SOCI 385 RELIGION AND SOCIETY

Spring, 2019
Office Hours (G548); Monday-Wednesday 1:30-3:00pm and by appointment

Providing an important study for understanding today’s headlines, “Religion and Society” surveys the world’s major religious traditions and introduces scholarly methods for the study of religion from an interdisciplinary perspective, with a sociological bent. It explores the nature of religious beliefs, rituals, and institutions, both historically and in the contemporary context. Of particular interest will be the way in which faith traditions form and change over time as they become increasingly cosmopolitan, and the relationship between those traditions and daily life, political and social conflicts, ethics, and the current globalization of culture and society.

TEXTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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<td>25-27 Feb.-4Mar</td>
<td>i.  Global Religious Life</td>
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<td>ii. A Sociological Tour</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>Types of Religious Traditions</td>
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<tr>
<td>11-13 March</td>
<td>Hinduism, Jainism</td>
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<td>18-20 March</td>
<td>Buddhism</td>
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<td>25-27 March</td>
<td>Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto</td>
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<td>1 April</td>
<td>Greek, Judaism</td>
<td>Quiz 1 1-2 April</td>
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<td>3-8 April</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
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<td>10-15 April</td>
<td>Islam</td>
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<td>17 April</td>
<td>Indigenous Religions</td>
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<td>22-24 April</td>
<td>Identity &amp; Social Structure</td>
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<td>29 April-1 May</td>
<td>Taboo Lines &amp; the Ethical Life</td>
<td>Proposals &amp; Extra credit 1 due</td>
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<td>iv. Modernism, Multiculturalism</td>
<td>[5 May Ramadan begins]</td>
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<td>6-8 May</td>
<td>Crisis of Modernism</td>
<td>Quiz 2 6-7 May</td>
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<td>Culture Wars</td>
<td>[12 May Buddha’s Birthday]</td>
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<td>Alternative Religious Movements</td>
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<td>v. Gods and Bombs</td>
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<td>20-22 May</td>
<td>Religious Conflict &amp; Dialogue</td>
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<td>27-29 May</td>
<td>Gods and Bombs</td>
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<td>3 June</td>
<td>Aesthetics of Peace</td>
<td>Ritual Analysis Due 3 June [Eid al-Fitr 3 June]</td>
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<td>5 June</td>
<td>Last Class</td>
<td>Extra credit 2 due</td>
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<td>11-12 June</td>
<td>Quiz 3</td>
<td>Quiz 11-12 June</td>
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I. RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE GLOBAL VILLAGE

25 February
A. Social Scientific Perspectives on Religion
Gods in the Global Village, 1-23

27 February
B. Metaphors and Methods
Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (selection)
Clifford Geertz, "Ethos, World View, and the Analysis of Sacred Symbols"

March 4th
C. The Three Pillars
Gods in the Global Village, 23-44.

II. THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS: A SOCIOLOGICAL TOUR

6 March
A. Types of Religious Traditions
Gods in the Global Village, 45-53

11 March
B. Hinduism and Jainism
Gods in the Global Village, 53-69

13 March

18 March

C. East Asian Religions: Buddhism
Gods in the Global Village, 69-76

20 March

25 March
D. Taoism and Confucianism
Gods in the Global Village, 76-83

27 March
The Sayings of Lao Zi, ed. by Tsai Chih Chung; tr. by Koh Kok Kiang and Wong Lit Khiong. (Singapore: Asiapac, 1989), 36-52.

1-2 April Quiz 1

1 April
E. Ancient Greek Religion
Gods in the Global Village, 87-93

F. Judaism
Gods in the Global Village, 93-101

3 April
G. Christianity
Gods in the Global Village, 87-93

8 April

Christian Scripture Selections

10 April
H. Islam
Gods in the Global Village, 110-128 (finish the rest of chapter 3)

15 April
Selections from the Qur’an in The Essential Koran, translated and presented by Thomas Cleary (Edison, NY: Castle Books), 44-49, 82-93
Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, “Mercy: The Stamp of Creation”

17 April
I. Indigenous Religions
Gods in the Global Village, Chapter 4

III. RELIGION & EVERYDAY LIFE
22 April
A. Identity and Social Structure
Readings
Gods in the Global Village, 151-171

24 April
"Muhammad as Model and Guide" (from Islam, ed. by John Alden Williams [NY: George Braziller, 1962], pp. 84-87).
Colossians 4

29 April
B. Taboo Lines, Ethics, Sexuality, & Economics
Gods in the Global Village, 171-210
Exodus 20-21
2 April Statement: Realizing the World We all Want and Spiritual Leaders’ Statement

2 May
Baba Metzia 85a from Judaism, ed. by Arthur Hertzberg (NY: Braziller, 1962), 200.

1 May

5-6 MAY QUIZ 2

IV. MODERNISM AND MULTICULTURALISM
A. The Crisis of Modernism
Gods in the Global Village, Chapter 6.

8 May

13 May
B. Culture Wars

15 May
C. Religious Syncretism and Alternative Religious Movements
Gods in the Global Village, Ch. 7


V. GODS AND BOMBS

20 May
A. Religion Conflict & Dialogue
Gods in the Global Village, Ch. 8

22 May

27 May
C. Gods and Bombs

29 May

3 JUNE RITUAL ANALYSIS DUE

3 June
B. Aesthetics of Peace


5 June Last Class Session - Extra credit #2 Due


Chuang Tzu, "The Useless"

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Learning objectives
By the end of the course, participants should have a basic knowledge of the central beliefs, rituals, and institutions of the world’s major faith traditions and an ability to use sociological tools to study and analyze them.

