Sociology 325: Sociology of Religion
Fall 2011

Instructor: Stan Knapp
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Course Objectives

Course objectives center on the four primary aims of a BYU Education: a) spiritually strengthening, b) intellectually enlarging, c) character building, and d) lifelong learning and service (Aims of a BYU Education, 1995). Both teacher and students should expect to teach and learn with/by the Spirit throughout the course and while the gospel will not be discussed constantly in class both teacher and student should teach and study the “subject matter bathed in the light and color of the restored gospel.” Intellectual mastery of sociological theory and concepts is required and will be the result of both the teacher’s and the students’ “ambitious commitment ... to rigorously study academic subjects in the light of divine truth.” Both course instruction and student independent study should seek to produce students “capable of competing with the best students in their field.” Course materials, discussion, and assignments are also aimed at helping students develop strong academic skills, including sound reasoning abilities (including the ability to discriminate “things that matter most from things of lesser import” and “the ability to engage successfully in logical reasoning, critical analysis, moral discrimination, creative imagination, and independent thought”) and the ability to communicate effectively (including the ability to “articulate honestly and thoughtfully their commitments to Christ and to his Church”). Course instruction will also aim to build strong character and the desire to continue lifelong learning and service (All quotations from Aims of a BYU Education, 1995).

Course Learning Outcomes

1) Acquire a basic understanding of the major theories, concepts, and perspectives used by sociologists to study religion in the modern world.
2) Acquire a basic understanding of the issues and debates concerning the scientific study of religion and the use of sociological theories and methods for the study of religion.
3) Develop the ability to think critically about the study of religion and the place of religion in modern life and society.
4) Develop the ability to analyze issues related to the study of religion and communicate the analysis in writing (i.e., forming and presenting an argument, using appropriate scholarly language, writing respectfully, etc.).
Texts


Evaluation

Final grades will be based on a mid-term and final exam (100 pts. each), a writing to learn portfolio (50 pts.), a critical analysis paper and two responses (120 pts. total), and course participation (30 pts). Final grade distribution will be based on percentage of total points earned (A= 93%; A- = 90%-92%; B+ = 87% - 89%; etc.)

Exams

The mid-term exam will be given in the testing center and will be closed book. The final exam will cover material since the last exam as well as including several comprehensive essay questions. Exams may consist of multiple-choice, matching, definitions, true-false with justification, and short answer questions but will primarily (or even exclusively) be essay. Essay answers will be evaluated in terms of the depth of analysis offered, the comprehensiveness of the answer, and the clarity of understanding shown. Standards will be such that without keeping up with the reading, regular attendance and participation, students will not receive high marks. **Exams cannot be made up unless the student has discussed their situation with me before the exam is given.** Exams will be given as noted in the course outline and any changes will be announced at least one class period in advance of the exam.
Course Participation

Students do not learn much just sitting in classes listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged assignments, and spitting out answers. Learning is not a spectator sport. Students must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves. (Chickering and Gamson, Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education)

Sociological knowledge is all about ideas. Learning to think sociologically will require learning to “think theoretically.” This course aims to help students to learn to think sociologically through reading sociological work, class and study group discussion on sociological perspectives, concepts and approaches, and writing about ideas. Learning to think requires more than just reading about ideas. It also requires critical questioning and engaging in a dialogue with others about ideas. Dialogue is encouraged through general class participation and through study group participation.

General Class Participation: For each meeting I will prepare some lecture material for presentation to the class and will take the lead asking questions to both probe your understanding of the assigned reading and stimulate group discussion. General participation in such discussions is required and will be a part of your final grade. The most important way for students to participate is through reading the material beforehand, asking questions about it, and being prepared to answer questions about it. Other ways to participate will include providing additional examples of concepts or ideas discussed in class, discussing ways in which the ideas either do or do not make sense to you, challenging/critically examining the presentation of the concepts in your assigned readings, etc. Familiarity with the assigned reading is essential for constructive participation and understanding of the course material.

