Course Description and Goals:

The overarching purpose of this course is to examine religion as a part of the social world. In order to achieve this goal, we will examine sociologists’ major theoretical ideas regarding religion. We will examine religion as an individual-level phenomenon, looking at people’s particular beliefs and practices, as a group-level phenomenon, looking at congregations, and consider the interplay between these two levels. We will examine how religion interacts with other forces, institutions, and ideologies at play in the social world. Finally, we will explore how sociologists study religion and conduct sociological research on religion ourselves.

An initial goal of the course is to be able to read and comprehend sociological writings on religion, and to be able to articulate that understanding both verbally and in writing. Additionally, you will learn to recognize how readings and ideas intersect and relate to each other and to articulate the nature of that intersection. You will also learn to analyze theories and research and develop your own informed opinion on their utility for explaining the social world. Ideally, both your reading comprehension and ability to express yourself in writing will be enhanced as a result of this course!

As this is a course on religion as a part of the social world, it is NOT a theological study to determine the doctrinal correctness of various beliefs. We will be studying what people think and do regarding religion and how religious groups behave, without evaluating them compared to some religious “ideal.” We are here to learn and think, not to judge.

Course Etiquette:

- I expect everyone attending class to have done the assigned readings and to be prepared to discuss them.
- I expect everyone to practice sensitivity and respect in all course discussions. You should feel free in class discussions to share as much as you are comfortable with about your
experiences and background, but you must keep in mind that your classmates’ beliefs and experiences may be different from yours and are equally deserving of respect. I expect you to also respect everyone’s race, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, etc.

- **We will begin and end class on time.** In addition, unless you have an emergency or an extremely compelling reason, you should plan to stay for the entire class period.
- **Do not use your cell phone during class.** Keep cell phones in your bag/pocket, not out on your desk. If you are texting in class, I will ask you to leave.
- You may use computers during class only for course-related activities.
- Please check your UWG email and CourseDen daily M-F – I will do the same!
- **Course assignments must be turned in to me at the beginning of class in hard copy.** I will not accept or grade assignments turned in over email.

**Contacting the instructor:**

The best way to contact me outside of class is to visit my office hours. If you can’t make these hours, please let me know and we can arrange to meet at another time. If you feel that you are having a problem, please come with specific questions so that I can help you. You should also feel free to visit even if you are not having a “problem” in the course and just want to chat about something. I will also usually be available for a few minutes before and after class.

For more complicated questions, I recommend that you contact me via email – mckendry@westga.edu. I check my email frequently and will respond to you as soon as possible. When you email me, remember to note in the email which class you are taking, and also to use correct grammatical English and normal capitalization.

**Preparing for class:**

For each hour spent in class, you will probably need to set aside at least two hours for work outside of the class session such as reading, reviewing your notes, and completing your assignments.

Readings are listed in the syllabus on a daily basis. It is your responsibility to prepare for class each day. I recommend doing the reading for the each day before our class meeting, and then reviewing them again briefly afterwards. Your readings are an important resource to succeeding in this course. You will need to be familiar with the terms and concepts we discuss, and periodically reviewing your readings is the best way to stay familiar with important ideas. In addition, you will find our discussions much more meaningful if you spend some time before class to make some notes listing what you think are the main points of the author’s argument, as well as any questions you have about the reading.
Honor Code and UWG Policies:

The University Honor Code is in effect for all written assignments and exams. Please read the provisions of the Honor Code carefully, and make certain that you understand and follow them. Violations of the Code will not be tolerated.

In addition to the Honor Code, you should review the University’s policies on the Americans with Disabilities Act, Email, and Credit Hours, as these change periodically. You can view the Honor Code and other policies here: http://tinyurl.com/UWGSyllabusPolicies

I expect you to do all of your own work. Initial instances of academic dishonesty (ie plagiarizing on an assignment or cheating on a quiz/exam) will result in a grade of 0 for that assignment/quiz/exam. Additional instances of academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course.

Readings:

I have assigned the following two books for our course. They are available for purchase at the university bookstore and online. I strongly encourage you to obtain your own copy of these books.


All other course readings will be available on CourseDen in the “Content” section.

Course requirements and evaluation:

All written assignments must be turned in hard-copy. I will not grade papers that I receive over email. Grammar and composition are not a formal part of your assignment grades, but both are necessary to clearly present your ideas and experiences in a relatively small number of pages. If I cannot understand what you are trying to say, it is as though you have not said it, which may result in a lower grade.

