



SOC 4030: Sociology of Religion

Point Loma Nazarene University, Fall 2023

“It may be said that nearly all the great social institutions have been born in religion... if religion has given birth to all that is essential in society, it is because the idea of society is the soul of religion.”

—Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life

Course Information

Instructor: Dr. Daniel Davis

Phone: Please request phone appointments via email first

Email: ddavil@pointloma.edu

Website: www.danieldavis.net

Class Days: Tuesdays

Class Time: 4:00 PM to 6:30 PM

Course Location: Rohr Hall 111

Mode of Delivery: Live lecture and discussion

Office Hours: Immediately after class or by appointment

PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Course Description

Comparative and analytical study of religion as a social institution; the relation of religion to social stratification, economy, state; religion as an agent of social change and stability.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Religion & Methodology:** Identify and describe the main sociological methods applied in the study of religion, rooted in the scientific method, both qualitative and quantitative.
- **Religion & Theory:** Identify and describe the main sociological theories applied in the study of religion, including structuralist, symbolic, conflict, and more.
- **Religion & Culture:** Analyze varying ways that religion is defined, enacted, and embedded in societies around the world. Particular attention is given to the symbiotic and ever evolving relationship between religions and culture, including intersectional connections between religion and race, class, gender, life stage, and sexuality.
- **Religion & Structure:** Analyze the relationship between religion and social structure, including the nation state, citizenship, media, politics, economics, authority and power, especially—but not exclusively—in the context of the United States.
- **Religion & Secularism:** Examine patterns in secularism, non-religious identities and movements, and trends in populations that do not identify with any particular religion.

Course Materials

- All materials are digital and will be posted free on Canvas. Most content will be articles and podcast episodes from the journal *Sociology of Religion*:
 - [Folder of Journal Articles](#)
 - [Podcasts | Sociology of Religion | Oxford Academic](#)

Assignments Point Outlay

Note: All assignments are turned in on Canvas.

Weekly Notes and Talking Points	3pts x 14 weeks	42pts
Attendance	2pts x 10 class sessions	20pts
Religious Group Discovery Project	19pts x 1 project	19pts
Religion in Society Project	19pts x 1 project	<u>19pts</u>
	Total:	100pts

Late Work Policy

- Notes accepted late up to 7 days (-25%) and thereafter (-50%)

Grading System

Final grades will be determined according to the following scale. Fractional points ending right on the line between grades will be rounded up only for those with strong discussion participation.

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	00-59

Assignment Descriptions

Attendance

Each time you attend class without coming late or leaving early you receive one point towards attendance. You achieve maximum attendance points by attending 10 class sessions. A sign-in sheet will be passed in class, sometimes at the beginning and sometimes at the end of class.

Much of the value of this course comes from the opportunity to orally debate and discuss the ideas from the readings, thus attendance and active engagement is vitally important.

Weekly Notes & Talking Points

For most class sessions, before coming to each class you will read an article from the journal *Sociology of Religion*, and listen to a podcast interview of the author. Your notes should be between 1-2 full pages. Bullet-points are fine. Notes should be uploaded to Canvas ahead of class time. Include the following three sections, labeled with corresponding headings:

1. **Article Summary:** Basic details about the research methodology and findings
2. **Social Relevance:** News headlines, statistical charts/figures, brief video clips or some other multimedia that connects the article to society and culture. You will often share these with class.
3. **Top 5 Talking Points:** Key ideas, questions you have, or new vocabulary you learned

Religious Group Discovery Project

You will use a template to investigate a specific global religious group that interests you. The group can be from the past and no longer in practice, or a presently active group. You will research a religious group you know little to nothing about. You will present it to the class in five to seven minutes at some point during the semester. More description and a grading rubric can be found on Canvas.

Religion in Society Project

You will use a template to investigate a specific issue at the intersection of religion and society that interests you. The topic can be a social problem or social phenomenon. You may argue a perspective but your tone should be objective and sociological, with scholarly sources supporting your claims. You will present it to the class in five to seven minutes at some point during the semester. More description and a grading rubric can be found on Canvas.

Course Calendar

Day	Article Titles/Topics
Tues 8/29	Syllabus & the Sociological Study of Religion
Tues 9/05	Religion & Gender: <u>Occupational Gender Inequality among American Clergy, 1976–2016: the Stained-Glass Ceiling</u>
Tues 9/12	Religion & Race: <u>Christian America in Black and White: Racial Identity, Religious-National Boundaries, and Explanations for Racial Inequality</u>
Tues 9/19	Religion & Sexuality: <u>“I’m Gay and I’m Catholic”: Negotiating Two Complex Identities at University</u>
Tues 9/26	Islam: <u>Thinking Sociologically about Religion and Violence: The Case of ISIS</u>
Tues 10/3	Eastern Religion: <u>Paths to Enlightenment: Constructing Buddhist Identities in Mainland China and the United States</u>
Tues 10/10	Religious Nones: <u>The Rise of “No Religion”: Towards an Explanation</u>
Tues 10/17	Religious Identity Construction: <u>“In the Lord’s Hands’: Divine Healing and Embodiment in a Fundamentalist Christian Church”</u>
Tues 10/24	Religious Practices: <u>Formal or Functional? Traditional or Inclusive? Bible Translations as Imitation in Religious Subcultures</u>
Tues 10/31	<u>Classical Sociological Thinkers on Religion and Society</u> (<i>Videos instead of an article & podcast</i>)
Tues 11/7	Religion & Social Networks: <u>The Influence of Your Neighbors’ Religions on You, Your Attitudes, Behaviors, and Your Community</u>
Tues 11/14	Religion in Trauma: <u>Finding Resonance Amid Trauma: Moral Injury and the Role of Religion for Christian Post-9/11 U.S. Veterans</u>
Tues 11/21	<u>Social Impacts of the Protestant Reformation</u> (<i>Video instead of an article & podcast</i>)
Tues 11/28	Religion & Politics: <u>A Theory of Political Backlash: Assessing the Religious Right’s Effect on the American Religious Field</u>
Tues 12/5	Religion & Environmentalism: <u>Naturally Ambivalent: Religion’s Role in Shaping Environmental Action</u>

Day	Article Titles/Topics
Tues 8/29	Syllabus & the Sociological Study of Religion
Tues 12/13	Finals Week- All Assignments Due by 12/13 at 11:59pm

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

PLNU Academic Accommodation Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan ("AP") to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester. PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course. Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.