

Lori G. Beaman Course Syllabus

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

Lori G. Beaman
Department of Sociology
University of Lethbridge

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

I have taught sociology of religion at the undergraduate level two times. In both cases I used a cooperative learning teaching strategy, which was in some senses a follow-up to the teaching apprenticeship I completed at the University of New Brunswick. The first week of the course is designed to introduce students into the cooperative learning method. I use a variety of materials, both academic and popular, to help students to understand both the learning method and the subject matter. In addition to the main topic areas, in my "mini-lectures" I weave a number of key concepts through the course, as well as draw insights from the "founding fathers" where applicable.

When I am teaching a fully integrated cooperative learning class, much of my work is "behind the scenes", organizing team exercises which facilitate engagement with the materials in an in-depth way. It is my task to structure positive interdependence as well as individual accountability.

As much as possible, I try to use Canadian materials to draw out some of the contemporary debates surrounding the social scientific study of religion, including secularization. This presents a real dilemma which was, frankly, highlighted for me during our first meeting. The social scientific study of religion is a booming area of study in the United States, which is in rather sharp contrast to the situation in Canada. There is a long and ingrained tradition of critical/socialist scholarship in Canadian sociology which has had a dampening effect on the study of religion. There is a tendency to read Marx's comments on religion as some sort of injunction against the study of religion. My problem? While the materials from the United States are good, and in some cases pertinent to Canadian issues, in many cases they are not as relevant to the sociology of religion in Canada.

II. Introductory Course Syllabus

Sociology 3303
Sociology of Religion

L. Beaman
September - December 1998

Office: C534 Monday/Wednesday 2:30 - 4:00
Phone: 329-2552

1.0 ABOUT THE COURSE

This course is a beginning exploration of theoretical and substantive issues relating to the sociology of religion. One goal of this course is to enable you to understand your own religious experience or background in the context of a variety of religious traditions. While the course focuses primarily on Western religions, there will be some integration of material which examines New Religious Movements. Another goal of the course is to explore the continuing relevance of religion in today's world. A third aim is to focus on issues of gender and religion, in particular, women as clergy and women as religious practitioners. Finally, we will seek to understand, compare and contrast, the worldviews of two particular religious groups, evangelicals and fundamentalists.

2.0 TEACHING METHOD

This course will blend more traditional styles of teaching, ie. lecturing, with active learning strategies, including cooperative learning group activities. Individual assessment will be on the basis of both group and individual activities. You are responsible for all material presented in class, including instructor lectures, group presentations and guest speakers.

Given the course structure and the incorporation of cooperative learning strategies, class attendance is essential. Attendance records will be kept and missed work will be deferred or reallocated only with medical documentation.

Although university regulations allow for course withdrawal well into the term, because of the nature of this course I would ask you to make your commitment to this course by September 15. Permanent learning groups will be assigned on September 18 and to withdraw after that date would be disruptive to your team and to the success of the course.

3.0 GRADING PLAN

Some activities are assessed on a complete/not complete basis. Team presentations and individual essays or fieldwork are assessed according to specific criteria to be provided in class.

Type of learning activity Maximum Points Possible

- A. Team based activities 30 (5-6 points each/ completed or not completed)
- B. Class Presentation by Team 60
- C. Peer Assessment of Contribution to team 10

D. Record of Class Attendance *10 (allowance of two absences without medical documentation)

E. Check for understanding 60 (in class test; 2 at 30 points each)

F. Team Response to Essay-Style Questions 30 (3 at 10 points each, completed/not completed)

G. Analytical Essay (individual) 60

TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE 260

* deductions to point allocations will be made for any in-class activities missed as a consequence of absence. Deferrals can be made only with proper medical documentation.

Grading Scheme Conversion Table

U of L Letter Grade Total Points Accumulated

A+ 240-260
A 215-239
A- 195-214
B+ 185-194
B 170-184
B- 155-169
C+ 145-154
C 130-144
D 115-129
F 0-114

4.0 REQUIRED READINGS

One required text is available at the U of L Bookstore:

Bibby, Reginald 1987 *Fragmented Gods: The Poverty and Potential of Religion in Canada*. Toronto: Stoddart.

Other required readings are on reserve at the Library. The majority of these readings are books and will be used in conjunction with team presentations to the class.

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2. Gillespie, Joanna Bowen 1995 *Women Speak: Of God, Congregations and Change*. Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International
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12. Carlson, Joanne Brown and Carole R. Bohn (eds) 1989 *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*. Ohio: The Pilgrim Press.
13. Barker, Eileen 1984 *The Making of a Moonie: Choice or Brainwashing*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

5.0 COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE TOPIC AND ACTIVITIES READINGS

Sept. 11 Course introduction/learning about cooperative learning part 1

Sept. 13 Learning about cooperative learning part 2

Sept. 18 Team building- team activity; introduction to sociology of religion (lecture) Hewitt, chapter 3

Sept. 20 Religion in Canada Bibby, 2,3,4,5 introductory lecture; teach and share

Sept. 25 complete teach and share; team activity

Sept. 27 teach and share Bibby, 6,7,8,9

Oct. 21 ecture and discussion (what is Bibby telling us?) team activity Bibby (1993); 3,4; Westheus critique

Oct. 4 team activity [preparation for class presentation; preparation for checking for understanding test]

Oct. 9 No class- Thanksgiving

Oct. 11 checking for understanding test #1

Oct. 16 Class Presentation: Team A Donald Kraybill *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (20-30 minute presentation; questions after; team activity; review of checking for understanding test)

Oct. 18 team activity chapters 2, 13 Kraybill and Olshan

Oct. 23 New Religious Movements

Class Presentation: Team B Eileen Barker, The Making of a Moonie team activity

Oct. 25 mini-lecture; team activity McGuire, chapter 3, pp.71-92

Oct. 30 Religion and Gender

Class Presentation: Team C Gillespie- Women Speak team activity

Nov. 1 team activity Hewitt, 11; McGuire, chapter 4 pp. 111-129

Nov. 6 Conservative Protestants

Class Presentation: Team D Bible Believers, Nancy Ammerman

Nov. 8 lecture and discussion Lechner, "Fundamentalism Revisited";

Nov. 13 team activity Selections from Hunter

Nov. 15 team response

Nov. 20 Where are we? Checking for understanding prep.

Nov. 22 Checking for understanding: in class test #2

Nov. 27 Guest Lecture: Aboriginal Spirituality

Nov. 29 Religion and Violence Neitz (Nason-Clark's chapter); Readings from Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse

Dec. 4 Team Activity

Dec. 6 Reporting Back

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