Although regular class attendance and participation are necessary for achieving a good grade in this course, they are not formally part of your course grade. You will simply do much better on the assignments and exams if you attend class each day and actively participate in discussions and group-work.
Your final grade will be based on the following required assignments:

- Reading Responses (20 points)
- Self-Directed Field Trip Assignment (20 points)
- Midterm Exam (20 points)
- Interview Assignment (20 points)
- Final Exam (20 points)

Details for assignments will be provided in class on the day they are assigned and will be available on CourseDen.

I do not grade on a curve. You will receive point values, but not letter grades, for individual tests and assignments. I will award final grades using this scale:

- A = 90-100
- B = 80-89
- C = 70-79
- D = 60-69
- F = 0-59

Course Schedule:

**Week 1**
August 24th: Course Introduction

August 26th: The Diverse American Religious Landscape
  - Sheitle and Finke, Introduction & Ch 1
  - Wuthnow, “Studying Religion, Making it Sociological” (CourseDen)

**Week 2**
August 31st: The Diverse American Religious Landscape
  - Sheitle and Finke, Ch 2
  - Chaves, *Congregations in America* excerpt (CourseDen)

September 2nd: The Diverse American Religious Landscape
  - Sheitle and Finke, Ch 3
  - Kurien, “Being Young, Brown, and Hindu” (CourseDen)

**Week 3**
September 7th: Labor Day – NO CLASS

September 9th: The Diverse American Religious Landscape
  - Sheitle and Finke, Ch 4
  - Marti, “Affinity, Identity, and Transcendence” (CourseDen)

**Week 4**
September 14th: The Diverse American Religious Landscape
  - Sheitle and Finke, Ch 5
September 16th: The Diverse American Religious Landscape
  o Sheitle and Finke, Ch 6
  o Nelson, “At Ease With Our Own Kind” (CourseDen)

Week 5
September 21st: The Diverse American Religious Landscape
  o Sheitle and Finke Ch 7
  o Cone, “Martin and Malcolm: Integrationism and Nationalism in African American Religious History” (CourseDen)

September 23rd: The Diverse American Religious Landscape
  o Sheitle and Finke, Ch 8 & Conclusion

Week 6
September 28th: Congregations in Communities
  o McRoberts, Chs 1 & 2

September 30th: Congregations in Communities
  o McRoberts, Ch 3

Week 7
October 5th: Congregations in Communities
  o McRoberts, Ch 4

October 7th: Congregations in Communities
  o McRoberts, Ch 5

Week 8
October 12th: Congregations in Communities
  o McRoberts, Chs 6 & 7

October 14th: Congregations in Communities
  o McRoberts, Ch 8
  o Review for midterm

Week 9
October 19th: Midterm Exam

October 21st: New Religious Movements
  o Reading TBA (CourseDen)
Week 10
October 26th: Individual Religion
  o McGuire, “Rethinking Religious Identity, Commitment, and Hybridity” (CourseDen)
  o Pearce and Denton, “Profiles of Religiosity in Adolescence” (CourseDen)

October 28th: Individual (Non)Religion
  o Smith, “Creating a Godless Community” (CourseDen)
  o Worth, “From Bible-Belt Pastor to Atheist Leader” (CourseDen)

Week 11
November 2nd: Individual Religious Change
  o Davidman, Ch 1

November 4th: Individual Religious Change
  o Davidman, Ch 2

Week 12
November 9th: Individual Religious Change
  o Davidman, Ch 3

November 11th: Individual Religious Change
  o Davidman, Ch 4

Week 13
November 16th: Individual Religious Change
  o Davidman, Ch 5

November 18th: Individual Religious Change
  o Davidman, Ch 6

November 23rd & 25th – NO CLASS

Week 14
November 30th: Religion and Gender Roles
  o Griffith, “Submissive Wives, Wounded Daughters, and Female Soliders” (CourseDen)
  o Sechzer, “Islam and Women: Where Tradition Meets Modernity” (CourseDen)

December 2nd: Religion and Violence
  o Juergensmeyer, “Is Religion the Problem?” (CourseDen)
  o Other readings TBA on CourseDen

Wednesday, December 9th, 2-4:30 PM: Final Exam