

**Instructor: Professor Manfred B. Steger**

**Meeting Time & Place: Tuesday & Thursday, 12:00 – 1:15 pm; WEB 112**

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## **SOC 455: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION Fall 2016: RELIGION IN GLOBAL SOCIETY**

### **Course Description and Structure**

This course invites students to engage in the study of the significance and impact of major world religions in contemporary societies. Critical of the modernist assumption that societies will become ever more secular, we instead proceed from the premise that the social roles and functions of religion are clearly evident (and relevant) in the global age. Indeed, people around the world find their familiar social arrangements greatly unsettled and destabilized by the forces of globalization. Social change has been occurring at a unprecedented and rapid pace, which has led to a number of “global problems” or “global crises” including global climate change, growing disparities in wealth and wellbeing, new pandemics, and global terrorism. This course explores how major faith traditions interact with the dynamics of the emerging global social order. The influential religious perspectives we will encounter in this class provide us with an appreciation of concrete social issues and problems confronting us in the era of globalization.

Starting with a survey of the major themes in the sociology of religion offered by the three major classical sociological thinkers—Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber—we will link their influential ideas to our overview of the central tenets and perspectives of the principal world religions. We will continue with a discussion of the significance of these religious ideas for main sociological themes such as social change, identity construction, stratification, social movements, modernity, race & multiculturalism, gender, and power. The final part of the course will be explicitly structured around two topics: religion & social violence, and religion & globalization. In this context, we will also discuss some analytical perspectives and methodological approaches to assess the role of religion in the global community. Indeed, a better understanding of the sociology of religion can provide invaluable insights into the most pressing social issues and problems of our global age.

### **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

The SLOs for this course are closely aligned with the Mānoa Institutional Learning Objectives for undergraduate students as well as the Sociology Department’s posted Student learning outcomes for sociology majors. These can be found here: <http://www.sociology.hawaii.edu/undergraduate/index.html#slo>

The four major SLOs of this course are:

- *To understand and evaluate major themes in the sociology of religion offered by classical sociological thinkers;*
- *To acquire the knowledge and skill to analyze the relevance of major religious ideas for crucial sociological themes such as social change, identity construction, stratification, social movements, modernity, race, and multiculturalism with an critical eye toward the workings of asymmetrical power relations in contemporary societies;*
- *To appreciate the crucial role of globalization in the spread and reception of religious ideas and practices in contemporary societies;*
- *To produce written work and make oral presentations that demonstrate a critical understanding of the roles and functions of religion in contemporary societies.*

**Readings (required books):**

The following paperback books are available for purchase in the U.H. bookstore. Feel free to get cheaper e-book versions of these books (if available). **Do not use different editions** since we'll need to use the same textual references in class.

1) Lester R. Kurtz, *God in the Global Village: The World's Religions in Sociological Perspective*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Sage Publications, 2015). ISBN: 978-1483374123.

2) Mark Juergensmeyer, *God in the Tumult of the Global Square: Religion in Global Civil Society* (The University of California Press, 2015). ISBN: 978-0520283473.

3) Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3<sup>rd</sup> rev. ed. (University of California Press, 2003). ISBN: 978-0520240117.

**Readings (required online materials—free downloads):**

4) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), Free download from: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/index.htm>

5) Karl Marx, 'Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy' (1859): <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>

6) Karl Marx, Short excerpt from 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*' (1844). In-class handout.

7) Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), Part I, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-50) and Chapter 5 (pp. 102-125).

Free download from:

<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/jhamlin/1095/The%20Protestant%20Ethic%20and%20the%20Spirit%20of%20Capitalism.pdf>

8) Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1912), Introduction, Book I, Chapter 1 & 4 (pp. 1-44; 84-98).

Free download from: <http://home.ku.edu.tr/~mbaker/CSHS503/DurkheimReligiousLife.pdf>

### **Course Requirements**

It is important to me to encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own “active learning environment”—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I EXPECT REGULAR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. You must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience with “truth.” You must be able to confront the questions I ask, regardless of your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant’s dictum: “*Sapere aude*”—“Have the courage to use your *own* understanding!”

You are expected to complete the weekly reading assignments and attend class prepared to discuss the texts. The format of this course will consist of lectures with plenty of opportunity for discussion. We will also view some video clips and other visual materials in class. Since it is imperative for a well-educated person to articulate his/her ideas in public, you will also engage regularly in small and large group interactions, including formal presentations of your reactions to the readings. Indeed, your active participation in the discussion will contribute to your final course grade.

Written work will consist of three (3) interpretive papers related to the three major section of this course. Thus, **Paper #1** should be on Section I, The Sociology of Religion: The Classical Theories and Major Religious Traditions (due Oct 13); **Paper #2** should be on Section II, Religion and Global Society: Major Themes and Issues (due November 15); **Paper #3** should be on Section III, Religion and Social Violence in the Era of Globalization (due December 12, noon). Each paper should consist of five double-spaced, typed pages on font Times Roman 12 (not counting the cover page).

