Sociology of Religion – Sociology 129a

Brandeis University
Summer 2016 Session II
July 11 – August 10

Instructor: Margaret Clendenen
Office: Pearlman 104
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1:30pm – 3pm
Email: mclende@brandeis.edu

Class meetings: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 11am – 1:30pm
Location: TBA

Course Description

How do people live and experience religion in their day-to-day lives? Why do people decide to convert and how do they adopt new religious identities? How do LGBT people understand and relate to religion? How do people with different religious identities, including atheists and agnostics, interact with each other?

This course will encourage you to think through these, and many other, questions, by providing an introduction to the sociological study of religion. Over the course of our summer semester, we will think and talk together about what spirituality and religion are, and how they shape public and private life in the United States.

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:
- Understand what it means to study religion sociologically, and be able to analyze and discuss debates within the field.
- Analyze how religion and spirituality are present in public and private life in the United States.
- Describe how religion and spirituality are experienced by people across the life course, and how these experiences vary based on people’s social locations.

As sociologists, we’ll focus on how people live and experience religion(s). We’ll pay particular attention to people’s religious communities, their practices, and the religious identities that they develop. We will think critically about how people develop their religious identities, and the spaces in which they experience religion (both in and outside of formal religious community).
Please note that this is a draft syllabus and may change slightly before the semester begins.

Course Readings

The following books are required for the course:


All other required course readings are available through Latte.

Course Requirements and Grading Policies

**Attendance and Participation** – 15 points
You are expected to attend all class sessions, and come to class prepared to participate actively. Asking questions, discussing the readings, sending out relevant current events to the class via email, taking notes, and coming to chat about the class in office hours are all examples of active participation. I will reduce your participation grade for texting, using computers for non-class related purposes, etc.

Absences will only be excused for religious observances or documented illnesses. Each unexcused absence will result in a two-point deduction to your grade. *As summer classes cover a lot of material in each class, more than three unexcused absences will result in failure.*

**Papers** – 2 papers, 20 points each
You will be required to write two papers over the course of the semester. Each paper should be between 5 and 6 pages, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font. Questions for papers will be distributed on the Thursday before they are due. I will deduct two points for every day that papers are late, including weekends. For the first paper, you are required to schedule an individual meeting with me before the paper is due. You may submit a draft of your paper on the Monday before the paper is due, no later than 12pm.

**Site Visit** - 15 points
Before Monday, July 25th, you will attend a service or gathering at a religious center in the greater Boston area. You are highly encouraged to attend a religious center outside of the religious tradition(s) in which you were raised and/or currently belong. We will brainstorm potential sites in class. Please come to class on July 25th prepared to discuss your experiences, and with any materials that you may have gathered while there (bulletins, brochures, etc.) (5 points).

You will submit a 4-5 page, double-spaced reflection on your experiences by Thursday, July 28th (10 points). You may submit a draft of this assignment on the Monday before it is due, no later than 12pm.
Please note that this is a draft syllabus and may change slightly before the semester begins.

**Final** – 30 points

Your final exam will be due Friday, August 12
d by 12pm. The prompt will be distributed on Thursday, August 4th. The exam will consist of two essay questions, worth 15 points each. The total, combined length of the essays should be between 6-8 pages, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font. Late final exams will not be accepted. You may not submit drafts of your essays.

Grades are calculated as follows. *All assignments must be completed to receive a passing grade for this course.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>98 – 100</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77 – 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94 – 97</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>74 – 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90 – 93</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70 – 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87 – 89</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67 – 79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84 – 86</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>64 – 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80 – 83</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60 – 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**University Policies on Academic Integrity**

You are expected to be familiar with and to follow Brandeis University’s policies on academic integrity. I will refer any suspected instances of alleged dishonesty to the Office of Student Development and Conduct.

**University Policy on Academic Accommodations**

If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible.

Visiting students who have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations should contact Gwenn Smaxwill, Summer School Director (x63424) or smaxwill@brandeis.edu. Current Brandeis students should contact Academic Services (x63470) for assistance.

Letters of accommodation should be presented at the start of the semester to ensure provision of accommodations. Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.
Course Outline

Week 1: How do sociologists think about religion?

July 11  Introductions and Overview of the Course

July 12  Classics and Neoclassics

Chapter 1, “Religion and World Construction”

Chapter 1, “Definition of Religious Phenomena and of Religion”

July 14  America’s Changing Religious Landscape

Chapters 2-4


Week 2: How do religious identities change over time?

July 18  The New Paradigm


July 19  Changing Religious Traditions

Chapters 1-3

July 21  Changing Religious Traditions

*Paper 1 due*
Chapters 4-6

**Week 3 : Where do people experience religion?**

**July 25**  
**Religion in Congregations**

*Site Visit Due*


**July 26**  
**Lived Religion and Religion Outside of Congregations**

Chapter 6

Chapter 5

In class film: *The Dhamma Brothers*

**July 28**  
**Religion in Public Life**

*Site Visit Report Due*

Chapter 9, “Civil Religion in America”

Please note that this is a draft syllabus and may change slightly before the semester begins.

Week 4: How are identities shaped by religious traditions?

August 1 Ex-gay Identities

Chapters 1-3

August 2 Ex-gay Identities

Chapters 4–6 and Conclusion

August 4 LGBT identities

*Paper 2 due*

*Final Exam Distributed*


In class film: *A Jihad for Love* or *Trembling Before G-d*

Week 5: How do young adults experience religion?

August 8 Religion in Emerging Adulthood

Chapters 1, 6-7

In class film: *Soul Searching*

August 9 Religion on Campus


*The final will be due on Friday, August 12 by 12pm.*
Please note that this is a draft syllabus and may change slightly before the semester begins.