

Time: Wednesdays, 5:10 – 7 pm
Instructor: Joseph M. Bryant
Office: 700 University Av., 17th Flr., Sociology Dept.
Teaching Assistant: TBA

Location: Online, Quercus Zoom
Email: joseph.bryant@utoronto.ca
Office Hours: by arrangement

NOTE: The prerequisite to take SOC295H 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: religion in pre-history and 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 existing orthodoxies, with primary focus on Christianity (early and early modern periods); the social “embeddedness” of religion, as it finds linkage and integration with other institutional spheres and practices, including economic life, politics, war & inter-group violence, 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, (March 6 = 20%);
one **Research Essay**, ~1400 words (Apr. 3 = 30%);
two **Online Tests**: (Feb. 7 & Mar. 27 = 40%);
Critical Reflection, ~800 words (Apr. 7 = 10%)

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.

Course Policy on use of ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TOOLS

Higher Education is guided by an all-important distinction between *knowledge* and *information*. Knowledge develops through the critical processing of information, i.e., identifying its reliability, significance, making connections with other facts and findings, making note of informational gaps, limitations, and possible biases. *Knowledge*, as acquired through learning and study, is thus something **you possess** or carry within you, as applied, creative, and responsive intelligence. *Information* consists of evidence, data, reports, etc., that **you access** and obtain from external sources. Artificial intelligence tools allow for new and impressive means for acquiring and presenting information, and will doubtless find expanding use within universities in the years to come. However, since the primary purpose of Higher Education is to promote and facilitate knowledge development, the use of AI technologies in our course is strictly restricted to information-gather functions. Accordingly:

Students may not copy or paraphrase any material created by generative Artificial Intelligence applications, including ChatGPT and other AI writing and coding assistants, for the purpose of composing and completing any of the research & writing assignments in this course.

** Specifically: Field Report; Research Essay; Online Tests, and the Critical Reflection Commentary.

The knowing use of generative Artificial Intelligence tools for any purpose other than information-gathering will accordingly be considered an academic offense.

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](#). Students not wishing their assignment to be submitted through *Ouriginal* will not be assessed unless a student instead provides, along with their work, sufficient secondary material (e.g., reading notes, outlines of the paper, rough drafts of the final draft, etc.) to establish that the paper they submit is truly their own.

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: No “make-up” tests will be offered. 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 (or an average of completed assignments) for the legitimately missed test.

Students who miss a test or are late in submitting an assignment **due to MEDICAL REASONS**, need to email the instructor (not the TA), and also declare their absence on the system (ACORN). This can only be used once during the semester. Missed or late work **due to other reasons, such as family or other personal emergencies**, should contact their College Registrar to email the instructor regarding the circumstances.

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. Documentation will be required to establish compliance. ****DO NOT MAKE A REQUEST UNLESS IN COMPLIANCE.**** Late papers without such documentation be scored as ‘0’ pts.

MISSED LECTURES: *Students who miss classes are expected to obtain lecture notes from classmates.*

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 consider the Writing Plus workshop series, described at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus>.

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Publius Terentius Afer (c.195-160 BC) Roman comedic playwright from North Africa, Libyan Berber descent, purchased slave of a Roman senator, educated and later freed; six plays survive. Terence gives us a wonderful and inspiring motto for the social sciences (and life in general!):

Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto. “Being human, I consider nothing that is human alien to me.”

WINTER TERM 2024

1. Jan. 10 *Introduction: Religion as a Social Phenomenon*
Readings: Lecture Notes I; **Kurtz**, Preface
2. Jan. 17 *Epistemological and Methodological Challenges in the Study of Religious Phenomena*
Readings: Notes I; **K**, Chap. 1 “Religious Life in the Global Village” [pp. 1-9]
3. Jan. 24 *Social Scientific Theories of Religion: Marx, Durkheim, Weber*
Readings: Notes I; **K**, Chap. 1 “Tools of the Trade ...” [pp. 9-30]
4. Jan. 31 *Theories (continued): Tylor, Frazer & Malinowski, Feminist Approaches & Notes on Religion in Pre-History, Aboriginal Religions, Polytheisms and the Rise of the State*
Readings: Lecture Notes II & III; **K**, Chap. 1 “Religious Rituals ...” [pp. 30-44]; **K**, Chap. 4 “Indigenous Religions” [pp. 129-50]
5. Feb. 7 *Weber on Early Christianity: the Sect-Church Dynamic*
Readings: Notes IV; **K**, Chap. 2 “Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism” [pp. 45-86]
K, Chap. 3 “Western Traditions: Ancient Greeks, Judaism, Christianity” [pp. 87-110]

*** **Test # 1** *** [covering readings & lectures through week 4]
6. Feb. 14 *Weber on Early Christianity: the Sect-Church Dynamic (continued)*
Readings: Notes IV; **K**, Chap. 3 “Islam ...” [pp. 110-19]
- *** **READING WEEK FEB. 19-23** ***
7. Feb. 28 *Case Study: Max Weber’s “Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism”*
Readings: Notes V; **K**, Chap. 5 “Religious Ethos ...” [pp. 151- 64]
K, Chap. 3 “Social Construction ... Elementary Forms” [pp. 119-28]

** **Field Report Early Submission Option: 3 points Bonus** **
8. Mar. 6 *Max Weber’s “Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” (continued)*
Reading: Notes V; **K**, Chap. 5 “Religion and Stratification” [pp. 165-71]

** **Field Report: Religious Art & Symbolism Essay Assignment Due** **

9. Mar. 13 *Religion and Social Control: Afterlife Beliefs in Historical-Comparative Perspective*
 Readings: Notes VI; **K**, Chap. 5 “Taboo Lines ... Sexuality” [pp. 171-98]
10. Mar. 20 *Sociology of the Afterlife* (continued)
 Readings: Notes VII; **K**, Chap. 5 “Religion and Politics ...” [pp. 198-210]
11. Mar. 27 *Religion and Social Conflict: Holy War, Aztec Sacrifice System, Crusades*
 Readings: Notes VIII; **K**, Chap. 8 “Religion and Social Conflict” [pp. 290-302];
 K, Chap. 8 “Religious Contributions to Nonviolence” [pp. 302-32]

*** **Test # 2** *** [covering readings & lectures from week 5 through week 10]

12. Apr. 3 *Modernity and Secularization*
 Readings: Notes IX; **K**, Chap. 6 “Modernism and Multiculturalism” [pp. 211-50];
 K, Chap. 7 “Religious Movements for a New Century” [pp. 251-89]

**** Research Essay Assignment Due ****

**** Critical Reflection Assignment** Upload due date: Sunday, April 9

“O mito é o nada que é tudo.”

‘Ulisses’, by Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935)

“The most gangster shit in the world is to know what’s going on.”

Immortal Technique (Felipe Andres Coronel, b.1978)