

Feeling Faith: Religion, Emotions, and American Society
SOC 370
MW 2:00-3:15 pm

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Office Hours: [By Appointment Only](#)

“We should not use emotions only to make sense of social outbursts and other pathological episodes, but to understand all the routine and core elements of social life.”
(Barbalet 2005:53)

“By offering to order emotional lives not just differently, but in accordance with a truer, more foundational, more satisfying pattern, religion proposes a new structuring of relationships, and with it an emotional restructuring. Religion reconfigures emotions by reconfiguring earthly and heavenly relationships, as well as vice versa.”
(Riis and Woodhead 2012:70)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Americans often view emotions as personal and individualistic, but social norms and institutions, such as religion, shape what people feel, when they feel, and how they express their feelings. Emotions, in turn, also structure religious views on what it means to become spiritual and belong to faith traditions. The course explores the social organization of emotions by examining what feeling rules reveal about religious authority and identity in American society.

READINGS:

All readings will be available through Perusall. It is important to do all the reading *and* attend classes. I will cover important topics during class which will not be addressed in your readings, and vice versa. Therefore, both reading and class attendance are equally necessary for success.

General Education Overview:

Social Problems fulfills one course unit of the Analysis of Values (AV) shared curriculum requirement. AV classes critically examine normative values concerning questions of what ought to be the case. In particular, the AV element of shared curriculum asks us to:

1. Introduce students to the process of intellectual inquiry and develop students' critical thinking skills;
2. Develop students' ability to evaluate competing ideas and experiences;
3. Develop students' skills in the conventions and structures of presenting knowledge in written academic and public discourse, and on strategies for effective revision; Provide students with opportunities to observe and/or to interact directly with individuals involved in the ongoing operations of one or more contemporary social institutions.
4. Engage students in learning activities that prepare them for academic life in the university

Our exploration of religion and emotions will help you meet these goals. Drawing on the sociological perspective, we will consider how faith traditions construct, transmit, and normalize appropriate feelings.

EVALUATION:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| In-Class Engagement | 10% |
| One-on-One Meeting | 2% |
| Perusall | 20% |
| Emotional Exercises | 30% |
| Literature Review | 23% (2% Topic, 6% Bibliography, 15% Paper) |
| Final Exam | 15% |

Attendance, Participation, and Engagement – (10%)

Attendance and class participation are important parts of the learning process. As a result, I will take attendance each class period. You can expect that each session will involve time for discussion and it’s important that you come ready to actively participate. This includes coming to class prepared (contemplating the readings), taking an active role in class discussions, using technology only for classroom purposes, offering insightful sociological comments, and other general signs of engagement. All of these factor into the engagement score which assess in-class performance over the course of the semester.

One-on-One Meeting – (2%)

In an attempt to get to know all my students and give you time to discuss the course, I will be meeting with everyone in the class one-on-one. The meetings will be brief (about ten minutes). After the first few weeks of class, I will post a sign-up to Moodle. You will receive full credit by completing the meeting with me. As a result, it is important to notify me in advance if you will be unable to make our scheduled meeting.

Perusall – (20%)

All readings and podcasts will be posted to Perusall. Each assigned item is graded holistically which means you will receive credit for completing the reading/podcast, posing insightful questions/comments, and engaging with the online discussion. Be sure to use the assignment tab when interacting with the course materials. At the end of the semester, the lowest individual score will be dropped and the remaining ones will be cumulatively weighted.

Emotions Exercises – (30%: 10% each)

At the end of each unit, you will complete an “emotion exercise” to synthesize insights from the course materials and apply them to your own observation about religion. For the first assignment, you’ll synthesize sociological approaches to emotions and religions into a theoretical perspective to analyze a religious text (e.g. holy scripture, religious self-help, religious educational material, etc.) The second exercise necessitates conducting observations of a religious ritual or worship to analyze how religious emotional regimes construct a sense of the transcendent. For the final exercise, you will interview a religious person to learn about how people engage in emotion work and emotion management strategies about how to align their personal feelings with expectations of their faith.

