Course Co-ordinator:  Dr Ann Taylor  
Room: W353  
Ph: 49216834  
Fax: 49216933  
Email: Ann.Taylor@newcastle.edu.au  
Consultation hours: Email for an appointment. Drop in from 2-3 on Tuesday (before the lecture).

**SOCA1030 - Introduction to the Sociology of Religion**  
**Course Outline**

**Course Coordinator**
- Semester 1 - 2009
- 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

**Learning Materials/Texts.** Alan Aldridge. 2007 Religion in the Contemporary World. 2\textsuperscript{nd} Edition. Cambridge: Polity Press  
Available in the Campus Bookshop. This text will be used every week. It is important to buy a copy as soon as you can.

Course Outline Issued and Correct as at: Week 1, Semester 1 - 2009  
CTS Download Date: 27\textsuperscript{th} February 2009
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>
</tr>
</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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</tbody>
</table>

Assumed Knowledge
None

Callaghan Campus Timetable
SOCA1030
INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION.
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 1 - 2009
Lecture and Tutorial Tuesday 15:00 - 17:00 [V07]
       Wednesday 13:00 - 14:00 [V111]
or       Wednesday 14:00 - 15:00 [V102]
or       Wednesday 16:00 - 17:00 [V103]
or       Tuesday 17:00 - 18:00 [V109]
IMPORTANT UNIVERSITY INFORMATION

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity, honesty, and a respect for knowledge, truth and ethical practices are fundamental to the business of the University. These principles are at the core of all academic endeavour in teaching, learning and research. Dishonest practices contravene academic values, compromise the integrity of research and devalue the quality of learning. To preserve the quality of learning for the individual and others, the University may impose severe sanctions on activities that undermine academic integrity. There are two major categories of academic dishonesty:

Academic fraud is a form of academic dishonesty that involves making a false representation to gain an unjust advantage. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it can include:

   a) falsification of data;
   b) using a substitute person to undertake, in full or part, an examination or other assessment item;
   c) reusing one’s own work, or part thereof, that has been submitted previously and counted towards another course (without permission);
   d) making contact or colluding with another person, contrary to instructions, during an examination or other assessment item;
   e) bringing material or device(s) into an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item; and
   f) making use of computer software or other material and device(s) during an examination or other assessment item other than such as may be specified for that assessment item.
   g) contract cheating or having another writer compete for tender to produce an essay or assignment and then submitting the work as one's own.

Plagiarism is the presentation of the thoughts or works of another as one's own. University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:

   a) copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
   b) using another person’s ideas without due acknowledgment;
   c) collusion or working with others without permission, and presenting the resulting work as though it were completed independently.

Turnitin is an electronic text matching system. During 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 text matching service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future checking).
   - Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

RE-MARKS AND MODERATIONS

Students can access the University's policy at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000769.html

MARKS AND GRADES RELEASED DURING TERM

All marks and grades released during term are indicative only until formally approved by the Head of School.
SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES AFFECTING ASSESSMENT ITEMS

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations items must be submitted by the due date in the Course Outline unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension. Unapproved late submissions will be penalised in line with the University policy specified in Late Penalty above.

Requests for Extensions of Time must be lodged no later than the due date of the item. This applies to students:

- applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
- 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.

Students must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, as outlined in the Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure at: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000641.html

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

Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- Special Consideration Requests must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the due date of submission or examination.
- Rescheduling Exam requests must be received no later than 10 working days prior the first date of the examination period.

Late applications may not be accepted. Students who cannot meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak firstly to their Program Officer or their Program Executive if studying in Singapore.

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS

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 contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, 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 on confidentiality and documentation visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability.

CHANGING YOUR ENROLMENT

Students enrolled after the census dates listed in the link below are liable for the full cost of their student contribution or fees for that term.

http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/fees/censusdates.html

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

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of term, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of term must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with staff in the Student Hubs or with your Program Executive at PSB if you are a Singapore student.

