questions that get at the main concepts of the unit. These summary questions will either refer back to the material we covered and our class discussions, or they will build on that material and point you to further relevant considerations. The midterm and the final will be based on these questions.

Class participation will factor into your grade. (See "Grading Policy" below.) Attendance, contribution to class discussion, and performance on quizzes will constitute the basis of this part of your grade.

If something beyond your control arises, and you cannot attend class, I do allow for a you to gain a sort of make-up credit. One way to do this is to do the reading for a missed class and review another student's class notes, then come in to see me during office hours to go over things. Another possibility would be to do the reading and notes review, then write up answers to the summary questions for the missed class.

Written Assignments

The written assignments for this course are designed to give you the opportunity to work with the readings and meet the course goals of the as outlined above. You are asked to write two unit reviews and a course essay.

Unit Reviews

Approximate length: 5 pages, 1200 to 1500 words.

First unit review / critical essay due Tuesday 10/17

Second unit review / critical essay due Thursday 12/7

You will be asked to write two unit reviews, where a "unit" is the assigned reading for a particular class. For each unit review you, you will choose which set of readings to write up. Prepare a concise overview of the readings of a given unit, indicate why these readings are significant, and integrate your reflections on the summary questions for that unit. Taking an in-depth look at one unit should prove a helpful exercise as you think through the material of the other units, as well.

In addition, I will try to coordinate assignment of the topics so that each unit in the course outline is covered by at least one student. Then during preparation for the midterm and final, students who so desire

will be able to share resources in a collaborative manner. For example, we can set up an optional review session, then each participant can prepare a brief write up and presentation of the unit he or she chose to write up for his or her unit review.

Please take the time to plan your essays well. They are short assignments. That means you only have a brief space in which to construct a thoughtful response, and one which incorporates as much reference to the readings and lectures as you can manage.

Course Essay

Approximate length: 10 pages, 2500 to 3000 words.

Prospectus for Course Essay due Thursday 11/2.

Course Essay due Saturday 12/16.

The purpose of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to reflect more broadly on the themes raised in this course and to integrate your thinking on the units we cover.

One approach would be to take an important theme and trace it through several units, then add your own reflections. Another would be to take an event in contemporary society and examine it using perspectives from a range of our readings.

During the week following the midterm you will be asked to provide a one-paragraph prospectus of your course essay. You are also welcome to submit a preliminary draft of your essay or meet with me to discuss it. The final draft of your essay will be due the Monday following the last week of class.

Mode of Submission and Extensions

Please submit your assignments to me by email. If I have them in electronic form, I can insert comments and make editorial suggestions using Microsoft Word in "Document Review" mode. When you get the assignment back, also electronically, you will (ideally) be able to track my suggestions and comments.

Using Microsoft Word I can open documents in most common formats. However, if you do not have compatible software, you may not be able to track my responses very conveniently. In that case, let me know, and either I will convert my response to an appropriate format, or as a last resort I will give you a hard copy with my suggestions and comments (and your grade, of course).

Your assignments are due by *midnight* of the due date. If you need an extension, please email me by *noon* of the due date. Let me know in brief what the problem is *and when you expect to complete the assignment*. Generally, I am happy to grant an extension for a day or two, especially if that does not involve pushing beyond the meeting time of the next class. Longer extensions are not as easily arranged. I try to have all the papers back to students within a class or two so that I can make a few general comments about how people did. Late papers delay that process. Also, I am concerned about students falling behind in the course.

Normally, for each *unexcused* day an assignment is late, it will lose one-half point. For a ten-point assignment that would constitute 5% of the grade for that assignment.

The Quality of Your Work

Please write your assignments with care. I will review them accordingly. Be sure to present your ideas clearly. For example, if you find yourself trying to include ten different ideas into the same sentence, why not try ten smaller sentences instead? Finally, be sure to proofread and polish your work.

Turning in slapdash, poorly executed work is not acceptable in the business world, and it certainly is not acceptable at the university. To benefit from having your writing reviewed, turn in the best work you can.

Exams

Midterm exam: Tuesday, 10/ 24 during class hour

Final exam: Tuesday, 12/12 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon

There will be a midterm and a final exam. The midterm will take place during class on Tuesday, October 24th, and the final will take place from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon on Tuesday, December 12th. Short of a documented medical or other exigency, students are required to be present for the midterm and final exams as scheduled. If an "exigency" arises which a student can anticipate, he or she must to take the exam ***prior to the scheduled time***, not after.

As noted above (Written Assignments: Unit reviews), the unit review essays are designed to help you prepare for the exams. A week or so before each exam, I will distribute an exam preview. It will indicate the format of the exam and the units for which you are responsible. If members of the class would like to organize a voluntary review session, I will help facilitate that process.

For the midterm you will be asked to write responses to two of the unit summary questions and a longer response to a question that will require you to integrate the material of several units. (See "About the Readings and Class Participation" above for more information about the unit summary questions.) In each case you will be given options from which to choose. The final will be similar to the midterm but will also include a longer integrative essay question.

The point of the exams is not simply to derive your grade. That certainly is part of it. However, your exams also have an important pedagogical dimension. In other words, the whole process of preparing for and taking the exams should serve the larger educational goals of this course.

To do well on the exams, view the exam questions as ***opportunities***. In other words, do not think in terms of minimum requirements—what is the minimum you can write to provide an answer on a purely literal level? Instead, think of exam questions as openings for showing what you know. I construct exam questions so that they provide entree for commenting on issues that are central to the course, so you should find considerable leeway for writing an intelligent response that draws on what you have learned.

Again, there is a larger goal that even grades themselves are supposed to serve, and that is your education. So ideally, you will learn something from taking the exams in this course.

Grading Policy

I will not distribute grades in this course on a curve. In other words, there are no predetermined number of A's, B's, C's, and so forth. I am happy to give out as many A's as people earn.

In order to facilitate your accomplishing as much as you can in this course, I try to make the course expectations and the basis of your grade clear. I also try to make clear the concrete steps you can take to do well. If my expectations or your task are not clear, please raise the matter in class, or come in to see me during office hours.

You will be graded out of 100 points, distributed as follows:

First unit review	10
Second unit review	10
Course essay	15
Midterm exam	20
Class participation and quizzes	15
Final exam	30

Your points earn the following grade equivalents:

95 - 100	= A	87 - 89	= B+	77 - 79	= C+	67 - 69	= D+
90 - 94	= A-	84 - 86	= B	74 - 76	= C	65 - 66	= D
		80 - 83	= B-	70 - 73	= C-	below 65	= F

If you receive a grade on an assignment or exam that you believe does not give you full credit, then you are welcome to drop me a note or come in to see me. In order to receive the credit you think you deserve, simply show me that what you have produced is worth more credit.

Of course, even when each assignment is graded appropriately, there are times when the numbers do not add up to the full story. I will try to have your grades ready as soon after the final exam as I can. If for some reason you believe your final grade for the course is not appropriate, then, again, be prepared to make your case. I will take into account what you have to say and, if warranted, will make an adjustment.

Academic Integrity

In brief, academic integrity means you must cite your sources and not misrepresent someone else's work as your own. Please review and be aware of the university standards for plagiarism and academic integrity. University policy can be found at www.bc.edu/integrity.

The university is a community of learning. Any community is based on trust. Students who do not take that trust seriously will be asked to leave this course.

THEOLOGY / SOCIOLOGY 344: RELIGION AT THE CROSSROADS

Course Bibliography

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