

Proposal for Connections: Systems

Contact person: Steve Groce, Sociology Department: steve.groce@wku.edu

1. What course does the department plan to offer in *Connections*? Which subcategory are you proposing for this course? (Social and Cultural, Local to Global, Systems)
Sociology 322 (Religion in Society). I am proposing the course for inclusion in Systems subcategory.
2. How will this course meet the specific learning objectives of the appropriate subcategory? Please address **all** of the learning outcomes listed for the appropriate subcategory.

SOCL 322 focuses on several fundamental questions concerning the nature of religion as a system of beliefs and practices: 1) What is religion?; 2) Where did it come from and how has it evolved?; and 3) What is the function of religion both in individuals' lives (attitudes, beliefs, behaviors) and in the structure of society and its component institutions (especially government, economy and family)?

A. Analyze how systems evolve.

Religion In Society traces the evolution of systems of religious beliefs and practices from Durkheim's treatments of non-Western, non-industrial, tribal societies up to contemporary scholars' studies of faith communities in the contemporary United States (with primary focus on Christianity, and secondary emphases on Judaism and Islam).

B. Compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems.

Religion In Society exposes students to the eight fundamental components of religious belief/practice systems: cohesiveness (the degree to which individuals in a given faith community feel bonded together), goals (both instrumental and expressive), norms (including appearance and performance norms), sanctions (reactions by the group to deviations from normative expectations within the group), differentiation (in terms of both division of labor [roles] and power/authority structures within faith communities), argot (specialized language and terminology), artifacts (both practical and symbolic), and ideology (weltanschauung, world-view). Each component is then observed as interdependent to/on the other components, collectively functioning to reinforce and reproduce religion as a system.

C. Evaluate how system-level thinking informs decision-making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself.

Religion in Society emphasizes the influence of religious beliefs and practices on other social institutions, most notably the government, the economy, and the family. It forces students to analyze the role religion has played, and continues to play, in:

- Political issues (examples include: "personhood" legislation, the pro-choice vs pro-life debate, legislation impacting women's reproductive health, the "marriage" debate, and the recent debate over whether businesses have the right

to refuse service to people on religious grounds), debated by organizations such as federal/state legislatures and courts (Supreme and lower);

- The entrenchment and reproduction of the social class structure (for example, how various faith communities contribute to class structure maintenance through either the theodicy of good fortune or the theodicy of despair) and;
 - In families in the United States (particularly in terms of its role in the childhood socialization process and its potential as a source of conflict within families (for example, heterogamous families [parents are of different religions/faiths/denominations]).
3. In addition to meeting the posted learning outcomes, how does this course contribute uniquely to the *Connections* category (i.e., why should this course be in Colonnade)? Discuss in detail.

Religion in Society makes a unique contribution to the Connections category by making the average WKU student think critically about how religion functions, as a system, both in her/his life individually and in the larger society. The course challenges students to examine their own beliefs and attitudes concerning religion, as well as those of other family members—and how these beliefs and attitudes are significant sources of meaning in their lives. At the same time, it forces them to examine how religion has left its mark (and continues to do so), in terms of both cohesion and conflict, on virtually every institutional aspect of society—from formal legislation in Congress to standards of “decency” that regulate most every form of media they consume. Sociology, in particular, is uniquely equipped to make the afore-mentioned contributions due to its fundamental “debunking tendency”—the never ending quest to look behind/beneath surface appearances for underlying systemic features and relationships.

4. Please identify any prerequisites for this course. NOTE: Any prerequisites MUST be *Colonnade Foundations* or *Explorations* courses.
The prerequisite for Religion in Society is SOCL 100 or consent of instructor.
5. Syllabus statement of learning outcomes for the course. NOTE: In multi-section courses, the same statement of learning outcomes must appear on every section’s syllabus.
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
- Analyze the multi-dimensional nature of systems of religious beliefs and practices and how they have changed over time [analyze how systems evolve and compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire system];
 - Evaluate ways in which the system of religion in the United States influences and impacts other social institutions—such as our system of government, our economic system, and the family [evaluate how system-level thinking informs decisions making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself];
 - Describe the ways in which religion acts as a source of both conflict and cohesion at the macro level [evaluate how system-level thinking informs

decisions making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself]; and

- Understand how religion functions as a significant source of meaning for individuals at the micro level [compare the study of individual components to the analysis of entire systems].