Literature Review – (23%: 2% Topic, 6% Bibliography, 15% Paper)

While we will cover a variety of religion and emotions in this course, we will still have only scratched the surface of existing research. Each student will select a topic of interest to examine the existing research and write a literature review. To provide you feedback and

help you develop your scholarly interest in religious emotional regimes, you will submit a brief topic paper describing what you want to study and an annotated bibliography to have your sources approved. The final paper will be due on the last day of class.

Grading Scale:

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|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|
| 94-100% A | 89-87% B+ | 79-77% C+ | 69-60% D |
| 93-90% A- | 86-83% B | 76-73% C | 59-0% F |
| | 82-80% B- | 72-70% C- | |

POLICIES:

- COURSE CONTENT:** *The class contains content which may result in emotional reactions.* In the pursuit to study the social significance of emotions, we will examine how emotions are produced, sustained, augmented, and managed in a variety of settings some of which may be new and others may be deeply familiar. Additionally, our exploration of the power, privilege, and marginalization of emotions will mean that we will discuss structural inequalities, such as racism, sexism, etc. which may mean that at some point in the class (whether reading the materials beforehand, during lectures, or in the class discussions) you will have your own emotional reaction. You may find yourself feeling embarrassed, angry, frustrated, excited or generally uncomfortable. Yet, to study emotions or religion sociologically, means that we must confront, question, and, perhaps even, critique the assumptions and experiences that undergird our reactions. While people will likely hold different personal views and have a range of experiences (positive and negative) with class subjects, it's important to create a classroom climate that is respectful and full of mutual consideration. Please look over the syllabus closely, including upcoming titles of readings, if there is a topic that you have concerns about I recommend speaking with me in advance.
- READINGS:** *Do all the assigned readings for class.* Discussion is an important part of the class structure and it will be extremely difficult to participate without having read the materials.
- LATE POLICY:** *Assignments need to be turned in on time.* Please note “on time” means at the start of class on the day the assignment is due. I only grant extensions if students can provide written documentation and arrange the conditions beforehand with me. Late assignments will be accepted, but with a penalty. For every day (twenty-four hours) an assignment is late it will receive a 10% deduction with a maximum penalty of 50%. In other words, students that have missed an assignment for any reason may make-up the assignment at a later date with a deduction. All late work, however, must be submitted by the final exam period.
- MISSED CLASS SESSIONS:** *Contact a classmate for lecture notes and ask me if you have any questions about them.* Since the information provided in class often complements but differs from the assigned materials, you will want to be sure to obtain class notes if you're absent. Since the lectures will not be posted to Moodle or provided by email, you should contact someone from the class to borrow their notes. If you have any questions or clarifications on the material, I encourage you to speak with me.
- CHEATING:** *Do not cheat.* This means no copying answers, plagiarism, or any other violation of the guidelines established in [Illinois Wesleyan University's Policy and](#)

[Regulations](#). If you have any questions about what counts as cheating or plagiarism, then please see the section below and/or feel free to speak with me.

- **CLASSROOM CONFIDENTIALITY:** In the interest of the privacy of everyone in the class, to create a space where students can freely work through the challenging and personal material, I will not conduct or allow recording of any class sessions. It is important to recognize that people will be coming to the course with different backgrounds, experiences, and exposure to the topic. No one is required to share anything personal in class, but if students choose to do so then others should interact respectfully and be thoughtful about how they discuss any revelations learned in the class.

Expectations for the Classroom:

- Only use technology for learning purposes. This means all cell phones should be silenced and put away. Any tablets or laptops should be used for the purpose of taking notes or examining the course materials. I reserve the right to rescind this privilege for any student that I observe using their computers for non-course related matters or that distracts other students. Consistent misuse of technology will detrimentally impact your engagement score at the end of the term.
- Please respect other people in the class which means paying attention when they are speaking and not talking over others or doing other work. In addition, do not attack anyone for their viewpoint. If you disagree with someone, do so respectfully.
- Please arrive on time and stay for the entire class period. Students walking in late or leaving before others is distracting for everyone. If you must arrive late or leave early for any reason, notify me and sit close to the door to minimize any disturbance.