Each participant will (1) observe a religious ritual and write an analysis of it (including writing a proposal for that research project); (2) take three online quizzes; (3) write a series of 10 short reflection papers related to their ritual analysis paper, some of which can be included directly in the final paper, and (4) participate in a 30-minute group class presentation introducing one of the world’s major religious traditions.

More information will be made available early in the course. In calculating the course grade, each assignment will be weighted as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz #1</td>
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<td>Quiz #2</td>
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<td>Quiz #3</td>
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<td>Reflection papers</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>Class presentation</td>
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<td>Research proposal</td>
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<td>Ritual analysis</td>
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The quizzes for the class will have an option of a multiple choice or an essay format (you may decide at the time of the quiz) and the second is not comprehensive. They will be taken online, posted on Blackboard. The first quiz will include material from readings and class presentations from the beginning of the semester until the class day before the exam; the second exam will include material from after first quiz until the date of the second, and so on until the last class day for the third quiz. They will be taken on Blackboard and students will have 48 hours to complete each one and are bound by the Mason Honor Code not to collaborate on the quiz.

Reflection papers are due almost weekly for a minimum of 10 (during the 15 weeks of the semester). Although you will get feedback, your grade for this assignment will be based on the following scale:

- 10+ papers: A
- 8-9 papers: B
- 6-7 papers: C
- 4-5 papers: D

These reflections should provide analysis of class readings and discussions, as well as scholarly sources related to your ritual analysis paper. Some of them may therefore be incorporated into that paper at the end of the term, especially those related to the faith tradition you are studying and the sources for your background research.

Groups from the class will make 30-minute presentations in class that introduce basic beliefs, rituals, and institutions each of the major religions. We will organize these groups during the second class session based on your preferences.

The ritual analysis for the course project or for extra credit should analyze a worship celebration in a tradition other than the author's own - please see the guide posted on Blackboard. The paper has two components – a literature review and an ethnographic element. Look for ways in which the religious group's worldview and key myths are acted out in the community's ethos. Examine the ritual in terms of the characteristics of rituals discussed in class: What problem(s) do(es) the ritual solve? How is it rooted in the experience of the community performing it? What social and doctrinal boundaries are marked out, and what evil is denounced? How are social structures reinforced by the ritual? Note how the ritual addresses the major themes of the course. If possible, analyze the effects of the participants' social status, ethnicity, gender, etc., on the content and form of the ritual. The assignment will be evaluated on the basis of the quality of the description of the ritual (the tradition, what was done, who participated, the setting and its symbolic props, etc.) and the analysis of it (discussion of its sociological significance, identification of the problem the ritual addresses, the beliefs, institutions, ethical implications, etc. embedded in the ritual). Some arrangements will be made for members of the class to attend a religious ritual together, if interest warrants our doing so.

Participants are encouraged to do a maximum of two extra credit projects which give you a chance to explore sources and experiences we do not have time to cover formally in the course -- and to improve your grade. Most projects should take the form of a short paper that analyzes (rather than simply summarizes) speeches, films, books, articles, or other events appropriate to the course. You may also use a major essay topic for an exam in which you do not write the essay, or to analyze a ritual that you do not use for your course project. You are especially encouraged to undertake interviews or attend worship celebrations of religious traditions other than your own. Papers should provide a critique and application of issues and ideas discussed in the course. Readings, films, etc. that are an assigned part of the course are not, of course, acceptable for extra credit.

Due Dates: 1 May and 5 June.

You may, of course, turn them in prior to the due dates. They will be submitted on Blackboard in the Assignments folder.

Length: 1,000-1,500 words

Grading:

You will be given 3-5 points on a 100-point scale for each paper that meets the requirements of the assignment. The points will be added to a quiz score.

Official Mason Nation

Academic Integrity

GMUK is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on
someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification. Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes.

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

GMU EMAIL ACCOUNTS
Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

OFFICE OF DISABILITY SERVICES
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at http://ods.gmu.edu

FREE SPEECH/VIOLENCE-FREE ZONE: The classroom should be a space where everyone and their ideas are respected. All participants should speak and act freely in the classroom, but with respect for others and the standards of academic pursuit of truth. As a faculty member, I am required by university policy to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason Korea's Deputy Title IX Coordinator pursuant to University Policy 1202 and 1412. If you would like to speak confidentially with the Mason Korea student counselor, please see https://masonkorea.gmu.edu/mksa/services/counseling/ for more information. For more information about what Title IX is, please see https://masonkorea.gmu.edu/mksa/services/tix/.

OTHER USEFUL CAMPUS RESOURCES
WRITING CENTER: The GMUK Academic Resource Center can look at your papers and problems to improve your academic achievement in the area of Writing, Mathematics, Accounting, Statistics, and Economics. You are invited to utilize the faculty and student tutor services at a variety of stages in your academic activities, checking to see that your project specifically meets the directions specified by your instructor. While tutors are ‘fixing’ your writing or projects, they do help you become conscious of particular error patterns that emerge in your work. For more information, please contact Professor Eunmee Lee, director of Academic Resource Center (elpee45@gmu.edu, office #521)

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
Access the George Mason University library resources at http://library.gmu.edu/ and the IGC library at http://lib.igc.or.kr/.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES
See information online at https://masonkorea.gmu.edu/wellness/counseling/

UNIVERSITY POLICIES
The University Catalog, http://catalog.gmu.edu, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.