

Wendy W. Young Course Syllabus

Prepared for the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture by:

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The Center is pleased to share with you the syllabi for introductory courses in American religion that were developed in seminars led by Dr. Wade Clark Roof of the University of California, Santa Barbara. In all of the seminar discussions, it was apparent that context, or the particular teaching setting, was an altogether critical factor in envisioning how students should be introduced to a field of study. The justification of approach, included with each syllabus, is thus germane to how you use the syllabus.

I. Syllabus Justification

This survey course in the sociology of religion is designed for a class of thirty undergraduate majors in Sociology. The emphasis is on theory and qualitative methods, while exposing the student to a wide variety of authors and themes. The beginning of the course leads the student through the several conceptual frameworks created by the founding fathers of the academic study of religion including: Durkheim, Weber, Marx and Freud. The latter portion expands the course to consider feminist and multi-cultural perspectives and ends with consideration of the problem of individualism in a post-modern world.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

Sociology of Religion: Dead White Men and Beyond

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to take part in discussions and to complete the following assignments:

1. An essay exam based on readings
2. An ethnographic study of a group chosen by the student
3. A final exam based on readings

Required Books:

- Robert Bellah *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, 2nd ed, University of California Press, [1996] c1985
- Karen McCarthy Brown *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* University of California Press, 1991

- Nancy Eisland and Penny Becker Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader , AltaMira Press, 1997
- Sigmund Freud The Future of an Illusion Norton, [1975] c1961
- Karl Marx The Communist Manifesto (any version)
- A Course Packet (items marked with an *)

Schedule:

I. ORIENTATIONS

-Week One: Defining Religion

II. THE FOUNDING FATHERS

A. First Generation

-Week Two: DURKHEIM

*Durkheim, p.13-33, 236-262, 474, 496 in The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life (The Free Press, 1965)

FILM: Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World, "The Art of Living"

PBS Home video

-Week Three: WEBER

Selections *From Max Weber, (Gerth and Mills, Oxford University Press, 1958) and *Weber, chapters 1,2,3,9 Sociology of Religion (Methuen & Co., London, 1965)

-Week Four: MARX

Selections *The Marx-Engels Reader 2 nd ed. (New York: WW Norton, 1978)

*Fromm, Ch 4, "The Nature of Man" in Marx's Concept of Man, (Frederick Ungar Publishing Co, New York, 1979)

The Communist Manifesto

FILMS: Excerpts from Metropolis, Modern Times

-Week Five: Sigmund Freud

The Future of An Illusion

B. Second Generation

-Week Six: Robert Bellah

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***"Religious Evolution," "Meaning and Modernization" and "Civil Religion" in Bellah Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World, (Harper & Row, c1970)

-Week Seven: Peter Berger

*Berger "The Problem of Theodicy", pp 3-80 in The Sacred Canopy: Elements of A Sociological Theory of Religion (Anchor Books, Doubleday, 1990 c.1967)

-Week Eight: Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner

**Geertz "Religion as a Cultural System" in Lessa and Vogt Reader in Comparative Religion , (Harper & Row, 1972),

"Ethos, World View and Analysis of Sacred Symbols" (in The Interpretation of Cultures, Basic Books, c1973)

*Turner "Liminality and Communitas" in The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, (Aldine Publishing Co., c1969)

-Week Nine:

MID-TERM: An in-class essay exam covering the required readings.

III. GENDER AND MULTICULTURALISM

(With an Exploration of Qualitative Methods)

Mini-ethnography assigned (see attached)

Ethnographies

-Week Ten: Nancy Eisland and Penny Becker Religion and Ethnography

FILM: Barbara Myerhoff In Her Own Time

-Week Eleven: Karen McCarthy Brown Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn

-Week Twelve: (above continued)

FILM: Randall Balmer Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory

IV. MODERNITY AND THE PROBLEM OF INDIVIDUALISM

-Week Thirteen: Bellah Habits of the Heart (2nd ed.)

First half

-Week Fourteen:

Bellah Habits of the Heart

Second half

-Week Fifteen: Mini-ethnography due

Presentations of ethnographic projects

-Week Sixteen:

Presentations

-Week Seventeen:

FINAL EXAM: To be taken in class. Based on the required readings.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Mid-term 30%

Ethnographic Project 30%

Class participation and presentation 10%

Final 30%