To check or change your enrolment online go to myHub: https://myhub.newcastle.edu.au
**STUDENT INFORMATION & CONTACTS**

Various services are offered by the Student Support Unit:  
www.newcastle.edu.au/service/studentsupport/

The **Student Hubs** are a one-stop shop for the delivery of student related services and are the first point of contact for students studying in Australia. Student Hubs are located at:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Campus/Hub</th>
<th>Location</th>
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</table>
| Callaghan Campus | Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building  
Hunter Hub: Level 2, Student Services Centre |
| City Precinct | City Hub & Information Common, University House |
| Central Coast Campus (Ourimbah) | Student Hub: Opposite the Main Cafeteria |
| Port Macquarie students | contact your program officer or  
EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au  
Phone 4921 5000 |
| Singapore students | contact your PSB Program Executive |

**OTHER CONTACT INFORMATION**

| Faculty Websites | General enquiries  
Callaghan, City and Port Macquarie  
Phone: 02 4921 5000  
Email:  
EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au |
| Faculty Websites | Ourimbah  
Phone: 02 4348 4030  
Email:  
EnquiryCentre@newcastle.edu.au |
| Rules Governing Undergraduate Academic Awards | The Dean of Students  
Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)  
Phone: 02 4921 5806;  
Fax: 02 4921 7151  
Email:  
resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au |

This course outline will not be altered after the second week of the term except under extenuating circumstances with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of the change.

**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](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](http://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 – all available on Blackboard. Note resubmission policy for this course.**
Details about the following topics are available on your course Blackboard site (where relevant). Refer to www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/

- Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
- Online copy submission to Turnitin
- Penalties for Late Assignments
- Special Circumstances
- Resubmission of Assignments As this is a 1000 level course a student who fails the first assessment item will be allowed to correct errors and re-submit the assignment for a capped mark of 50% of the available marks for the assessment item
- 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 exercise from the course outline or 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.

- More information about assignment questions/topics and instructions will be provided on Blackboard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Items</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Library research &amp; essay plan (750 words)</td>
<td>Thursday 9th April, Week 6</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<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>
<td>Turnitin only</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Essay (1500 words)</td>
<td>Tuesday May 26th, Week 12</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed to develop students' skills in research, writing and sociological analysis.</td>
<td>Hardcopy by 5pm +Turnitin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Reflective Journal (1000 words +)</td>
<td>Friday 5th June, Week 13</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designed to keep a record of your studies, including set readings Lecture notes, tutorial participation and independent study.</td>
<td>A4 hardcopy only</td>
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Library Research & Essay Plan (LREP)\(^1\)

Weighting: 30%  Due Date: Thursday April 9\(^{th}\)  Total length: 750 words
Submission details: Turnitin submission only required for this assessment
Marking criteria: See below.

The Library Research & Essay Plan (LREP) is designed to help you prepare for your Essay. The LREP is a systematic way to organise your thinking and information gathering on an essay topic. Before writing your essay you are required to do a LREP addressing the items below. Feedback on this assignment will help with your essay.

Students who are also doing SOCA1010 need to note that this assessment is longer (750 words) and worth more (30%) than their Culture and Society Essay.

LREP Guidelines:
In completing this assignment use a report format based on the bolded headings below to structure your content. Use a University assignment coversheet. Please address all of the following:

1. Essay topic:
   Write down the essay topic you will research (chosen from the essay topics below).
   Note: Students can change essay topics after they submit their LREP if they choose, though this is inadvisable.

2. Starting point: Interpreting the topic
   State your starting point for researching the essay topic. How did you interpret the topic? List the key words you used to conduct your library research. (2 marks)

3. Relevant sources of information found:
   Provide a list of at least 6 references you found that are relevant to your essay topic. For each source of information:
   - Provide full bibliographic details in alphabetical order (for books, provide: author/s, date, title, publisher & place of publication; for journal articles: author/s, date, article title, journal title, volume number, issue number, first and last page number of article). See the Essay and Referencing Guidelines in Appendix 1 for help (as well as textbook Chapter 24).
   - For each reference, explain in a sentence why you think it will be useful. (6 marks)
   Note: The 6 references are included in the word limit. The 6 references exclude your textbook as it is assumed this will be used; it should be the first place you start to research your essay topic.

