

Course Title	Religion and Contemporary Society LAH316	Instructor	Dr BOLZONAR Fabio
		E-mail	fbolzonar@miu.ac.jp
Class Style	Lecture	Office Hours (face-to-face or online)	To be determined Or by appointment (please send an email to request an appointment).
Track		Mode of Instruction	Solo
Credits	2	Allocated Year	Fall 3 rd – 4 th year
Active Learning	Category 2: 3 Category 3: 2, 3, 4 Category 4: 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10	Compulsory or Elective	
Course Overview	<p>This course is designed to introduce students to the study of religion in current times. The course is composed of three modules. The first module explains some of the major sociological theories of religion. The lectures discuss the theories of secularization and postsecularity, the rational choice theory of religion, and the emergence of reflexive and 'personal' religiosity. The second and the third modules have a more empirical focus than the first module. While the second module debates how and why religion has exerted remarkable influence on some domains of the public sphere, the third module is concerned with the re-organization of established religions and the emergence of new actors that are acquiring a prominent role in the religious sphere. The course instructor presents theoretical and empirical works, reviews the major methodological approach in the sociology of religion and, through an active learning approach, stimulates students to think critically about the role played by religions in contemporary societies.</p>		
Course Objectives	<p>The intended learning outcomes of this course are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing the major theories, issues, and debates in the current sociology of religion; • Understanding the role played by churches, faith-based organizations, and religious movements in contemporary societies; • Grasping the internal pluralism and dynamics of religious organizations; • Applying the sociological theories of religion to understand social reality; • Enhancing communication skills in English by developing the capacity to synthesize complex arguments and expose them accurately and concisely; • Improving the ability to think critically about the place of religion in contemporary societies. 		
Prerequisite	<p>The course is open to any student who wishes to understand the role played by religions in contemporary societies. Those students who do not have the required background knowledge of sociology and are interested in attending the classes are invited to contact the course instructor.</p>		
Course Schedule	No	Contents	Homework
	1	<p>Introduction <i>What Is Sociology of Religion</i></p> <p>The first part of this lecture presents the course structure, explains the work expected by each student, and describes the grading scheme. The second part discusses some distinct features of the sociology of religion to show how it helps to understand the place of religions in contemporary societies.</p>	Reading for the next class.

	2	<i>The Contemporary Religious Landscape</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	3	<i>The Limits of Secularization</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	4	<i>The Growth of New Age Spiritualities</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	5	<i>Religion and Social Solidarity</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	6	<i>Review</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	7	<i>Mid-term Exam</i>	Studying for the exam.
	8	<i>Religion and Politics</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	9	<i>Religion and Violence</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class and reflection.
	10	<i>Religion and Migrations</i> <i>Religion, Gender, and Sexualities</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	11	<i>Religion and Gender</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	12	<i>Religion and the Family</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	13	<i>The 'Nones'</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.

	14	<i>The New Religious Vitality</i>	Critical reading of class material. Preparing questions to raise in class.
	15	<p>Conclusion <i>Wrap Up</i></p> <p>This final lecture summarizes and reviews what we have learnt about the relationships between politics and society in Europe. Students will also have the opportunity to raise further questions about the class material and the course instructor will provide some advice for the preparation of the final assignment.</p>	Debate and course overview.
		<i>Final Exam</i>	Studying for the final exam.
Grading	<p>Class Participation: 30 %</p> <p>Students are expected to engage in discussions. Participation will be evaluated on the basis of the contribution to collective learning. If a student does not feel comfortable speaking in class, she/he is encouraged to contact the course instructor to arrange an alternative way to participate in discussions. The course instructor would do his best to accommodate students' requests. Student presentations will be counted as extra participation.</p> <p>Midterm exam: 30%</p> <p>There will be a midterm exam related to the course material discussed in Module 1. This exam will be composed of several multiple choice and true/false quizzes and one open questions. Grades will be based on the understanding of the course material and the answers given by each student.</p> <p>Final exam: 40%</p> <p>There will be a final exam related to the course material discussed in Module 2. This exam will be composed of several multiple choice and true/false quizzes and three open questions. Grades will be based on the understanding of the course material and the answers given by each student.</p>		
Textbooks	A detailed list of readings will be provided by the instructor on Moodle.		
References	<p>A detailed list of references will be provided on Moodle.</p> <p>WEBSITES</p> <p>Columbia University, Middle East and Islamic Studies: Online Resources, https://guides.library.columbia.edu/mideast</p> <p>Holy See, https://www.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html</p> <p>Internet East Asian History Sourcebook: Religious Traditions, https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/eastasia/eastasiasbook.asp#Religious%20Traditions</p> <p>Pew Research Center, https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/religion/</p> <p>MASS MEDIA, NEWSPAPERS, AND MAGAZINES</p> <p><i>BBC</i> (Religions), https://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/</p> <p><i>The Financial Times</i> (Religion), https://www.ft.com/religion</p> <p><i>The Japan Times</i> (Religion), https://www.japantimes.co.jp/tag/religion/</p> <p><i>Al Jazeera</i> (Religion), https://www.aljazeera.com/tag/religion/</p> <p><i>Le Monde</i> (Religion), https://www.lemonde.fr/en/religions/</p> <p><i>The New York Times</i> (Religion), https://www.nytimes.com/international/section/opinion/religion</p> <p><i>Der Spiegel</i> (Religion), https://www.spiegel.de/thema/religion_en/p2/</p>		

NOTES	<p>During the course each student will be required to write short reflections (max 150 words) which are due two days before each class at the latest. If a student does not submit the short reflection their grade will be reduced by 10%.</p> <p>Students with disabilities or special needs (including stress and anxiety problems) should talk to the course instructor as soon as possible to discuss likely arrangements to let them attend the course properly. Confidentiality will be granted to all students.</p> <p>Artificial intelligence (AI) tools (such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini) for learning purposes should be used cautiously. Even though AI tools can explain complex concepts, organize workload efficiently, and enhance writing skills, they can also provide inaccurate information, lead to unintended plagiarism, and undermine the enhancement of critical thinking. If students wish to use AI tools, they are strongly encouraged to discuss this topic with the course instructor.</p>
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