SOCA1030 - Introduction to the Sociology of Religion
Course Outline

Course Co-ordinator: Dr Ann Taylor
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Ph: 02 49216834
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Email: Ann.Taylor@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours: Drop in Tuesday 2-3 or Wednesday 11-12 or phone/e-mail for an appointment.

Semester: Semester 1 - 2008
Unit Weighting: 10
Teaching Methods: Lecture
                      Tutorial

Brief Course Description
Students will be introduced to the study of religion as an aspect of social structure and social change. The course will examine characteristic sociological approaches to systems of belief based on classical theorists and define the basic concepts which underpin many contemporary debates about the role of religion in society.

Contact Hours
Lecture for 2 Hours per Week for the Full Term
Tutorial for 1 Hour per Week for the Full Term

Available from the Campus Bookshop.
Course Objectives
On successful completion of this course students will be able to demonstrate:

An understanding of key debates and sociological approaches to religion and belief.
An ability to apply key concepts to contemporary debates about the role of religion in the contemporary world.
Skills in researching, writing and debating appropriate to first year university study.

Course Content
Definition of ‘religion’ from a sociological perspective:
Varieties of religious and other beliefs
Secularisation thesis
Religion and social structure
Religion and social change.

Theories about the relationship between religion and society:
Marx and the Opium of the People
Weber and the Protestant Ethic
Durkheim and ‘collective consciousness’.

Religion and science
‘Fundamentalist atheism’? - Dawkins, Hitchens et al.
Religion, gender and sexuality.

Assessment Items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essays / Written Assignments</th>
<th>Essay research plan 750 words, 30%, due mid semester</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>1500 words, 40%, due week 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
<td>Reflective Journal 1000 words, 30%, due week 13. Students are to provide evidence of understanding the set readings, attendance at lectures, participation in tutorials and independent study.</td>
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</table>

Assumed Knowledge
None

Callaghan Campus Timetable

| SOCA1030 Introduction to the Sociology of Religion |
| Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science |
| Semester 1 - 2008 |
| Lecture and Tutorial |
| Tuesday 15:00 - 17:00 [V07] |
| Wednesday 13:00 - 14:00 [V07] |
| Wednesday 14:00 - 15:00 [V102] |
| Wednesday 16.00 – 17.00 [V103] |
**Plagiarism**

University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

- copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
- using another's ideas without due acknowledgment;
- working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs.

Aiding another student to plagiarise is also a violation of the Plagiarism Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link -


The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -

- Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University; and/or
- Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking).
- Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

**Written Assessment Items**

Students are required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.

**Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations**

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:

1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;

must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer following the instructions provided in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Procedure - Policy 000641.

Note: different procedures apply for minor and major assessment tasks.

Please go to the Policy at [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html) for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you.

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- **Requests for Special Consideration** must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.
- **Requests for Extensions of Time on Assessment Items** must be lodged no later than the due date of the item.
Requests for Rescheduling Exams must be received in the Student Hub no later than ten working days prior the first date of the examination period. Your application may not be accepted if it is received after the deadline. Students who are unable to meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak to their Program Officer in the first instance.

Changing your Enrolment

The last dates to withdraw without financial or academic penalty (called the HECS Census Dates) are:
- For semester 1 courses: 31 March 2008

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of semester. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of semester will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of semester/trimester, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of semester/trimester must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs.

To check or change your enrolment online, please refer to myHub - Self Service for Students

https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au

Faculty Information

The Student Hubs are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students on campus.

The four Student Hubs are located at:

- **Callaghan campus**
  - Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Union Building
  - Hunter Hub: Student Services Centre, Hunter side of campus

- **City Precinct**
  - City Hub & Information Common: University House, ground floor in combination with an Information Common for the City Precinct

- **Ourimbah campus**
  - Ourimbah Hub: Administration Building

Faculty websites

- **Faculty of Education and Arts**

Contact details

- **Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie**
  - Phone: 02 4921 5000
  - Email: EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au

- **The Dean of Students**
  - Resolution Precinct
  - Phone: 02 4921 5806
  - Fax: 02 4921 7151
  - Email: resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:
Alteration of this Course Outline

No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.

Web Address for Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

The University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness.

If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies, please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator.

Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, or via email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester.