4. Provide a brief essay plan:
   Based on your research to date, write a brief essay plan for your topic that outlines the content and structure of your essay. Your plan should be outlined as follows:
   - Introduction: requires a clear statement about how you intend to answer the question/address the topic and the theoretical perspectives to be used (1 mark)
   - Body: should outline a structure for arranging your material to answer the question (5 marks)
   - Conclusion: a short statement linking your content and argument to the topic (1 mark)
   The essay plan should be about 300-400 words and briefly indicate what you plan to cover. Short grammatical statements in dot points are acceptable (for this assignment only).

5. What still needs to be done? What would you have done differently?
   Your LREP is a plan and therefore you are not expected to have all the information at this stage. On further reading and note-taking you may need to revisit your plan or conduct more library research. Provide a brief statement of what your next steps will be to complete the essay (eg information you still need to obtain). Reflect on what you might do differently next time.

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1. The LREP was developed by Lauren Williams and John Germov and is adapted from Germov, J. 2000, Get Great Marks for Your Essays, 2\(^{nd}\) edn, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
Essay Questions – choose ONE topic to form the basis of your library research and essay.

Weighting: 40%  Due Date: Tuesday May 26th  Total length: 1500 words
Submission details:  Hard copy to Hub + Turnitin submission required for this assessment
Marking criteria:  See below.

1. What is the most important contemporary issue in the relationship between society and religion? How do sociologists contribute to understanding this?

2. What are some of the ways sociologists define religion? What importance does it have for society how religion is defined?

3. How do sociologists classify different kinds of religious organisations? How does this help us to understand the main religious groups present in contemporary Australian society?

4. In what ways, if any, are classical sociological theories still useful in understanding religion in the third millennium?

Essential Essay Instructions, Guidelines and Expectations

The essay is a method of communicating your knowledge and understanding about a topic within a given timeframe and word limit. Essay writing helps to develop skills of critical analysis and communication by providing a method of collecting your ‘thinking’ about a topic in a logical, credible and persuasive way. In a sociology essay you are expected to:

- Use of a minimum of SIX academic sources, at least TWO of which should be from refereed journal articles (all referenced in your essay). The SIX academic sources exclude newspapers, current affairs magazines, and generic websites (online refereed journal articles and online reports by governments and non-government agencies are accepted).
- Read widely to critically review the field of sociological literature on a topic
- Analyse a topic, develop a logical argument and use supporting evidence from your reading. Do not just give descriptive information, but also discuss various explanations/theories in the literature
- In the introduction, briefly define key terms and introduce your argument/stance (i.e., your approach to answering the question and what your essay will cover)
- In the body of your essay, construct an argument based on what you have read in the published sources and support what you say with evidence.
- In the conclusion, briefly summarise the evidence and argument you have presented to answer the question
- Direct quotes should NOT exceed 10% of your total word count
- Short quotations (less than 30 words) must be placed inside single ‘quotation marks’; long quotations (30 words or more) are indented, but should be kept to minimum
- Do not use dot points in your essay
- Students may study collaboratively, but are warned not to copy each other’s work as this may result in a fail grade
Journal

Weight: 30%
Word length: 1,000+
Due: Week 13 (Friday 5th June 2009)
Hardcopy to Hub only

Submission: Submit your complete journal (must be in A4 format) to the Student Hub by 5.00pm on the due date. Given the nature of the task there is no Turnitin requirement.

Task
Students are asked to maintain a weekly journal of reflections on course material (lectures, readings, and tutorial discussions) and material students encounter outside the classroom (e.g., media and social interactions). In this course students are expected to submit 8 (eight) entries out of a possible 12.

Advice
The journal of reflections should provide evidence of scholarly activity and informed reflection. It should demonstrate your ability to engage with the content of the subject and make relevant links between themes, theories, concepts and supporting material. Personal reflection, informed by the readings and discussions (as well as personal experience), on the issues raised is strongly encouraged. Students are encouraged to express their ideas freely. The key to this task is informed engagement with the material.