6. Give a brief description of how the department will assess the course beyond student grades for these learning objectives.

One of the major projects for students in SOCL 322 is the keeping of a semester-long religion journal wherein they chronicle their thoughts on religion and its effects on individual lives, and that of society in general. Students may reflect upon/analyze their own experiences with religion, course readings, class films and discussion, and presentations by guest speakers (area clergy representing different religions/faith communities/denominations).

Students' journals are collected at the end of the semester. A random sample of 10% will be selected and assessed by a committee of departmental faculty with expertise in the sociology of religion on the following points:

- Do the journal entries exhibit evidence of students' ability to analyze the different components that comprise a system of religious beliefs and practices, and understand how these beliefs and practices have evolved over time?
- Do the journal entries demonstrate students' ability to evaluate the ways in which religion influences other institutional systems within society in terms of decision making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself (for example, government, economy, family, mass media)?
- Do the journal entries demonstrate students' ability to describe how religion both brings people together (cohesion) and pulls them apart (conflict) and understand how these two processes impact decision making, public policy, and/or the sustainability of the system itself?
- Do the journal entries show evidence that students understand the ways in which religion functions as a significant source of meaning in terms of how the individual components of religion relate to individuals and to the larger social system?

7. Please discuss how this course will provide a summative learning experience for students in the development of skills in argumentation and use of evidence.

Religion in Society provides a summative learning experience for students in the development of skills in argumentation through the use of out-of-class written projects and the semester-long religion journal assignment. In addition, their argumentation skills are enhanced through the use of class discussions. Students' skills use of evidence are enhanced by readings both in the text book and the additional assigned readings. Questions on exams and class discussions force them to critically evaluate recent scholarship in the sociology of religion in terms of its ability to systematically describe, explain, evaluate and analyze religious beliefs and practices in their social contexts.

8. How many sections of this course will your department offer each semester?
Religion in Society is offered every spring semester
9. Please attach sample syllabus for the course. **PLEASE BE SURE THE PROPOSAL FORM AND THE SYLLABUS ARE IN THE SAME DOCUMENT.**

Course Syllabus

Course: Sociology 322 (Religion in Society)
Spring 2014
11:10-12:30 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday
Grise Hall 134

Instructor: Dr. Steve Groce
Office: 131 Grise Hall
Phone: 745-2253
E-mail: steve.groce@wku.edu
Web Page: <http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Home.htm>

Text: *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (5th edition) by Keith A. Roberts and David Yamane. Additional reading material comes in the form of articles online at my web page. Follow the course outline to know which articles you need to read for which class meetings.

Note: Different versions of Adobe Acrobat react somewhat differently to .pdf files. If you try to open an article from the web page and you get either a blank page or an error message, try downloading the most recent (newest) version of Acrobat (free). If that doesn't solve the problem, try the following:

- 1) right click on the link
- 2) click "Save Target As"
- 3) save to your desktop
- 4) either double click on the icon on your desktop, or open Acrobat and then open the file
From within Acrobat

Course Objective:

In this course we will attempt to answer three general questions: 1) What is religion; 2) Where did it come from; and 3) What does religion do—in terms of both individuals' lives (attitudes, beliefs, behaviors) and the structure and functioning of society? It is my hope that students will come away from this class with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for: a) How religion is a multi-dimensional system of beliefs and practices that has changed over time; b) How the system of religion in the United States influences and impacts other social institutions—such as our system of government, our economic system, and the family; c) the ways in which religion acts as a source of both conflict and cohesion at the macro level, and; d) how religion functions as a significant source of meaning for individuals at the micro level.

A couple words of caution: In this class, I require that students maintain an attitude of respect toward others whose beliefs are different from their own. Also, though it is certainly *not* my objective to cause any student to doubt his/her faith, both the openness of this course in particular and the sociological perspective in general may cause students to rethink their own belief systems in a manner which could either strengthen or weaken them.