Disability Accommodation

[Illinois Wesleyan University's Accessibility Services](#) coordinates accommodations and services for students. If you have a disability for which you may request accommodation in this class and have not contacted Accessibility Services, please do as soon as possible. I will need to receive confirmation from them before I can provide any accommodations. Additionally, please come speak to me directly about the accommodations to ensure that we make this course a positive learning experience for you.

Mental Health and Counseling Services

[Illinois Wesleyan University's Counseling Services](#) are available for students that are experiencing a crisis or feel that mental health concerns are impacting their ability to succeed. If you find that you're struggling in your courses for any reason, I encourage you to reach out to the resources on campus. In addition to the counseling services, you may want to contact your academic advisor and instructor about how to develop strategies to take care of yourself without falling behind in your courses.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Please note Illinois Wesleyan University has defined [cheating](#) as "as giving or receiving information, or using material, in exams, assignments, and projects when it is not allowed. Some examples of cheating include copying from another person during an exam, using "cheat sheets" or other proscribed materials during an exam, collusion on take-home exams or other assignments where it has been expressly prohibited, and the submission of a

laboratory report based on falsified data or any data not obtained by the student in the manner indicated by the instructor.” Additionally, they have defined [plagiarism](#) as “the intentional or inadvertent misrepresentation as one’s own, the words, ideas, research data, formulae or artistic creations of another individual or collective body, without giving credit to the originator(s) of those words, ideas, data, formulae or artistic creations.” Both are serious offenses and can result in failing the assignment or even the class depending on the severity of the offense.

Extra Credit

You will have the opportunity to earn extra credit in this class by attending a sociologically relevant talk, listening to one of the podcasts, or reading a chapter posted as optional in Perusall. To earn the points, you will have to write a two-page paper – the first page should summarize the talk/podcast/chapter and the second page should discuss/analyze what you learned in light of the course material. The successful completion of this extra credit activity will add 1% to your final grade. You may only submit two extra credit papers. Since the options are available all semester, I have a rolling due date. To receive credit, you must submit the written assignments by the 5:00 pm on the last day of classes (December 9th). Please note that no late submissions are allowed for extra credit.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

PART I – INTRODUCTIONS

Introduction: Welcome to the Course!

Thinking Sociologically About Emotions

- Harris, Scott. 2015. “Thinking Sociologically about Emotions.” Pps. 1-14 in *An Invitation to the Sociology of Emotions*. New York: Routledge.
- Barbalet, Jack. 2006. “Emotions.” *Contexts* 5(2):51-53.
- Hochschild, Arlie. 1997. “The Sociology of Emotion as a Way of Seeing.” Pps. 3-16 in *Emotions in Social Life: Critical Themes and Contemporary Issues*, eds. Gillian Bendelow and Simon Williams. New York: Routledge.
- Kolb, Kenneth. 2014. “Emotional Subcultures.” *Sociology Compass* 8(11):1229-1241.

Thinking Sociologically About Religion

- McGuire, Meredith. 2008. “Everyday Religion as Lived.” Pps. 3-17 in *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Orsi, Robert. 1997. “Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion.” Pps. 3-21 in *Lived Religion in America*, ed. David Hall. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Winchester, Daniel. 2014. “The Feel of Faith.” [The Society Pages](#), August 18th.

Emotion Exercise #1 Due – Locating Socio-Religious Beliefs in Materials

PART II – RELIGIOUS EMOTION REGIMES

Religious Emotions – Emotion Norms and Feeling Rules

- Hochschild, Arlie. 2012. “Feeling Rules.” Pps. 35-55 in *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Riis, Ole and Linda Woodhead. 2010. "Religious Emotion." Pps. 54-94 in *A Sociology of Religions Emotion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Nelson, Timothy. 1996. "Sacrifice of Praise: Emotion and Collective Participation in an African-American Worship Service." *Sociology of Religion* 57(4):379-96.
- Creek, SJ. 2013. "Not Getting Any Because of Jesus": The Centrality of Desire Management to the Identity Work of Gay, Celibate Christians." *Symbolic Interaction* 36(2):119-36.