The length of each entry is up to the student, though keep in mind that we are more interested in the quality of your thinking and engagement rather than the quantity of material submitted. Reference where appropriate. Further guidance on this task will be given in class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading guide for all written work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>49% or less</strong></td>
<td>Fail (FF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>50% to 64%</strong></td>
<td>Pass (P)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>65% to 74%</strong></td>
<td>Credit (C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>75% to 84%</strong></td>
<td>Distinction (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>85% upwards</strong></td>
<td>High Distinction (HD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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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Tutorial Questions – Week by week – see overview on back page for dates.

Week 1

General discussion and introductions. Acquire a copy of the textbook to prepare for next week. 

Week 2

You should read and make notes on Chapter 1 of Alan Aldridge’s text. This is the beginning of your learning journal – keep an A4 notebook for your reflections on this course. The following questions may help you prepare for the tutorial, but see the learning journal instructions above – make notes of what YOU think to bring to the tutorial.

Section 1.
• Has Australia had any situations comparable to the French ban on the hijab and other religious symbols in schools?
• How does Australia handle the issue of prayer in schools?
• Do you know of any ‘rule and exemptions’ in Australia?
• What does this tell us about the relationship between the state and religion in Australia?
• Do you agree that religion should be confined to the private sphere?

Section 2.
• What does Aldridge mean by saying that ‘whiteness’ socially constructed?
• What is super-diversity?
• Do you think Hansens’ law applies in Australia to the same extent as in the USA?

Section 3.
• What is Huntington’s main argument?
• What criticisms have been made of it?
• Do you agree with Huntington or his critics?

Section 4.
• How have mainstream Christians reacted to cultural diversity?
Week 3

Chapter 2 of the Aldridge text is about how religion is defined. What religions or religious groups do you know of? How would they fit with these sociological definitions?

1. Do you think that either Scientology or B’hai has a good claim to be a religion? Why or why not?
2. Why would an organisation want to be defined as a religion?
3. Why would an organisation not want to be defined as a religion?
4. What is an inclusive definition of religion?
5. What is an exclusive definition of religion?
6. Do you think it is important to define exactly what religion is?
7. What is Aldridge’s answer to this question?
8. How do you define religion?
9. Can you think of any organisations which are like religions but not defined as such?
10. Are there any religious organisations which you think should be defined as something else?

Week 4

Chapter 3 of the Aldridge text discusses some classical ideas about the organisation of religion – the differences between Churches and sects. Some important debates are around how some minority religious groups fit into a democratic society, whether a large number of groups threaten the legitimacy of religious ideas and how to understand a growing number of ‘cults’ which appear.

1. What are supposed to be the characteristics of Churches and Sects?
2. What did Weber mean by ‘the routinisation of charisma’?
3. How do some Sects maintain their separate identity?
4. What current issues have brought the Exclusive Brethren and the Mormon practise of polygamy into mainstream culture in Australia? (Need to think outside the textbook for this).
5. According to Aldridge, what are the limits of the Church/Sect analysis?
6. Why are denominations said to be suited to democratic society?
7. What do the concepts of ‘pluralist legitimacy’ and unique legitimacy mean?
8. How does this text define a ‘cult’? Can you think of any examples of an ‘audience cult’ or a ‘client cult’?
9. What is the difference between epistemological individualism and epistemological authoritarianism?
10. What is the definition, the likely membership and the potential problems of Wallis’ three cult types:
   - World Rejecting
   - World Affirming
   - World Accommodating
Week 5

Chapter 4 is very dense so we will take it in small sections. This week read pages 61-67. We go back to the early 19th Century for the origins of Secularisation and ideas about explaining religion in some terms other than theological. Some sections from Marx and Freud will be posted on Blackboard so that you can read them in the original.

1. What were Comte’s three stages of history?
2. What was Feuerbach’s analysis of the place of religion in human history?
3. Why did Marx call religion the Opium of the people?
4. What was Freud’s idea about religion? How did Jung disagree with him?

Week 6

This week read pages 67-80 about three more major theorists for whom religion was an important issue in understanding European society in the early 20th Century. Again, you can read some of their work in the original by looking on Blackboard. Which one makes the most sense to you?