Attendance:

I have no set attendance policy. I do, however, expect to see you in class each time because much of our effort will be devoted to material not included in the assigned readings (guest speakers and films, for example). You will be responsible for all material we cover on the exams.

Grade Determination:

I assign grades based on: 1) three in-class exams; 2) three out-of-class projects; 3) a journal in which you write (at least twice a week) about your thoughts on religion and its effects on your life, as well its impact on other areas of society; and 4) a number of unannounced in-class quizzes.

I expect you to take exams and turn in projects and journals on the days designated in this syllabus. I accept only legitimate, documented excuses. In all other cases I will deduct one letter grade for each day your project or journal is late. You **MUST** turn in hard copies of projects and journals. I will **NOT** accept projects or journals emailed to me (the Sociology Department does not have sufficient resources to act as your personal printing service—which it would, in effect, become if I had to print out your projects and journals in my office).

I grade on the standard ten-point scale (90-100=A, 80-89=B, etc.). You will have five major grades this semester, all of which carry the same weight—the three exams, plus the average of your three journal grades and the average of your three project grades. You will have one minor grade--the overall grade on pop quizzes. The five major grades count two and one-half times more than the minor grade in the determination of your final grade.

Office Hours:

My office in 131 Grise Hall. My office hours are 7:00-8:00 a.m on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 3:00-4:30 p.m. on Mondays and Wednesdays. If these times are not convenient for you, just call me at the office or e-mail me and we'll schedule an appointment.

Students With Disabilities:

In compliance with university policy, students with disabilities who require accommodations (academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids or services) for this course must contact the Office for Student Disability Services in DUC A-200 of the Student Success Center in Downing University Center. Please **DO NOT** request accommodations directly from the professor or instructor without a letter of accommodation from the Office for Student Disability Services.

The Learning Center (TLC) (located in the Academic Advising and Retention Center, DUC-A330)

Should you require academic assistance with this, or any other, course, there are several places that can provide you with help. TLC tutors in most major undergraduate subjects and course levels throughout the week . To make an appointment, or to request a tutor for a specific class, call 745-6254 or stop by DUC A330. Log on to TLC's website at www.wku.edu/tlc to find out more. TLC hours: M-Thur. 8am-9pm, Fri. 8am-4pm, Sat.-Closed, and Sundays 4pm-9pm.

Tentative Schedule

Jan. 28 Introduction; Defining religion (pp. 3-18); Social scientific research on religion

(pp. 19-40)

Additional Readings:

Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/religionasaculturalsystem-geertz.pdf>

Berger, "The Sacred Canopy"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/thesacredcanopy-berger.pdf>

Jan. 30 Religion and sociological theory: Macro perspectives (pp. 43-65)

Additional Readings:

Durkheim, "The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/theelementaryforms-emiledurkheim.pdf>

Marx, "From 'Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law': Introduction"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/fromcontributiontothecritique-marx.pdf>

Weber: "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/theprotestantethic-weber.pdf>

Feb. 4 Continue macro perspectives; Film

Additional Reading:

Chancey, "The Bible, the First Amendment, and the Public Schools in Odessa, Texas"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Bible and Public Schools.pdf>

Feb. 6 Religion and sociological theory: Micro perspectives (pp. 66-89); Film;

Additional Readings:

Petts and Knoester, "Parents' Religious Heterogamy and Children's Well-Being"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/ParentsReligionandChildrensWellBeing.pdf>

Vaidyanathan, ". . . Early Religious Socialization. . ."

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Religious Socialization.pdf>

Feb. 11 Conversion and commitment (pp. 93-147); Assign Project #1

Additional Reading:

Covington, "Salvation on Sand Mountain"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/salvationonsandmountain-covington.pdf>

Loveland, "Religious Switching. . ."

