

**Sociological Theorizing:  
The Sociology of Religion as an Investigation of Categories  
SOCIOL 204 (Graduate)  
Haines A6  
Tuesday, 3-5:50 pm**

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Office Hours: 2 pm to 3 pm, Tuesday and Thursday (and by appointment)  
Set up an office hours appointment here: <https://slotted.co/3qclm7s8>

### **Welcome and Overview**

Hello students! This is going to be a great class. It's going to be a lot of work, but by the end of the quarter, you should have a very good sense of how categories work within social science and a good grounding in some of the major conversations in contemporary theory. A few things are worth pointing out:

1. Each week is a combination of readings, usually a book and two articles. It's a lot of reading, and you might well have to skim the book. It's a skill to get used to, however. It will probably be around nine of hours of reading, plus the three hours of the course for around a twelve hour commitment per week (plus the papers of course). Also (see below) you are only required to read the book for class and will present on an article of your choice.
2. This course is many things at once. It is simultaneously an introduction to various conversations about the category of religion, a broader analysis of the sociology of religion, and, most importantly, a course about how to theorize, particularly how to theorize categories and their relationship to identity, power, institutions, and organizations.

### **Attendance and Absences**

We only have ten meetings. If you miss more than two, it will affect your grade. I won't ask why you're not there (you're an adult!), but if you will need to miss more than two, please do contact me. Please be respectful of each other regarding the use of smart phones and social media and other random websites in class.

### **Contacting Me and Office Hours.**

My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 2 pm to 3 pm, Haines 296. Come on by! I'm also available most days by appointment. Here's where you can sign up for office hours:  
<https://slotted.co/3qclm7s8>

### **Class Presentation and Readings**

You will all be required to read the book for each week and then will also be required to present on at least two of the articles. Please prepare an approximately five to ten minute presentation on the article's key arguments and relevance to the subject at hand.

### **Papers**

You will write two papers, with the option of the second paper being an extension and elaboration of the first with the possibility of future publication. The papers should be no shorter than eight pages (Garamond, double space, 1 inch margins). They should have a clear argument about the themes we discuss in class, either using your own data or engaging in a theoretical or methodological

critique. Papers should be e-mailed to me no later than midnight on the day they're due. Late papers will be deducted one letter grade each day. The papers will be due May 5 and June 9. I'm happy to give extensions on the first paper, but you have to ask me for it.

### **Grading**

Paper 1: 35%

Paper 2: 35%

Class Presentations: 10%

Attendance and Participation: 20%

### **Academic Honesty**

If you're caught plagiarizing, you get an automatic 0 on the paper. I'll also report you to the Dean.

### **Difficult Material**

Some material in this class might be hard for some students. If you're worried that's the case, please contact me beforehand.

### **Required Books**

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*
2. Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion*
3. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*
4. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religions Life*
5. Edward Said, *Orientalism*
6. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*
7. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*
8. Genevieve Zubrzycki, *Beheading the Saint*
9. Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?*

Books From Which We'll Read Selections (I'll provide the selections on the class website, but you still might want to purchase them)

1. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*
2. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger*
3. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*
4. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*

All readings on the syllabus besides the nine required books listed above will be either on the course website or easily findable online.

## **The Schedule**

### **Week 1**

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*
2. Macintyre, Alasdair. 1981. "The Nature of the Virtues." *The Hastings Center Report*. 11(2); 27-34.
3. Taylor, Charles. 2002. "Modern Social Imaginaries." *Public Culture*. 14(1): 91-124.

## Week 2

1. Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion*
2. Smith, Jonathan Z. 1998. "Religion, religions, religious." *Critical terms for religious studies* pp. 269-284.
3. Asad, Talal. 2009. "The idea of an anthropology of Islam." *Qui Parle* 17(2): 1-30.

## Week 3

1. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*
2. Avishai, Orit. 2008. "'Doing Religion' In a Secular World Women in Conservative Religions and the Question of Agency." *Gender & Society* 22(4): 409-433.
3. Gorski, Philip. 2000. "Historicizing the secularization debate." *American Sociological Review*. 65(1): 138-167.

## Week 4

1. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religions Life*
2. Williams, Rhys H. 1996. "Religion as political resource: Culture or ideology?." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 35(4): 368-378.
3. Braunstein, Ruth, Brad Fulton, and Richard Wood. 2014. "The Role of Bridging Cultural Practices in Racially and Socioeconomically Diverse Civic Organizations." *American Sociological Review*. 79(4): 705-725.

## Week 5

1. Edward Said, *Orientalism*
2. Guhin, Jeffrey and Jonathan Wyrzten. "The Violences of Knowledge: Edward Said, Sociology, and Post-Orientalist Reflexivity"
3. Spivak, Gayatri. C. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?." *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds pp. 271-313.

## Week 6

1. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (3-30; 87-141; 412-453)
2. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (1-50; 160-172; 196-220)
3. Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (27-82)

## Week 7

1. Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*
2. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (77-131; but really just read the book: it's short and more or less necessary for this kind of conversation.)
3. Fetner, Tina. 2011. "Working Anita Bryant: The impact of Christian anti-gay activism on lesbian and gay movement claims." *Social Problems* 48(3): 411-428.

## Week 8

1. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan. *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*
2. Fitzgerald, Timothy. 1997. "A critique of religion as a cross-cultural category." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*. 9(2): 91-110.
3. Winchester, Daniel. *Religion as theoretical case, lens, and resource for critique: Three ways social theory can learn from the study of religion*. *Sociology of Religion* 77 (3), 241-260

Week 9

1. Genevieve Zubrzycki, *Beheading the Saint*
2. Lichterman, Paul. 2008. "Religion and the Construction of Civic Identity." *American Sociological Review*.
3. Voas, David, and Mark Chaves. 2016. "Is the United States a Counterexample to the Secularization Thesis? 1." *American Journal of Sociology* 121(5): 1517-1556.

Week 10

1. Shahab Ahmed, *What is Islam?*