

Time: Wednesdays, 6:10-8 pm Location: SS 1073 (Sidney Smith)
Instructor: Joseph M. Bryant
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Teaching Assistant: TBA

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Office Hours: by arrangement

NOTE: The prerequisite to take SOC250Y1 is completion of SOC100H1.

To study without reflection is a waste of time; reflection without study is dangerous. Confucius (c.500 BCE)

Other things may be seized by might, or purchased with money, but knowledge is to be gained only by study...
Samuel Johnson, *Rambler* #7 (1750)

Synopsis: This course will examine religious beliefs, practices, and experiences from a historical-sociological and comparative perspective. We will begin with an overview of the major social science approaches to the study of religious phenomena, highlighting the contributions of various classical as well as contemporary theories. Substantive topics to be explored will include the following: the nature-and-spirit based polytheisms of primal/aboriginal religions; the historic emergence of the major “world religions” (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam); religious institutionalization, and the heretical/schismatic movements that commonly arise to challenge emerging orthodoxies (with primary focus on early Christianity); the social “embeddedness” of religion, as it finds linkage and integration with other institutional spheres and practices, such as gender and sexuality, economic life, politics, war and revolution, the arts and sciences; religious regulation of the human body and person, by means of mystical, ascetic & penitential disciplines, miraculous and sacramental means of spiritual empowerment or blessing, and through the “social control” promises of afterlife rewards and punishments. We will conclude with an investigation of the opposing modern trends of secularization and fundamentalism, while also examining various new religious movements and cults.

Text: Lester Kurtz, *Gods in the Global Village: The World’s Religions in Sociological Perspective*, 3rd Edition, 2012; 4th ed., 2015. Cited as **K** (you can use either text; pages listed vary slightly)
The Online version of this textbook is available from the UofT library (with downloadable chapters):

<http://sk.sagepub.com.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/books/gods-global-village-worlds-religions-sociological-perspective-4e>

Requirements and Grading:

one **Field Report**, ~850 words, (Dec. 7 = 10%); one **Essay**, ~1400 words (Apr. 5 = 25%);
three **In-class Tests**: Oct. 26 – Feb. 8 – Mar 22 (= 30%); one comprehensive **Final Exam** (35%);

Learning Objectives: (1) To develop a comprehensive understanding of the major theoretical perspectives in the Sociology of Religion; (2) To comprehend the broad outlines of World religious history, as well as more detailed knowledge of selected cases and comparisons; (3) To gain practical experience in the tasks of researching and writing academic papers.

Academic Integrity is fundamental to learning at UofT. Familiarize yourself with the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*, at <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>. It is the University rule book for academic behaviour, and students are expected to know those rules.

Plagiarism Policy: Ouriginal

Sometimes, students will be required to submit their assignments to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>). For some of your assignments, we will be using the software *Ouriginal*. It uses text matching technology as a method to uphold the University's high academic integrity standards to detect any potential plagiarism. *Ouriginal* is integrated into Quercus. For the assignments set up to use *Ouriginal*, the software will review your paper when you upload it to Quercus. To learn more about *Ouriginal*'s privacy policy please review its [Privacy Policy](#).

Email policy: Owing to the large number of suspect/junk mailings I receive, I do not favor using this medium for class communication, other than for emergencies. My email address and home phone number are in the public domain, but my preference is for you to contact me in class for all course-related matters. **NOTE:** The TA should be contacted first regarding all routine course matters.

Missed Tests: For students with officially legitimate reasons and documentable proof for absences on test days, the policy will be to substitute a score from another assignment for the legitimately missed exam. **Missed Lectures:** *Students who miss classes are expected to obtain lecture notes from classmates.*

Policy on Extension Requests: *Extensions for completing course assignments can only be given in accordance with university rules, which are limited to medical situations or family emergencies.* Students who miss the test, or are late in submitting an assignment for medical reasons, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN). (NOTE: Because of Covid-19, students do NOT need to submit the usual documentation, i.e., medical notes or the Verification of Illness forms). Students who miss the test, or are late in submitting an assignment for other reasons, such as family or other personal reasons, should request their College Registrar to email the instructor. NOTE: Late papers without such documentation will not be accepted, and scored as '0' pts.

Accessibility Services: If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility> as soon as possible.

WRITING ASSISTANCE Students can find information about college writing centres at <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science>. It is recommended that you ***book appointments well in advance***, as the Writing Centres are commonly very busy. See also the website Writing at the University of Toronto at www.writing.utoronto.ca. For numerous practical advice files, see www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice. Information about the English Language Learning program (ELL) is available at <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>. There is also Reading eWriting, an online program that helps students engage course readings more effectively. For group instruction on writing and study skills, please refer students to the Writing Plus workshop series, described at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus>. In 2020-21, workshops will be conducted as Bb Collaborate webinars. Students can join the webinars on Quercus using the following link: <https://uoft.me/writingplus>.