For more information related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

Online Tutorial Registration:
Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system. Refer - http://studinfo1.newcastle.edu.au/rego/stud_choose_login.cfm

NB: Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

Studentmail and Blackboard: Refer - www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/

This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

Important Additional Information
Details about the following topics are available on your course Blackboard site (where relevant). Refer - www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/

• Re-marks & Moderations
• Return of Assignments
• Preferred Referencing Style
• Student Representatives
• Student Communication
• Essential Online Information for Students
Assessment Items, Due Dates and Grading System

Expectations of students: Attendance and tutorial preparation
Tutorial preparation consists of completing the prescribed textbook reading and any associated discussion questions and tutorial exercises which will be posted on Blackboard. As you read, it is advisable to make well-organised notes; they will improve your understanding and help you to complete your assessment items, especially your reflective journal. Please bring your Course Outline and Textbook to the tutorial each week.

Students should complete all assessment items. A pass is achieved when the combined marks for all assessment items total 50% or more, meaning that you may be able to fail an assessment item and still pass the course.

- Specific Marking criteria for each item and
- More information about assignment questions/topics and instructions will be provided on Blackboard.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Items</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Library research &amp; essay plan (750 words)</td>
<td>April 4, Friday 4pm</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designed to develop information literacy skills through the preparation of an essay plan and the identification of relevant resources for the essay (assessment item 2).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Essay (1500 words)</td>
<td>May 23, Friday 4pm</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Designed to develop students’ skills in research, writing and sociological analysis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Reflective Journal (1000 words), Lecture notes, tutorial participation and independent study.</td>
<td>May 30, Friday 4pm</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
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Grading guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marking Criteria</th>
<th>49% or less: Fail (FF)</th>
<th>50% to 64%: Pass (P)</th>
<th>65% to 74%: Credit (C)</th>
<th>75% to 84%: Distinction (D)</th>
<th>85% upwards: High Distinction (HD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fail (FF)</strong></td>
<td>An unacceptable effort, including non-completion. The student has not understood the basic principles of the subject matter and/or has been unable to express their understanding in a comprehensible way. Deficient in terms of answering the question, research, referencing and correct presentation (spelling, grammar etc). May include extensive plagiarism.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Pass (P)</strong></td>
<td>The work demonstrates a reasonable attempt to answer the question, shows some grasp of the basic principles of the subject matter and a basic knowledge of the required readings, is comprehensible, accurate and adequately referenced.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Credit (C)</strong></td>
<td>The work demonstrates a clear understanding of the question, a capacity to integrate research into the discussion, and a critical appreciation of a range of different theoretical perspectives. A deficiency in any of the above may be compensated by evidence of independent thought. The work is coherent and accurate.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Distinction (D)</strong></td>
<td>Evidence of substantial additional reading and/or research, and evidence of the ability to generalise from the theoretical content to develop an argument in an informed and original manner. The work is well organised, clearly expressed and shows a capacity for critical analysis.</td>
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<td><strong>High Distinction (HD)</strong></td>
<td>All of the above, plus a thorough understanding of the subject matter based on substantial additional reading and/or research. The work shows a high level of independent thought, presents informed and insightful discussion of the topic, particularly the theoretical issues involved, and demonstrates a well-developed capacity for critical analysis.</td>
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Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details

Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date.

Hard copy submission:

- **Type your assignments:** All work must be typewritten in 11 or 12 point black font. Leave a wide margin for marker’s comments, use 1.5 or double spacing, and include page numbers.
- **Word length:** The word limit of all assessment items should be strictly followed – 10% above or below is acceptable, otherwise penalties may apply.
- **Proof read your work:** because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.
- **Staple the pages of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).**
- **University Assessment Item Coversheet:** All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet available at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/)
- Assignments are to be submitted at any Student Hub located at:
  - Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
  - Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
  - Ground Floor, University House, City
  - Ground Floor, Administration Building, Ourimbah

- **Date-stamping assignments:** All students must date-stamp their own assignments using the machine provided at each Student Hub. If mailing an assignment, this should be addressed to the Shortland Union Hub (Callaghan). Mailed assignments are accepted from the date posted, confirmed by a Post Office date-stamp; they are also date-stamped upon receipt.
- **Do not fax or email assignments:** Only hard copies of assignments will be considered for assessment. Inability to physically submit a hard copy of an assignment by the deadline due to other commitments or distance from campus is an unacceptable excuse.
- **Keep a copy of all assignments:** It is the student’s responsibility to produce a copy of their work if the assignment goes astray after submission. Students are advised to keep updated back-ups in electronic and hard copy formats.

