SOCA1030 - Introduction to the Sociology of Religion
Course Outline

Course Coordinator   Dr Kathleen McPhillips
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Fax: 49216933
Email: Kath.McPhillips@newcastle.edu.au
Consultation hours: Wednesday 11-12, Thursday, 9-10

Semester          Semester 2 - 2010
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
Available in the Campus Bookshop.
Other readings as listed on the course Blackboard site.
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, 20%, due Week 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essays / Written Assignments</td>
<td>1500 words, 40%, due week 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial Participation</td>
<td>Attendance at weekly tutorial and answering weekly tutorial questions 10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quiz - On-line</td>
<td>Two online quizzes - multiple choice due Weeks 4 and 6, 30%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Assumed Knowledge
None

Callaghan Campus Timetable
SOCA1030 Sociology of Religion
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2010
Lecture and Tutorial Wednesday 9:00 - 11:00 [GP101] Commencing Week 2
or Thursday 10:00 - 11:00 [W238] Commencing Week 2
or Thursday 11:00 - 12:00 [W238] Commencing Week 2
or Thursday 14:00 - 15:00 [MCLG44] Commencing Week 2
or Thursday 15:00 - 16:00 [W238] Commencing Week 2

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](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** (under student) at the link 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:

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:

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>Callaghan Campus</th>
<th>Port Macquarie Student Hub</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shortland Hub: Level 3, Shortland Building</td>
<td>The University of Newcastle</td>
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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.

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### Additional Course Information

#### Assessment Items:

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School of Humanities and Social Science
A pass grade 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading guide for all written work</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>49% or less</strong></td>
<td><strong>Fail (FF)</strong></td>
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<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>50% to 64%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pass (P)</strong></td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td><strong>65% to 74%</strong></td>
<td><strong>Credit (C)</strong></td>
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<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><strong>Distinction (D)</strong></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>
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<tr>
<td><strong>85% upwards</strong></td>
<td><strong>High Distinction (HD)</strong></td>
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<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 Participation (10%)**

Students are expected to attend weekly tutorials and participate in class discussion. Weekly discussion questions will be listed on Blackboard. Students will answer two questions over the course of the semester.

**(i) On-line Tests (30%)**

There will be two on-line tests that all students will complete in Week 4 and Week 6. They will be completed on Blackboard. Each test will be worth 15% and will consist of 3 short answer questions worth 5 marks each. All questions must be attempted. Further details can be found on Blackboard.

**(ii) Essay Plan (20%)**

Weighting: 20%
Due Date: Thursday 16\textsuperscript{th} September 4pm
Total length: 750 words
Submission details: Turnitin NOT required for this assessment. Submit hard copy to the HUB
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.

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 on Blackboard for help. (5 marks)
   - For each reference, explain in a sentence why you think it will be useful. (3 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 (3 marks)
   - 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 (2 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*, 2nd edn, Sydney: Allen & Unwin.

(iii) **Essay (40%)**

Weighting: 40%
Due Date: Thursday 28 October 4pm
Total length: 1500 words
Submission details: Hard copy to Hub + Turnitin submission required for this assessment
Marking criteria: See below.

**Essay Questions (answer one of the following)**
Further details will be listed on BlackBoard during semester.

1. In what ways does post-modernity challenge Weber’s thesis of disenchantment? In your answer, use examples to demonstrate the efficacy of re-enchantment as a central characteristic of post-modernity.

2. What is secularization and are modern western societies really secular? In your answer provide a case study to demonstrate your point of view.

3. What effects has popular culture had on traditional religions? In your answer, provide examples to demonstrate your point of view.

4. Is modern paganism a religion? In your answer, provide examples to back up your argument.
5. Why has gender been so problematic for traditional religions? In your answer, include a case study.

6. What is religious fundamentalism, and why is it so significant in current times?

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**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 (ie, 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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Week Commencing</th>
<th>Lecture Topic</th>
<th>Required Reading</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>July 26</td>
<td>Defining religion in a post-modern age</td>
<td>NO TUTORIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semester Recess: Monday 27</td>
<td></td>
<td>September – Friday 8 October</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Examination period:** Monday 8 November to Friday 26 November 2010

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School of Humanities and Social Science
Reference List: Books and Journals

Texts with sociological perspectives on religion
Ammerman, Nancy T 2007 Everyday religion; observing modern religious lives. New York; Oxford University Press
Norris, Pippa and Inglehart, Ronald 2004 Sacred and secular: religion and politics worldwide. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press.
Clark Schofield, Lynne (2003) From Angels to Aliens: Teenagers, the Media, and the Supernatural, Oxford University Press
York: Routledge.
Ezzy, D (ed) Practising the Witches Craft: real magic under a southern sky, 2003 Allen & Unwin, Australia
Gary Zukav 1999 The Seat of the Soul Simon and Schuster New York
J.P. Bloch New Spirituality, Self and Belonging Westport.


Hume, Lynne *Witchcraft and Paganism in Australia* MUP 1998


Clive Marsh & Gaye Ortiz *Explorations in Theology and Film* Blackwell: Oxford, 1997


Merlin Stone, 1976 *When God Was A Woman*, New York: Harvest


**Journals**
- *Australian Religion Studies Review* Equinox Press
- *Culture and Religion*: Taylor & Francis
- *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*: Blackwell Synergy
- *Journal of Contemporary Religion*: Taylor & Francis
- *Pomegranate*
- *Social Compass*: Sage press
- *Sociology of Religion*
- *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* (on-line)
- *Journal of Religion and Film* (on-line)
- *The Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*

**Sociology dictionaries and short introductions:**