In your interpretive papers, you should carefully analyze and comment on *one* self-selected key concept/theme/problem related to the relevant section. With as much sophistication as possible, your analysis should reveal something of significance about religion and the social dynamics discussed in this section (such as violence, capitalism, class, sexuality, globalization, etc). For example, you could indicate how your chosen theme/problem reveals the differences or similarities in the thinking of different authors (such as Marx and Weber) and **why this comparison is significant and meaningful to you**. Your papers should represent reflective exercises in sociological analysis, interpretation, and critical thinking. You should draw on a careful textual analysis of selected course readings and cite appropriate, short textual passages according to ASA style: [http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/ASA\\_Style\\_Citations\\_4.pdf](http://lib.trinity.edu/research/citing/ASA_Style_Citations_4.pdf).

*No book reports or summaries please!* I am happy to give you recommendations for additional secondary readings that you might wish to cite in your papers. If you wish such advice, please talk to me about it BEFORE you get to work on your paper. In order to support your efforts, I am willing to comment on ONE outline or draft of your paper, but you must come to my office hour to receive my feedback in a face-to-face interaction (no online draft or outline discussions).

**No late papers will be accepted (except in documented emergency cases).**

Moreover, each student will be responsible for a 45-minute *in-class group presentation* (4-5 students per group) on particular course readings. This includes leading class in an ensuing discussion of 15-20 min out of the total 45-minute presentation. Rather than offering a “book report,” you are expected to present to class what you consider important themes or topics from the readings and then generate questions for discussion. You will be asked to sign up for a presentation on a topic of your choice at the latest in the third week of class (see course schedule for topics). Assignments will be made on first-come first-serve basis. In addition the assigned readings, your presentation may include additional supportive (brief) materials (for example, handouts, charts, and/or visual materials like PowerPoints, video clips, or other web-based materials).

Regular class attendance is required. You are responsible for signing the attendance sheet at the beginning of each class. If you are more than 10 minutes late, you may not sign in. Please inform the instructor *in advance* if you have to miss class for really important reasons!

### **Course Assessment**

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the course. Any student found guilty of plagiarism is in danger of failing the course (see academic conduct and plagiarism section below). Your in-class presentation will count for 15%, your three interpretive essays 75% (25% each), and your attendance/participation 10%. More than THREE absences per semester will result in a 5% penalty per missed class. In order to be considered “legitimate,” absences must be documented and they must clearly reflect cases of emergency. It is not acceptable to simply cite “other commitments.” Thus, your course grade will reflect your presentation, your participation in class discussions, class attendance, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who distinguish themselves during our class discussions will receive *extra credit*—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the *higher grade*.

Please be advised that *overparticipation* and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may count against you, especially if such actions consistently derail the course agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help *all* students to understand the relevant material. A significant element in higher education is the ability to learn to listen to other voices.

### **A Note on Grading**

For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

#### ***1) In-Class Presentations:***

An “A” will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such presentations are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. “A” students show their thorough and careful reading of the text(s), bring in outside and/or online materials for reference, and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

## *2) Interpretive Essays:*

Much of the above pertains to interpretive essays as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, “A” papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between nonobvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice and perspective. If this grade is to mean something, just doing a “good job” is not good enough for an “A.” You must demonstrate your ability to go *beyond* the expected.

## **Course and Classroom Protocols:**

Our goal is learning, through the sharing of ideas about a complex and rich subject of great intellectual and aesthetic value. The classroom is for comments, questions, and clarifications about the assigned reading. To help us achieve that goal:

- Reading assignments are to be completed in advance of the class meeting when they are scheduled to be discussed; you are expected to bring the book/online readings, and your insights as well as puzzlements to share with the rest of the class;
- Be on time; do not go out and come back during class (except for real emergencies); do not leave early;
- No eating during class (drinking is allowed);
- Turn off and put away your cellphones;
- No private conversations;
- Laptops are permitted for occasional note taking use only; you may not withdraw from the group into your laptop and/or surf for unrelated information;
- Participation in class discussions is a required component of the grade for classwork;
- To sum up: we want to keep the heat in the system for 75 minutes and maximize our learning experience.

## **Office Hours**

Tuesday, 9:30 – 11:30 am; and by appointment.

Students are encouraged to see me during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify any difficult readings and/or other problems as soon as they arise. Don’t wait until the last few weeks of the semester.