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Religious Switching.pdf>

Sharp, "Prayer Utterances as Aligning Actions"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Prayer Utterances as Aligning Actions.pdf>

Feb. 13 Guest speaker

Feb. 18 Project #1 due; Film

Feb. 20 Film

Feb. 25 Guest speaker

Feb. 27 Review for exam; Turn in journals

Mar. 4 Exam #1

Mar. 6 Return exams; Film

Mar. 10-14 No Class (Spring Break)

Mar. 18 Charisma and routinization (pp. 151-184); Film; Assign Project #2

Additional Reading:

Weber, "Domination and Stratification"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/dominationandstratification-weber.pdf>

Mar. 20 Charisma and routinization; Denominations and congregations (pp. 185-213)

Additional Readings:

Doolittle, "The Impact of Behaviors upon Burnout Among Parish-Based Clergy"

http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Burnout_Among_Clergy.pdf

Coates, "Disaffiliation from a New Religious Movement: The Importance of Self and Others in Exit

http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Disaffiliation_from_a_New_Religious_Movement.pdf

Mar. 25 Religion and social inequality: Social class (pp. 217-235; 292-305)

Additional Readings:

Pope, "Millhands and Preachers"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/millhands&preachers-pope.pdf>

Harrison, "Why Southern Gospel Music Matters"

http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Gospel_Music_and_Religion.pdf

Mar. 27 Guest speaker

Apr. 1 Religion and social inequality: Race (pp. 236-260; 313-322)

Additional Readings:

Roof and Manning, "Cultural Conflicts and Identity: Second Generation Hispanic Catholics. . ."

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/culturalconflictsandidentity-roofmanning.pdf>

Lee, "The Structure of a Spiritual Revolution: Black Baptists and Women in Ministry"

http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Black_Baptists_and_Women_Pastors.pdf

Nelson, "Sacrifice of Praise: Emotion and Collective Participation in an African-American Worship Service"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/sacrificeofpraise-timothynelson.pdf>

Apr. 3 Religion and social inequality: gender (pp. 261-282); Film

Additional Readings:

Perl, "Gender and Mainline Protestant Pastors' Allocation of Time to Work Tasks"

[http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Gender and Pastors' Work.pdf](http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Gender%20and%20Pastors%20Work.pdf)

Wallace, "The Social Construction of a New Leadership Role: Catholic Women Pastors"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/thesocialconstruction-wallace.pdf>

Pevey, Williams, and Ellison, "Male God Imagery and Female Submission: Lessons from a Southern Baptist Ladies' Bible Class"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/malegodimageryandfemalesubmission-peveywilliamsellison.pdf>

Apr. 8 Film; Secularization (pp. 325-347)

Additional Readings:

Goldstein, "Secularization Patterns in the Old Paradigm"

[http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Theories of Secularization.pdf](http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Theories%20of%20Secularization.pdf)

Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P."

[http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Secularization RIP.pdf](http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Secularization%20RIP.pdf)

Apr. 10 Guest speaker

Apr. 15 Guest speaker; Turn in journals

Apr. 17 Project #2 due; Review for exam

Apr. 22 Exam #2

Apr. 24 The marketing of religion (pp. 348-363); Assign Project #3

Additional Readings:

Alexander, "Televangelism"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/televangelism-alexander.pdf>

Schaefer, "Oh, You Didn't Think Just the Devil Writes Songs, Do Ya? Music in American Evangelical Culture Today"

[http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Music in American Evangelical Culture.pdf](http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Music%20in%20American%20Evangelical%20Culture.pdf)

Coleman, "Appealing to the Unchurched: What Attracts New Members?"

[http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Church Marketing.pdf](http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Church%20Marketing.pdf)

Apr. 29 Religion and sexuality (pp. 283-291); Film

Additional Readings:

Dahir, Colbert, and Flippen, "Keeping the Faith"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/keepingthefait-dahircolbertflippen.pdf>

Hunter, "Culture Wars: The Challenge of Homosexuality"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/culturewars-hunter.pdf>

McQueeney, "We Are God's Children, Ya'll. . ."

[http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Sexuality and Religion.pdf](http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/Sexuality%20and%20Religion.pdf)

May 1 Film

May 6 Project #3 due; discussion

May 8 Conclusions (pp. 399-400); Turn in journals; Review for exam

Additional Reading: King, "I Have a Dream"

<http://people.wku.edu/steve.groce/ihaveadream-king.pdf>

Final Exam: Tuesday, May 13, 8:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.