Study Group Participation: Participation in a study group is required and 5 pts. for each section of the course will be assigned for active participation in a study group. Active participation in a study group requires meeting and discussing course material for at least one hour each meeting. Active participation also means meeting at least twice each exam period, coming to each meeting having read the material, and preparing handouts to assist other members of the study group. Handouts may consist of summary answers to questions from study guides (if available), outlines of chapters, definitions and examples of key concepts in a chapter, etc. I encourage cooperative work and dividing up responsibilities amongst the members of the group. Evaluation of study group participation will be made after each exam period with each individual reporting what they and other members of their group did.

Writing to Learn Portfolio

Learning to think theoretically also requires writing about ideas. In order to facilitate learning sociological ideas and ways of thinking each student will be required to construct a portfolio of informal writing about the ideas discussed in the course. For approximately every two weeks of the semester students will be required to write at least one entry of at least two pages (double-spaced) minimum. These writing assignments are aimed to assist students to learn the course material and to think critically about it. Therefore, all entries must be written specifically for
this course. No material previously written for another course may be used as a portfolio entry. Most entries will require students to decide what and how they want to write. However, periodically throughout the course I may provide directed writing assignments to be added to the portfolio.

Evaluation: Formal evaluation will take place through posting portfolio entries on blackboard prior to an exam. Portfolios will be posted and each student will read, evaluate and give suggestions for improvement on two portfolios. Evaluating two portfolios is required to earn full credit on your own portfolio. The portfolio will be worth 25 pts. for each section of the course.

Criteria for Evaluation: 1) Consistency of writing (One entry for about every two weeks=A); 2) Total length of entries (2 pages per week=A); and 3) Quality of entries.

Format: Each entry must include a title and begin on a new page. Each entry must include the day of week and full date the entry was written. Again, the date indicates the day the entry was completed (not started, not mostly written, but actually finished). Each entry must be a minimum of at least two pages double-spaced, normal 12 point font with normal headings and margins.

Quality of Writing: Quality will be determined based on an assessment of the effort put into the entries, the extent of critical thinking exemplified, originality and creativeness, and basic features of good writing. High marks are reserved for those portfolios showing evidence of thinking. Entries that are nothing more than summaries of class lectures or course readings are not acceptable! You must show your own thinking about the ideas in your writing. Finally, portfolio entries should demonstrate critical thinking about the ideas and not your personal feelings or reaction to course material. Avoid subjectivizing your writing. In other words, your writing should be less about you and more about the ideas. They should be written in such a way that you could imagine someone disagreeing with you. For example, if I write something like, “I really like how Marx characterizes the alienation of modern life.” Then, someone can’t come along and say, “I disagree. I don’t think you like Marx.” If your entry is about you, then it is not demonstrating critical thinking. If, however, you were to say, “I think Marx’s description of alienation in modern life is very insightful because…” and then proceed to give reasons for why you think Marx is on to something, then someone could disagree with you.

Style: Normally the audience should be another student in the class, but the audience may also be yourself, the instructor, a friend or parent, the general public, etc. Writing style should be informal but not sloppy. This means that you should not spend an inordinate amount of time preparing a perfect essay with a thesis statement, introduction, body and conclusion. The entries are working drafts of your ideas on paper, not finished essays. Your entries should, however, be easily accessible to the reader (generally another student) with a clear presentation of your train of thought. Spelling, grammar, and clarity of writing are important but not as important as they would be for a formal writing assignment. (I recommend sitting down at a computer and just writing without worrying about writing style, format, and so forth. After you’ve finished writing, reread with the idea of assessing how clear your writing has been. Make any necessary changes and move on.)
Sociology 325: Sociology of Religion
Critical Analysis Writing Assignment

Purpose
Learning to write well is a critical element of sociological work. In this assignment you will practice constructing an argument by focusing on improving both the substantive and rhetorical dimensions of a paper. Learning to think critically and organizing your thoughts into a coherent and structured presentation are essential to producing contributions to the field. Your focus will be to critically examine the work of scholars relative to an issue in the scholarly study of religion.