1. Did Durkheim believe that religion was an illusion which was destined to disappear? Why or why not?
2. What did Weber mean by ‘the disenchanted of the world’? Did he think it was a good or a bad thing?
3. What were Weber’s three types of authority? Can you think of contemporary examples of these?
4. Why did Weber think that Protestant religion was particularly suited to capitalism?
5. Do you think that Simmel’s view of religion is more accurate than the other classical theorists?

Week 7

Read Page 80-97. At the end of this major chapter, Aldridge is reviewing the arguments FOR the secularisation thesis – the argument that religion is declining in the contemporary world. Next week we will be looking at the arguments against it.

1. Why does Aldridge say that the ‘secularization thesis’ depend on an exclusive definition of religion?
2. What role do Weber and Berger give Judaism and Protestant Christianity in the process of ‘disenchancement’ of the world?
3. What are the arguments in favour of and against the idea that religion in declining because of a decline of community in the modern world?
   (Gemeinschaft means traditional settled agricultural society and Gesellschaft means the modern industrial nation state – these terms were coined at the end of the nineteenth century).
4. Is there such a thing as charismatic leadership in the modern world? Why or why not?
5. Are contemporary people suffering from cultural amnesia? Have you personally inherited a strong cultural tradition from your family or community? Is it a religious one?
6. Does pluralism and diversity threaten the ‘plausibility structure’ of religion? Why or why not?
7. Reason, rationality and Science – this section is very dense and we will look at the arguments in the lectures – here are a couple of questions to think about while reading it:
   • Why were Marx, Engels and Habermas so opposed to religion?
   • Why did Horkheimer (who was an intellectual in the same critical tradition) disagree with them?
   • What does Dillon’s study of marginalized Catholics say about the conservative nature of the Church?
   • Has religious belief declined because of the progress of science or for some other reason?

8. Questions 2 to 7 trace debates the different elements of the argument that the modern world is becoming more secular. Why does Aldridge suggest in his conclusion that the secularisation thesis is tied to a version of modernity which is now becoming outdated?

Week 8

In Chapter 5 we are looking at arguments against the secularisation thesis. These writers believe that religion is changing in form not declining or disappearing. They do have different kinds of arguments to support this though. Berger, Davy and Talcott Parsons are all sociologists while Stark and Bainbridge are very influenced by Economics.

1. Why has Berger changed his view on secularisation and why does he think that Western educated intellectuals continue to believe in it?

2. What does Davy mean by ‘believing without belonging’ and why has this statement been criticised?

3. How does ‘the new paradigm’ challenge the secularists views of religion in the USA?

4. Why did Talcott Parsons argue that the Christian Religion in the West contributed to liberty rather than denying it?

5. What is Stark and Bainbridge’s rational choice theory of religion?

6. What examples of ‘supply side’ growth are mentioned and how does this contradict the idea that pluralism is a threat to religion?

7. What does Stark say leads to strong religious movements? How do Mormons (Latter Day Saints) and Jehovah’s Witnesses exemplify these qualities?

8. How does the new paradigm explain the success of Mega Churches and Pentecostalism?

Week 9

The next four chapters are about different aspects of contemporary religion. First, read Chapter 6 on Fundamentalism, which is one of the most over-used words in contemporary debate. We have looked at arguments for the importance of religion in the contemporary world – so this chapter looks at one aspect of it. Do you think that most people understand what ‘fundamentalism’ actually means? Does fundamentalist religion really want to go back to the past or is it a product of modern society?

1. How does Aldridge think the concept of ‘Fundamentalism’ relates to life in ‘detraditionalised’ culture?

2. What are the characteristics of Bible believing fundamentalists, according to Ammerman?

3. Does Aldridge agree with Bruce that Fundamentalism is only found in monotheistic religions? Why or why not?

4. What are the arguments for and against using the term ‘Islamophobia’? Do you think it is a useful term?
Week 10

Read Chapter 7. This week looks at a second aspect of religion in contemporary society - possibly ‘religious’ ideas and experiences which occur in secular societies. Why do so many young Australians want to go to Gallipoli? Is that an expression of religion? The following questions address each section of the chapter in turn – they should help to focus your reading:

1. What is the role of ‘civil religion’ in holding communities together? Can you think of any examples of rituals which unite or divide?
2. How is civil religion in the USA used by conservatives and liberals? Is there an equivalent debate in Australia?
3. Why is Canada described as lacking civil religion? Does Australia resemble Canada in this respect or not?
4. What is the significance of the difference between Ulster Catholic and Protestant civil religious rituals?
5. What were the key features of Soviet ritual? What made it a ‘political religion’ rather than a ‘civil religion’?
6. What was irrational about Nazi civil religion?
7. Do you think that ‘rampant individualism’ threatens the social order as Bellah’s later work suggests? What would be the signs of it? What can be done about it?
8. If you wanted to describe Australian civil religion, what rites of passage, calendrical festivals and mass rallies would you include? Do they have a transcendent significance?

Week 11.

Read Chapter 8. A third aspect of contemporary religion is that of ‘cults’ which receive media attention and are accused of brainwashing their followers. Sociologists call all sorts of groups New Religious Movements. How can you distinguish between dangerous groups and groups which other people are just prejudiced against?

1. What kinds of atrocity stories are told about minority religions? Are you surprised to find Catholicism described like this?
2. What is ‘brainwashing’ and why is it such a powerful accusation?
3. What are the benefits offered by new religious movements?
4. What are the problems with disengaging from a New Religious Movement?
5. What does Aldridge argue is the relationship between NRMs and the State?
6. Why did Bromley and Sharpe criticise anti-cultists?
7. Do the five case studies support their case?
8. How can you distinguish between a dangerous cult and a New Religious Movement?
9. What are the different types of ‘cult watching’ groups?
Week 12

Read Chapter 9. The final chapter in Aldridge’s book looks at religion in a consumer society in the light of everything we have discussed so far. Is the New Age really religious or just a form of self-indulgent consumption? Is religion so patriarchal that contemporary young women should reject it? What kinds of religion are flourishing at the present time?

You might notice that it is difficult for sociologists to admit to religious ideas and feelings. The whole discipline has been so much a part of enlightenment rationality, that to acknowledge the role of religion is difficult. The final statement by a famous German sociologist – Habermas, finds a small way forward.

1. What is the main argument of Bellah’s Habits of the heart?

2. What are the main changes to the Catholic Church described in this section? Do you agree with Iannaccone that they are ‘the worst of all worlds’?

3. What is significance of sexuality for major world religions?

4. What kinds of religious movements are likely to be ‘gender blind’? Are there any limits on their tolerance?

5. How is gender analysed in disputes between traditionalists and modernisers?

6. What different feminist analyses are there of the Virgin Mary?

7. Why does Aldridge argue that mysticism is more suited to contemporary society than conventional religion?

8. What is the relationship between spirituality and religion in the New Age?

9. How is the internet used for religious purposes?

10. Does consumerism lead to the death of religion?

11. What are Habermas’ prescriptions for dialogues between the religious and the non-religious?
The following are some 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.
Check Blackboard for weblinks and short loans.
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<td>Introduction to the course – what is sociology of religion?</td>
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<td>Part 1 – Basic Concepts</td>
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<td>Religious institutions</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>30/03/2009</td>
<td>(31st March Last day to withdraw without financial penalty.)</td>
<td>Comte, Marx And Freud</td>
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<td>Part 2. Classical theories 1. – Comte, Marx and Freud</td>
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<td>Semester Recess: Friday 10th April (Easter)</td>
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<td>Durkheim, Weber and Simmel</td>
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<td>Essay plan due in Turnitin – Thursday 9th April</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Part 3. Religion in the contemporary world: The Secularisation debate 1. The secularisation of the world</td>
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<td>Secularisation debate part 2. Retraditionalisation and new paradigms</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<td>4. Gender, individualism, consumption and contemporary religion. Essay due Tuesday 26th May hardcopy 5pm at hub + Turnitin</td>
<td>Identity and meaning</td>
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<td>01/06/2009</td>
<td>Review. Submission of Journal entry – 5pm Friday 5th June. Hard copy at hub A4 format only. (5th June Last day to withdraw without failure.)</td>
<td>No tutorial</td>
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**Examination period:** Monday 9th June to Friday 26th June 2009