SO 401 A // Sociology of Religion
Fall 2015 / Dr. E. Camara

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Text / Reading Materials -- No formal or regular textbook will be required. The course will be based on readings -- either articles or excerpts from books -- which will be provided to the class either as handouts or as on-reserve materials. These readings will consist of articles, or excerpts from books. The on-reserve readings may be accessed online.

Course Objectives – This course presents the sociological treatment of religion in terms of how religion can be defined, its major structural features, and its role in the lives of individuals, and within the social system as a whole.

The course also looks at how religions begin, how religion may function as a source of social stability and integration, or as a source of social conflict and social change.

Learning Outcomes -- Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the nature of religion in general, as a fundamental human effort to deal with the unknown and to exercise control over Nature.
- Understand the effect of religion on social life as a whole, as well as at the individual level.
- Look at religion in comparative perspective, and realize the similarity of its basic function and purpose across all human societies.
- Be less ethnocentric with reference to how they view and relate to the religious system of their own society.
Testing and Grading - (Tentative schedule – i.e., the tests may be multiple choice -)

Four essay-type exams are planned for the semester, including the final. The final is not comprehensive. It is based on the material covered after the last regular test. The tests are graded on a 100-point scale, and account for 80% of your course grade.

A number of quizzes (8-10), as well as a few short written assignments, will also be given on a regular basis, and will account for 20% of the course points.

If a written assignment is given, you will be handed a sheet with specific instructions, and allowed 2 weeks to prepare and turn in the assignment.

These assignments must be turned in on the date specified. A grace period of one week may be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Important - The in-class work (i.e., the quizzes) and the written assignments cannot be made up later.

The tests will be based mainly on the lecture material and assigned readings. Students will be responsible for everything covered in class, even if it is not covered in the textbook. Therefore, it is critically important that you keep regular attendance, take good notes, and be actively involved with class discussion of the material.

Video documentaries related to the material presented in class will also be shown, on a regular basis. Some test questions will be based on these videos.

Grading Scale

The tests will be worth 80% of your final course grade, with the remaining 20% consisting of the quizzes and written reports. The total number of possible points for the course is 500 pts (4 tests amounting to 400 points, and 100 points for the quizzes & reports).

The grade given on the quizzes & reports represents the percentage obtained from the 100 points. — At the end of the semester, these percentages are added up and divided by the number of quizzes & written reports given during the semester. The result is the average percentage of the possible quiz / report points (i.e., of the 100 pts.).

The points obtained from the quizzes are then added to the points obtained from the tests. The corresponding grading scale will be:
A  93% of 500 points = 465 points  
A-  90%   "   = 450 "  
B+  87%   "   = 435 "  
B   83%   "   = 415 "  
B-  80%   "   = 400 "  
C+  77%   "   = 385 "  
C   70%   "   = 350 "  
D   60%   "   = 300 "  

Important - There will be no extra-credit work!

Effective Fall 2001, core courses in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology must be passed with a “C” or above for all majors and minors.

Attendance - Regular attendance is a critical factor for successful class performance. Therefore, an attendance policy will be enforced. Students are allowed to miss the equivalent of two weeks -- (i.e., 4 class periods for a T-R class) -- for any reason, without penalty.

Additional absences will result in the reduction of points from the final grade. Specifically, each additional three absences reduces your grade by 5 percentage points - e.g., a B+ to a B-. An additional six absences lowers the final course score by one full letter grade.

If you miss a class for any reason, there is no need to call to notify me. Just make sure you are within the limit of absences allowed. If you are not sure, you can check this with me when you return to class. If you have exceeded the limit, this needs to be discussed with me.

Excessive absences may lead to the official withdrawal from the class. (The University Policy regarding this matter is attached).

Students are also required to be on time. The basic guideline is this: If the student comes in after his/her name has been called, it is his/her responsibility to let me know this after class so that the absence will be removed.

If you have to leave class early, I must also be notified beforehand. Otherwise, this counts as an absence.
All electronic devices must be off during class time, especially cell phones and beepers, which can be very disruptive of class proceedings.

Make-up Exams -- You will be allowed to make up one missed test (but not any of the quizzes, unless the student has been off campus with some campus organization). The make-up test will be essay, and will be given on the last day of classes (Friday afternoon).

Consultation -- Regular consultation with me should enhance your class performance. I encourage everyone to get assistance with the coursework as soon as you think you need it. My office hours are listed, or you can also schedule an appointment.

- There will be no early taking of Final Tests at the end of the semester, as consistent with the University position on this issue. Therefore, plan accordingly (i.e., re-travel arrangements, etc.)