Online copy submission to Turnitin via course Blackboard website

In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of the following assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website:
- Essay plan
- Essay

Prior to final submission, all students have the opportunity to submit drafts of their assignment to Turnitin to self-check their referencing. Assignments will not be marked until both hard copy and online versions have been submitted. Marks may be deducted for late submission of either version.

Penalties for Late Assignments
Assignments submitted after the due date, without an approved extension of time or serious extenuating circumstances will be penalised by the reduction of 5% of the possible maximum mark for the assessment item for each day or part day that the item is late. Weekends count as one day in determining the penalty. Assessment items submitted more than ten days after the due date will be awarded zero marks.

Special Circumstances
Students wishing to apply for Special Circumstances or Extension of Time should apply online at: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html)

No Assignment Re-submission
Students who have failed an assignment are not permitted to revise and resubmit it in this course. However, students are always welcome to contact their Course Coordinator to make a consultation time to receive individual feedback on their assignments.
The following are useful supplementary texts and reference books:

- Norris, Pippa and Inglehart, Ronald 2004 Sacred and secular: religion and politics worldwide. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.

The following are useful Sociology dictionaries and study skills guides:


Journals and Databases.

You will find many electronic resources relevant to this course, such as:

- The Journal of religion and society
- The Sociology of Religion

Look for on-line resources in the library catalogue and learn how to search databases for keywords and authors. More guidance will be given on this in class.

More Course specific resources will be provided via Blackboard.
Essay Questions – choose ONE topic to form the basis of your library research and essay.

1. Discuss the major changes in the way sociologists have understood religion during the 20th Century.

2. Does Secularization theory retain any value today?

3. Is the separation of Church and State an acceptable compromise for both Church and State?

4. In sociological terms, what are the features of Pentecostalism which has made it such a successful worldwide movement?

5. Do evangelical movements create more social capital than mainstream religious movements?

6. In sociological terms, is religion in Australia more like Europe or more like the USA?

7. Is fundamentalism a revolt against modernity or a feature of modernity?

8. In sociological terms, what is the significance of gender and sexuality for the major world religions? Discuss with reference to either Christianity or Islam.

9. Is atheism a defence of rationality or another form of fundamentalism?

10. Are new religious movements dangerous to their participants or to the society in which they are found?

11. In sociological terms, are individualism and consumerism threats to religion?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Week beginning</th>
<th>Lecture and Tutorial Topics</th>
<th>Assessment at a Glance</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18/02</td>
<td>Introduction.</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25/02</td>
<td><strong>Part 1. Basic concepts.</strong> Clash of civilisations? Religion, politics, war and the state</td>
<td>Religions and diversity Chapter 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3/03</td>
<td>Religious Institutions – What we know about religious organisations and structures.</td>
<td>Defining Religions Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10/03</td>
<td>Kinds of believing – Ideas about religious experience.</td>
<td>Varieties of religious movements Chapter 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>15/03 Good Friday</td>
<td><strong>Part 2. Classical theories – the inheritance of the enlightenment.</strong> Comte, Marx and Freud: explaining religion in other terms</td>
<td>Secularization Chapter 4 – Pages 61 -79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>24/03 Easter Mon/Tue</td>
<td>No lecture</td>
<td>Tutorial discussion on essay plans and mid-semester evaluation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>31/03</td>
<td>Durkheim and the social functions of religion <strong>Essay plan due 4pm Friday</strong></td>
<td>Defining secularisation Chapter 4 Pages 80-97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>7/04</td>
<td>Max Weber, religion and capitalism.</td>
<td>Challenging secularisation Chapter 5</td>
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<td><strong>Mid-Semester Recess: 14/04 – 25/04</strong></td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>28/04</td>
<td><strong>Part 3 Religion in the contemporary world.</strong> Debates about secularisation</td>
<td>Fundamentalism Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>5/05</td>
<td>Believing, belonging and vicarious religion</td>
<td>Civil religion Chapter 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>12/05</td>
<td>Religion as a form of consumption?</td>
<td>New Religious movements Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>19/05</td>
<td>Gender and religion. <strong>Essay due 4pm Friday.</strong></td>
<td>Religious identities Chapter 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>26/05</td>
<td>Conclusion and reflection. <strong>Reflective Journal due 4pm Friday.</strong></td>
<td>Reflection and evaluation</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>2/06</td>
<td>No teaching.</td>
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**Examination period: 10th June to 27th June**