

# Sociology 3410

## Sociology of Religion

Instructor: Dr. Rob Reynolds  
Office: Social Science Building 122  
Office Phone: 801-626-6237  
Email: [reynolds@weber.edu](mailto:reynolds@weber.edu) (Please put **Soc 3410** in the subject line.)  
Office Hours: MWF 9:30-10:20 a.m., TTH 10 a.m.-Noon, or by appointment

### INTRODUCTION

Religion is a social institution that is all around us. From the conflicts in the Middle East and East Timor, to the buying of a block of Main Street in Salt Lake City, religion is constantly in the news. For some people, their everyday activities are dictated by religious belief, while for others it is viewed as the “opium of the masses” (Marx) to be dismissed as the crutch of simply minds. Whatever your view of religion, it influences contemporary society from the laws of the land, to the norms and folkways of everyday life. This course explores religion’s place in the makeup of society. It is not a philosophy course, although we will learn about the belief systems of some religious faith groups.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

- Students will understand what religion is and is not.
- Students will be able to take a sociological perspective of religion.
- Students will understand religion’s relationship to other social institutions.
- Students will understand religion’s relationship to the stratification system.
- Students will understand the Church-Sect Continuum.
- Students will better understand several contemporary religious faith groups.

### TEXTS

Lundskow, George. 2008. *The Sociology of Religion: A Substantive and Transdisciplinary Approach*. Los Angeles, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Reserve readings and websites as announced in class.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Exams (100 points each):** There will be two exams. The exams will be take-home. I will give you the first exam Friday of the seventh week, and it is due **Friday of the eighth week**. I will give you the second exam Wednesday of the thirteenth week, and it is due **at noon, Wednesday of Finals week**. **Note: Exams must be typed.**

**Field Observation (200 points):** You will need to attend the religious worship services of three different faith groups. The service should be the principal worship service for that faith group, such as a Catholic Mass or an LDS Sacrament Meeting. If you regularly attend a worship service for a faith group, you should **not** count that as one of the services. You will be given an outline to guide your field observation. Then you will write (type) a paper comparing and contrasting the services. This paper should be ten to twelve pages long. **Note: If you have ideological concerns about attending religious worship services please see the professor for an alternate assignment.**

This paper is due **Friday of the 12<sup>th</sup> week**.

**Book Review (100 points):** Review a book on religion of your choice approved by Dr. Reynolds. Basically, after reading the book, evaluate it, in about four to six double spaced pages, covering the following points:

1. Most authors have a single theme, or a few key points, to develop in their writings. State what you understand to be that theme or those points in a sentence or two.
2. Summarize the book. Who did what, when, and where.

3. Now analyze the reading as if you were writing a review for a professional journal. This is the how and why. The main approach is to take the author's theme or main points, already identified, and examine the extent to which s/he develops a logical and coherent argument to support the theme or points. Included here should also be an assessment of the evidence used to support the argument: is it relevant? of good quality? well organized? convincing?

This book review is due on **Friday of the 7th week of class.**

**GRADING**

Grades will be given based on the following:

Exams (100 points each)	40%
Field Observation Paper (200 points)	40%
Book Review(100 points)	20%
Total (500 points)	100%

A = 475 points      B+ = 435 points      C+ = 385 points      D+ = 325 points      E = <300 point  
 A- = 450 points      B = 420 points      C = 370 points      D = 300 points  
                                  B- = 400                      C- = 350

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

In addition to, but not instead of, assigned readings, you may wish to consult other sources (including discussing assignments with other students). This is acceptable, but is not required. However, in all instances you must do your own work and credit must be given where credit is due. There is no excuse for plagiarism or for submitting another's work, ideas or wording as your own. If you plagiarize or otherwise cheat on any assignment or exam, you will receive a failing grade for the course. Any student who does not understand how to avoid plagiarism must request assistance from the instructor.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Service Center. SSD can also arrange to provide course materials (including this syllabus) in alternative formats if necessary.

## SCHEDULE

**Note:** This schedule represents my best guess about what we will be doing in this class this semester. However, due to circumstances beyond my control, the due dates of all readings and assignments are subject to change. All changes will be announced in advance in class. Each student is responsible for keeping track of all changes.

<b>WEEK beginning</b>	<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</b>
1/6	Introduction; What is Religion	Introduction & Chapter 1
1/13	Religion and Sociological Theory	Chapter 1
1/20	Religion in Premodern Times	Chapter 2, Section 1
1/27	Religion in Premodern Times	Chapter 2, Section 1
2/3	Religion in Modern Times	Chapter 2, Section 2
2/10	Religion in Modern Times	Chapter 2, Section 2
2/17	Superstition and the Supernatural	Chapter 3 <b>Book Review Due Friday</b>
2/24	Religious Adaptation	Chapter 4 <b>Exam 1 Due Friday</b>
3/3	Religious Intolerance and Aggression	Chapter 5
<b>Spring Break, March 10-14</b>		
3/17	Evil	Chapter 6
3/24	Cults	Chapter 7
3/31	Emergent Religion	Chapter 8 <b>Field Observation Paper Due Friday</b>
4/7	Religion and Globalization	Chapter 9
4/14	Religion beyond Religion	Chapter 10
Finals		<b>Final Exam Due Wednesday at NOON!</b>