Audience
Your audience is other sociology colleagues who have a basic understanding of sociological concepts but are not experts in the area you are analyzing. Try not to write to the instructor as you may tend to assume of your reader a greater knowledge of sociology and write less clearly. I suggest you imagine yourself writing to a fellow undergraduate student at another university who is interested in learning more about the theoretical issues you discuss.

Scope
The analysis paper must not exceed 8-10 double-spaced pages of 12 point font. Although you may analyze critically any number of issues and questions in the sociology of religion, I suggest you focus your paper on critically examining the topic of your paper in terms of what we have discussed during the course. You should consult and reference resources outside those used in the course. I do not expect, however, that this paper will be a thorough review of the literature on your topic. Your aim is to construct an argument, not write a comprehensive analysis of the literature in the field on your topic. (As a guide, I would anticipate that you consult at least 6 outside resources.)

Style
Your style should be formal, concise, clear, and to the point. You should make it clear to your reader that you are making an argument and that your aim is to articulate reasons for why your reader should agree with you.

Format
You should follow the ASA style guide for references, citations, etc. The following website gives an overview of the ASA style: http://www.asanet.org/Quick%20Style%20Guide.pdf

Procedure
You will be required to post on Blackboard a copy of a completed paper on November 29. This version of your paper will be evaluated in terms of its length, completeness of sources, organization of argument, and clarity of presentation. Two students will use the evaluation sheet as a help in their thinking about ways to suggest you improve your paper. The evaluation is meant to encourage you to be thinking that the final version of your paper is due November 29. You will receive two responses from students to your paper. The final revised version of your paper will be due on December 8.
Critical Analysis Evaluation Criteria

**Understanding**: Does the author show a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the issues being examined?

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**Content**: Does the paper focus on the most important elements of the issues being discussed? Are the decisions regarding what to include and what to exclude appropriate and justifiable?

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**Analysis**: Does the author demonstrate an ability to analyze the issues and arguments of different perspectives on the topic? Does the author show insight and intelligence in their analysis of the issues?

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**Research**: Is the argument clearly grounded in the sociological or academic literature related to the topic?

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**Focus**: Is there a clear thesis? A clear focus that ties the elements of the paper together?

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**Introduction**: Does the introduction prepare the reader for what is to follow? Is the thesis clearly presented?

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**Structure**: Does the sequence of paragraphs and the presentation of concepts and ideas follow a careful, logical development? Is the paper more than a collection of disparate ideas and concepts loosely associated with one another?

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**Paragraphing**: Does each paragraph represent a clear subset in the development of the thesis? Are the paragraphs unified in their presentation of a key piece to the larger structure of the paper?

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**Transitions**: Is each sentence, idea, and paragraph connected to the one preceding and following it?

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**Syntax**: Is the writing style appropriate for the intended audience? Is the language lean, precise, and focused? Is the appropriate voice used? Is the writing clear and easy to follow?

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**Mechanics**: Are punctuation, spelling, grammar, referencing, citations, and other writing conventions (ASA Style) used correctly?

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Sociology 325: Sociology of Religion
Analysis Paper Response Assignment

**Purpose**
To give your fellow student constructive feedback on their analysis of an issue. Your job is to help your fellow student receive an “excellent” evaluation for each of the aspects on the evaluation sheet.

**Audience**
A student that wants constructive feedback given in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

**Scope**
You should address both content and presentation issues. If there are areas where you think the author’s understanding needs to be strengthened, then you need to indicate how and why you evaluate their work as insufficient. If you think the presentation of the ideas needs to be strengthened, then you need to show how the author can make their presentation more clear and persuasive.

**Style**
You should be sure to include as many positive comments as you can. Let the author know where you think they have performed well. When giving critical feedback be respectful and communicate clearly and thoughtfully.

**Format**
You may write directly in the text and/or compose a response on the computer. However, you will need to be able to email your response to both the student and the instructor so keep that in mind.