Becoming Religious – Emotional Socialization

- Wilkins, Amy. 2008. "'Happier than Non-Christians': Collective Emotions and Symbolic Boundaries among Evangelical Christians." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 71(3):281-301.
- Jacobs, Janet. 2011. "The Cross-Generational Transmission of Trauma: Ritual and Emotion among Survivors of the Holocaust." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 40(3):342-361.

Case Study: Transcendent

- Durkheim, Emile. 1912/1995. *Elementary of Forms of Religious Life*. Pps. 216-225, in version translated by Karen Fields. New York: Free Press.
- Wellman, James, Katie Corcoran, and Kate Stockly-Meyerdirk. 2014. "'God is like a Drug...': Explaining Interaction Ritual Chains in American Megachurches." *Sociological Forum* 29(3):650-72.
- Moon, Dawne. "The Truth of Emotions in Everyday Theologies." Pps. 180-205 in *God, Sex, & Politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Emotion Exercise #2 Due – Observing Religious Emotion Regimes in Rituals

PART III – RELIGIOUS EMOTION WORK

Doing Religion – Emotion Management

- Delehanty, Jack. 2018. "The Emotional Management of Progressive Religious Mobilization." *Sociology of Religion* 79(2):248-72.
- Sharp, Shane. 2010. "How Does Prayer Help Manage Emotions?" *Social Psychology Quarterly* 73(4):417-37.
- O'Brien, John. 2017. "On Being a Muslim in Public." Pps. 112-48 In *Keeping it Halal: The Everyday Lives of Muslim American Teenage Boys*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Irby, Courtney. 2018. "Instructions for God's Gift: Emotional Management in the Cultural Transmission of Evangelical Sexuality." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 48(5):645-73.

Forging Religious Community – Emotion Work

- Wolkomir, Michelle. 2001. "Emotion Work, Commitment, and the Authentication of the Self: The Case of Gay and Ex-Gay Christian Support Groups." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 30(3):305-44.
- Jenkins, Kathleen. 2014. "Divorce Work as Cultural Strategy." Pps. 44-74 in *Sacred Divorce: Religion, Therapeutic Culture, and Ending Life Partnerships*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

- Smith, Jesse. 2017. "Can the Secular be the Object of Belief and Belonging? The Sunday Assembly." *Qualitative Sociology* 40:83-109.

Religious Authority – Emotions and Power

- Moon, Dawne. 2005. "Emotion Language and Social Power: Homosexuality and Narratives of Pain in Church." *Qualitative Sociology* 28(4):327-349.
- Gaddini, Katie. 2022. "Wounds that Never Heal." Pps.149-178 in *The Struggle to Stay: Why Single Evangelical Women are Leaving the Church*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brescoll, Victoria. 2016. "Leading with their hearts? How Gender Stereotypes of Emotion Lead to Biased Evaluations of Female Leaders." *The Leadership Quarterly* 27:415-428.

Case Study: Calling

- McGee, Micki. 2005. "From Calling to Vision: Spiritual, Secular, and Gendered Notions." Pps. 25-48 in *Self-Help, Inc.: Makeover Culture in American Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gallagher, Sally. 2017. "Growing." Pps. 98-125 in *Getting to Church: Exploring Narratives of Gender and Joining*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, Roman. 2014. "Constructing a Calling: The Case of Evangelical Christian International Students in the United States." *Sociology of Religion* 74(2):254-80.
- Pitt, Richard and Stephen Behnke. 2012. "Introduction." Pps. 3-16 in *Divine Callings: Understanding the Call to Ministry in Black Pentecostalism*. New York: New York University Press.

Emotion Exercise #3 Due – Interview about Religious Emotion Work

Literature Review Paper Due

Final Exam