**FALL 2014: UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS at ARLINGTON**

SOCI 5319, Section 001: Seminar in Social Institutions and Change (Sociology of Religion)

Professor: Jason E. Shelton, Ph.D.

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Time and Place of Class Meetings: Wednesdays from 2pm to 4:50pm in UH #432

**Course Description:** This course provides an overview of the scientific study of religion from a sociological perspective. While theology and history are important, we will focus on theories, research, and trends concerning religion in the contemporary United States. Some of the topics to be addressed include (but are not limited to) understanding the rich variety of religious traditions and affiliations, religious practices and beliefs, as well as the role that religion plays in facilitating and limiting social change as well as conflict in society. We will also examine differences across various religious traditions such as “mainline” and “fundamentalist” believers, secularization, and the often controversial ways that religion intersects with other spheres of society such as morality, politics, race and ethnic relations, sex and gender.

**Required Texts:**

1. Ellingson, Stephen. 2007. *The Megachurch and the Mainline: Remaking Religious Tradition in the 21st Century*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
2. Emerson, Michael O., William Mirola, and Susanne C. Monahan. 2011. *Religion Matters: What Sociology Teaches Us About Religion in Our World*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. (Chapters 1-3, and 9)
3. Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark. 2007. *The Churching of America, 1776-2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
4. Kurien, Prema A. 2007. *A Place at the Multicultural Table: The Development of an American Hinduism*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
5. Monahan, Susanne C., William Mirola, and Michael O. Emerson. 2001. *Sociology of Religion: A Reader*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. (Excerpt from Emile Durkheim)
6. Roof, Wade Clark and William McKinney. 1987. *American Mainline Religion: Its Changing Shape and Future*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
7. Shelton, Jason E. and Michael O. Emerson. 2012. *Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Racial Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions*. New York: New York University Press.

**Description of Major Assignments and Exams:** This course will consist of one mid-term take-home essay exam (100 points), and one final term paper on a topic of your choice (100 points). Grades will also be based on my subjective assessment of your preparation and effectiveness in leading discussions over particular readings (100 points), as well as your participation in class discussions during the weeks when you are not presenting (100 points). Each week a different group of students will be responsible for leading discussion/debate. Students must email me at least five discussion questions/comments by Wednesday at 12pm. The take home exam and final paper are considered “late” if they are not submitted by the end of class on the day that they are due, or as specified on this syllabus. I will deduct ten points per day until they are submitted, and I do not accept late papers after two days.

No work for extra credit is necessary, and none will be accepted in lieu of missed requirements or to raise grades. Students are expected to have read the course materials **before** coming to class. Also, out of respect for our scholarly goals, I ask that you place your electronic devices (e.g., cell phone) on silent or vibrate.

**Grading:** Your final grade will be calculated by simply dividing your point total by 400. Students are expected to keep track of their performance via Blackboard throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels. The final grading scale is as follows:

A= 90 to 100%

B= 80 to 89%

C= 70 to 79%

D= 60 to 69%

F= 0 to 59%

**Expectations for Out-of-Class Study**: Beyond the time required to attend each class meeting, students enrolled in this course should expect to spend at least 3 additional hours per week of their own time in course-related activities, including reading required materials, completing assignments, preparing for exams, etc.

**Attendance Policy:** At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students’ academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I will not take attendance. However, your class participation grade will suffer if (a) I suspect that you have not done the reading for the week, and (b) you do not show up for class without a valid reason. Also, be here on the exam day because I **do not** give make-ups (unless you have an incredibly valid reason that can be substantiated with evidence).

**Academic Integrity:** All students enrolled in UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents’ Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university’s standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from the University.

In this course, scholastic dishonesty automatically results in an **F** for the assignment in question, and possibly even an **F** in the course overall. (I highly recommend that you take this policy very seriously; I have no sympathy for students who attempt to cheat on tests or plagiarize papers.)

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/>). The final drop date for the **Fall 2014** semester is **October 29th.**

**Americans With Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and the letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide me with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by staff in the Office of Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Student with Disabilities at (817)-272-3364.

**Title IX:** The University of Texas at Arlington is committed to upholding U.S. Federal Law “Title IX” such that no member of the UT Arlington community shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. For more information, visit [www.uta.edu/titleIX](http://www.uta.edu/titleIX).

**Student Support Services:** UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**Electronic Communication Policy:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**Recording Lectures:** Please see me if you feel that you need to record class lectures. Also, taking notes for distribution outside the classroom (e.g., for companies that sell lecture notes to students) is strictly prohibited and will be met with very stiff penalties.

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit/emergency exit, which varies depending on where you choose to sit within the classroom. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

**Tentative Course Schedule**

Week 1 (Aug 27th): Welcome: Aims and Expectations

Week 2 (Sep 3rd): Emerson et al, pgs. 1-53; and Durkheim, pgs. 9-15

Week 3 (Sep 10th): Roof and McKinney, pgs. 11-71

Week 4 (Sep 17th): Emerson et al, pgs. 134-158; and Roof and McKinney, pgs. 106-147 and 186-228

Week 5 (Sep 24th): Emerson et al, pgs. 67-82; and Finke and Stark, pgs. 235-283

Week 6 (Oct 1st): Ellingson, pgs. 1-77

Week 7 (Oct 8th): Ellingson, pgs. 78-143

Week 8 (Oct 15th): Ellingson, pgs. 144-192

Week 9 (Oct 22nd): **Mid-Term Essay Exam Due (NO CLASS)**

Week 10 (Oct 29th): Kurien, pgs. 1-85

Week 11 (Nov 5th): Kurien, pgs. 86-116 and 184-236

Week 12 (Nov 12th): Shelton and Emerson, pgs. 1-30 and 57-88

Week 13 (Nov 19th): Shelton and Emerson, pgs. 111-198

Week 14 (Nov 26th): TBA

Week 15 (Dec 3rd): **Final Term Papers Due**