**Procedure**
Your response to the author will be due on December 2. If you use track changes, then you can save a new .doc version of the paper and send it to the instructor and the author. Each response will be worth 10 points and will be evaluated in terms of how much thought and effort were expended towards improving the paper and the quality of comments and suggestions given.
Help from the FHSS Writing Lab:
FHSS Writing Lab: To get help with your paper’s organization, structure, focus, tone, and documentation style, you can go to the FHSS Writing Lab in 1049 JFSB to meet one-on-one with a peer advisor. All advisors are students from our college and are trained in APA, Turabian, AMA, and MLA styles. To prepare for a tutorial, take
- a copy of the assignment
- a hard copy of your draft, whatever stage it may be in
- a list of questions and concerns you have about your paper
Walk in Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or make an appointment online: http://fhsswriting.byu.edu For more information, go to their website or email fhss-writinglab@byu.edu

Statement on Cheating, Plagiarism, Sexual Discrimination, and Disabilities
While all students sign the honor code, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in this new age of the internet; as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers. See http://www.byu.edu/honorcode for specific examples of intentional, inadvertent plagiarism, and fabrication, falsification.

Preventing Sexual Harassment
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the University but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender-based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

Students with Disabilities
Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere that reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability that may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You may contact the Equal Employment Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.
Sociology 325: Sociology of Religion
Course Schedule

Week 1 August 31
Topics: Intro to Course; How to Study Religion?
Assigned Reading:
    McGuire, Chap. 1
    Smith, Chap. 1

Week 2 September 7
Topics: Moral, Believing Animals
Assigned Reading:
    Smith, Chap. 2-4

Week 3 September 14
Portfolio #1 Due
Topics: Religion as Provision of Meaning
Assigned Reading:
    McGuire, Chap. 2
    Smith, pp. 95-106
    Porpora, “Methodological Atheism, Methodological Agnosticism, and Religious Experience”

Week 4 September 21
Topic: Conversion & Religious Identity
Assigned Reading:
    McGuire, pp. 51-53, 73-96
    Smith, pp. 106-123
    Jerolmack & Porpora, “Religion, Rationality, and Experience”

Week 5 September 28
Portfolio #2 Due
Topic: Religion, the Moral Good, and the Living of Life
Assigned Reading:
    Porpora, Introduction, Chap. 1-2

Week 6 October 5
Topic: Religion & the Meaning of Life
Assigned Reading:
    Porpora, Chap. 3-5

Week 7 October 12
Portfolio #3 Due
Topic: Religion & Communities of Discourse
Assigned Reading:
    Porpora, Chap. 6-8

Week 8 October 19
Topic: Organization & Religion
Assigned Reading:
    Porpora, Chap. 9
    McGuire, pp. 97-127
    Catch-up/Review

October 19 (midnight)
PORTFOLIOS DUE on Blackboard
(4 entries due; 8+ total pages)

Exam # 1 October 20-24

Week 9 October 26
Topics: Religion & the Social Environment
Assigned Reading:
    McGuire, pp. 149-185
    McGuire, Chap. 6

Week 10 November 2
Topic: Religion and Social Change
Assigned Reading:
    McGuire, Chap. 7

Week 11 November 9
Portfolio #5 Due
Topic: Religion in the Modern World
Assigned Reading:
    McGuire, Chap. 8
Week 12 November 16
TBD

Week 13 November 23
Thanksgiving Holiday

November 29 (midnight)
Analysis Paper Due on Blackboard

Week 14 November 30
Portfolio #6 Due
Topic: Religion, Secularism, & Modernity
Assigned Reading:
   Taylor, Chap. 1-2
   Abby, “Sources of Secularity”
(Blackboard)

December 2 (Midnight)
Analysis Paper Responses Due

Week 15 December 7
Topic: Varieties of Religion Today
Assigned Reading:
   Taylor, Chap. 3-4
Catch-up/Review

December 8 (midnight)
Final Analysis Paper Due (email)
PORTFOLIOS DUE on Blackboard
(3 entries due; 6+ total pages)

FINAL EXAM
December 14, Wednesday, 5:45 in class