FIRST TERM

1. Sept. 14 *Introduction: Religion as a Social Phenomenon*
Reading: **Kurtz**, Preface
2. Sept. 21 *Epistemological and Methodological Challenges in the Study of Religious Phenomena*
Reading: **K**, Chap. 1 “Religious Life in the Global Village” [pp. 1-9]
3. Sept. 28 *Social Scientific Theories of Religion: Marx, Durkheim, Weber*
Reading: **K**, Chap. 1 “Tools of the Trade ...” [pp. 9-30]
4. Oct. 5 *Theories (continued): Tylor, Frazer & Malinowski*
Reading: **K**, Chap. 1 “Religious Rituals ...” [pp. 30-44]
5. Oct. 12 *Contemporary Theoretical Approaches: Berger, Geertz, Feminist Theory*
Reading: **K**, review Chapter 1
6. Oct. 19 *Contemporary Approaches (continued)*
Reading: **K**, review Chapter 1
Tutorial Session (after lecture): Review in Preparation of Test # 1
7. Oct. 26 *Aboriginal/Primal Religions*
*** **Test # 1** ***
8. Nov. 2 *The Historical Sociology of Religion: Axial Age Foundations and Trajectories*
Reading: **K**, Chap. 4 “Indigenous Religions” [pp. 129-50]

- *** Nov. 7-11 *** **FALL TERM READING WEEK BREAK**

9. Nov. 16 *Trajectories in the World Religions: The Eastern Traditions*
Reading: **K**, Chap. 2 “Turning East: Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism” [pp. 45-86]
Tutorial Session (after lecture): Review in Preparation for Field Report Essay

10. Nov. 23 *Trajectories in the World Religions: The Western Traditions*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 3 “Western Traditions: Ancient Greeks, Judaism, Christianity ...” [pp. 87-110]
11. Nov. 30 *Trajectories: A Sociology of Early Christianity*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 3 “Islam ...” [pp. 110-19]
12. Dec. 7 *Heresies and Schisms in Early Christianity*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 3 “Social Construction ... Elementary Forms” [pp. 119-28]
**** Field Report Essay Assignment Due ****

Knowledge is praised and desired by multitudes whom her charms could never rouse from the couch of sloth; whom the faintest invitation of pleasure draws away from their studies; to whom any other method of wearing the day is more eligible than the use of books, and who are more easily engaged by any conversation than such as may rectify their notions or enlarge their comprehension.
 Samuel Johnson, *Rambler* #178 (1751)

SECOND TERM

1. Jan. 11 *Case Study: Max Weber’s “Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 5 “Religious Ethos ... Identity Construction” [pp. 151- 64]
2. Jan. 18 *Weber’s “Protestant Ethic” (continued)*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 5 “Religion and Stratification” [pp. 165-71]
3. Jan. 25 *Religion and Social Control: Heavenly Rewards and Hellish Torments*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 5 “Taboo Lines ... Sexuality” [pp. 171-98]
4. Feb. 1 *Religion and Social Control: Afterlife Beliefs in Historical-Comparative Perspective*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 5 “Religion and Politics ...” [pp. 198-210]
Tutorial Session (after lecture): Review in Preparation of Test # 2
5. Feb. 8 *Religious Regulation of the Human Body*
***** Test # 2 *****

6. Feb. 15 *Religion and Social Cohesion*
 Reading: **K**, review chapters 1-5

*** February 20-24 *** **WINTER TERM READING WEEK BREAK**

7. Mar. 1 *Religion and Social Conflict: Holy War, Aztec Sacrifice System, Crusades*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 8 “Religion and Social Conflict” [pp. 290-302]
 Tutorial Session (after lecture): Review in Preparation for Research Essay

8. Mar. 8 *Religion and Social Conflict* (continued)
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 8 “Religious Contributions to Nonviolence” [pp. 302-32]

9. Mar. 15 *Religion and Social Change*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 6 “Modernism and Multiculturalism” [pp. 211-21]
 Tutorial Session (after lecture): Review in Preparation of Test # 3

10. Mar. 22 *Modernity and Secularization*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 6 “Modernism and Multiculturalism” [pp. 221-50]
 *** **Test # 3** ***

11. Mar. 29 *New Religious Movements and Cults*
 Reading: **K**, Chap. 7 “Religious Movements for a New Century” [pp. 251-89]

12. April. 5 *Fundamentalisms Resurgent*
 ** **Research Essay Assignment Due** **

** **Comprehensive Final Exam** to be held during the Final Assessment Period: April 11 – 28,
Specific time and location TBA by OFR/ACE Final Grades due: May 4

And beware “the Curve of Forgetting”...

O mito é o nada que é tudo. ‘Ulisses’, by Fernando Pessoa

The world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel.
Horace Walpole