## **Academic Conduct and Plagiarism**

Students are expected to abide by the university’s policies regarding academic integrity. Actions that are academically dishonest include, but not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication of

information, interfering with the education of another student. Violation of these policies will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences including receiving no credit for the assignment, a failing grade, or, in serious cases, it might lead to suspension or expulsion. The university policy on academic dishonesty can be found at the UH Mānoa Student Conduct Code Policies Section IV Proscribed Conduct. For detail information, please consult the following website:

[http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct\\_code/proscribed\\_conduct.php](http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php)

### **Disability Accommodation**

If you have a disability for which you need an accommodation, please make an appointment with the UH Manoa KOKUA Program (Disability Access Services) at (808) 956-7511, or via email [kokua@hawaii.edu](mailto:kokua@hawaii.edu). For more information please access its website:

<http://www.hawaii.edu/kokua/>

### **Subject to Change Statement**

This syllabus and schedule are provisional and are subject to change. It is at the discretion of the instructor to do so for the purpose of furthering the educational objectives of the course. While the instructor will notify students of any changes through class announcements and email communications, it is students' responsibility to check on the course syllabus periodically for changes.

# **COURSE SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1 (Aug 23, 25): Introduction to the Course (Syllabus and Course Overview)**

*Readings for week 2:* Kurtz, Chapter 1, pp. 1-45.

**WEEK 2 (Aug 30, Sept 1): Religious Life in the Global Village**

*Readings for week 3:* Kurtz, Chapter 2, pp. 45-86.

## **PART I: SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION: THE CLASSICAL THEORIES AND MAJOR RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS**

**WEEK 3 (Sept 6, 8): The Sociological Tour: Major World Religions, Part I: The East**

*Readings for week 4:* Kurtz, Chapters 3 & 4, pp. 87-150.

**WEEK 4 (Sept 13, 15): The Sociological Tour: Major World Religions, Part I: The West & Indigenous Traditions**

*Readings for week 5:* Marx, online readings #4-6.

**WEEK 5 (Sept 20, 22): Classical Sociological Theories, Part I: Marx and Engels on Religion**

*Readings for week 6:* Weber, online reading #7.

**WEEK 6 (Sept 27, 29): Classical Sociological Theories, Part II: Weber on Religion**

*Readings for week 7:* Durkheim, online reading #8.

**WEEK 7 (Oct 4, 6): Classical Sociological Theories, Part III: Durkheim on Religion**

*Readings for week 8, Oct 11:* none.

**WEEK 8 (Oct 11): Student Presentations #1 on self-selected themes linked to classical sociological theories on religion**

*Readings for week 8, Oct 13 and week 9:* Juergensmeyer, *God In the Tumult of the Global Square* (all).

## **PART II: RELIGION AND GLOBAL SOCIETY: MAJOR THEMES AND ISSUES**

**WEEK 8 (Oct 13): Globalization and Religion: Identity, Security, Civil Society**

**Paper #1 due. No late papers will be accepted!**

**WEEK 9 (Oct 18, 20): Globalization and Religion: Resistance, Global Citizenship, Cultural Imperialism**

**Student Presentations #2 on self-selected themes in Juergensmeyer, *God in the Tumult of the Global Square* (Oct 20)**

*Readings for week 10:* Kurtz, Chapters 5 & 6, pp. 151-250.

**WEEK 10 (Oct 25, 27): Religion and Ethics, Identity Construction, Social Stratification, and Sexuality, Modernity**

*Readings for week 11:* Kurtz, Chapters 6 & 7, pp. 211-289.

**WEEK 11 (Nov 1, 3): Religion and Multiculturalism, Nationalism, Gender, Social Movements, and Ecology**

**Student Presentation #3 on self-selected themes in Kurtz, Chapters 5-7 (Nov 3)**

*Readings for week 13:* Kurtz, Chapter 8, pp. 290-332; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Intro & Chapters 1-6, pp. 3-120.

**WEEK 12 (Nov 8, 10): NO CLASS (ELECTION DAY 11/8; INSTRUCTOR AT A MAINLAND CONFERENCE 11/10)**

### **SECTION III: RELIGION AND SOCIAL VIOLENCE IN THE ERA OF GLOBALIZATION**

**WEEK 13 (Nov 15, 17): Religion and Social Violence, Part I**

*Readings for week 14:* Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Chapters 1-6, pp. 3-120.

**Paper #2 due Nov 15. No late papers will be accepted!**

**WEEK 14 (Nov 22): Religion and Social Violence, Part II**

*Readings for week 15 & 16:* Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Chapters 7-11, pp. 121-250.

**Student Presentation #4 on self-selected themes in Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Chapters 4-6**

**WEEK 14 (NOV 24): NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

**WEEK 15 (Nov 29, Dec 1): The Logic of Religious Violence, Part I**

**WEEK 16 (Dec 6, 8): The Logic of Religious Violence, Part II**

**Student Presentation #5 on self-selected themes in Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, Chapters 7-11 (Dec 8)**

**Paper #3 due: Monday, December 12, at noon. No late papers will be accepted!**