

## SOAN 228: PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Winter 2021

Carleton College

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

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Professor Wes Markofski

Class: Leighton 236, MW 1:50-3:00pm, F 2:20-3:20pm (5a)

Office Hours: MW 3:15-4:15pm, Thursday 10:30am-12:30pm or by appointment

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From the discipline's earliest days, sociologists have found religion to be a fascinating and perplexing object of study. Early sociological theorists devoted enormous attention to the topic of religion, famously linking it to the development of capitalism (Max Weber), to moral and social solidarity (Emile Durkheim), to false consciousness and political conservatism (Karl Marx), to progressive era social reform (Jane Addams), to Black American experience and power (W.E.B. Du Bois), and to varying forms of social, economic, and political life around the world. A powerful social force, sociologists have explored religion's relationship to collective emotions, individual and collective agency, social and moral solidarity, social movements and political reform, political stability and change, capitalism and socialism, secularism, democracy, intersectional inequality, and cultural conflict.

This course focuses on special topics in the contemporary sociology of religion, with a particular emphasis on the relationship between religion and public life in the United States and around the world. We will look at the intersection of race, religion, and politics in the age of Trump and contemporary U.S. society; at the culture war debate and American civil religious tradition; at theories of secularization and religious vitality; and at the ongoing relevance of "orthodox" and "modernist" expressions of public religion around the world—including Islamic feminism and democracy in Egypt and Indonesia, Coptic Christianity and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, orthodox Jewish movements in Israel, American evangelicals in the United States, and Black church mobilization in the U.S. civil rights movement. As we do so, we will examine core theoretical perspectives and empirical developments in the contemporary sociology of religion.

### Student Learning Outcomes

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology has specified six student learning outcomes we want students to acquire before graduating. The relevant outcomes for this course are:

- Articulating the complexity of contemporary socio-cultural phenomenon in their many dimensions (e.g., temporal, structural, spatial, and symbolic).

- Applying sociological theory to analyze socio-cultural phenomena.
- Drawing upon your understanding of historical and contemporary socio-cultural phenomena to engage the world.

### Course Materials

There are two required books for the course, which are available at the Carleton bookstore. Other required readings will be made available on the Moodle course website.

- Aldon D. Morris. 1984. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. New York: The Free Press.
- Ruth Braunstein. *Prophets and Patriots: Faith in Democracy Across the Political Divide*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

### Course Requirements

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Reading Questions 12.5%	<b>[Due each class session]</b>
Participation 12.5%	<b>[Due each class session]</b>
Discussion Leadership Assignment 7.5%	<b>[TBD]</b>
Position Paper #1 12.5%	<b>[Due Wed, 9/29]</b>
Position Paper #2 12.5%	<b>[Due Wed, 10/13]</b>
Midterm Exam 20%	<b>[Wed, 10/27]</b>
Final Position Paper Presentation 2.5%	<b>[Due Wed, 11/17]</b>
Final Position Paper 20%	<b>[Due Fri, 11/19]</b>

A = 100-93; A- = <93-90; B+ = <90-87; B = <87-83; B- = <83-80; C+ = <80-77; C = <77-73; C- = <73-70; D+ = <70-67; D = <67-60; F = <60

*Policy on Late Work:* Late work will be penalized one grade increment (e.g., A to A-, A- to B+) per day in the absence of clear and demonstrable extenuating circumstances (e.g., extended illness, family emergency, letter from dean's office, etc.) communicated in advance of assignment deadlines.

*Readings:* To do well in this course, it is imperative that you commit to several hours of active, focused reading prior to each class meeting in order to complete the readings and reading questions and be prepared to engage dynamically in class discussions.

*Some questions to keep in mind while reading:* What is the main argument of the section/text? Key concepts and definitions? What evidence or methods are used to support the authors' arguments? What might be missing? Make a note of concepts/arguments you find difficult to understand (to bring up in class). Make a note of things you agree/disagree with, or find plausible/implausible, exciting/problematic, etc. (to bring up in class discussions).

*Reading Questions:* In order to facilitate active, critical engagement with the readings, and to stimulate discussion & debate with one another (through which much of our learning will occur), each student is required to upload via Moodle at least two reading questions prior to each class meeting:

- (1) One (or more) question, comment, or critique about a main idea in the text. (*Examples: Is the distinction between theological communitarianism and theological individualism really all that important? I'm unconvinced: here's why. Or What exactly is secularization theory?!*)
- (2) One (or more) comment or question comparing, contrasting, or otherwise relating something from the readings to a prior reading, personal experience, or contemporary issue. (*Examples: It's remarkable how relevant Hunter's culture war argument continues to be in light of the 2020 election. .... Or How do different types of Islamic feminist agency relate to democracy in Indonesia?*)

**Reading questions should be posted by 12pm before each class session.** You may miss two session's worth of reading questions without consequence; beyond that, each failure to upload reading questions will incrementally lower your participation/reading question grade. Reading question submissions can range from a few sentences up to a single paragraph in length.

*Participation:* Your personal success in this course (as well as its collective success) depends on your active and sustained engagement throughout the entire term. I expect everyone to participate at a high level; however, I recognize we don't all have the same personalities or learning styles. While participation includes asking questions and contributing vigorously (yet respectfully) to class discussions, it also involves consistent presence and attentiveness to others throughout the term. Active participation also means refraining from non-course related use of electronic devices during class time. You may miss two class sessions without consequence; beyond that, each missed class will incrementally lower your participation grade.

*Civil Discourse @ Carleton:* I strive to create an inclusive and respectful classroom that values diversity of all kinds. Let's work together to ensure that classroom discussions throughout the term reflect our shared commitment to academic and egalitarian norms of mutual respect, recognition, and tolerance. Note this does not mean engaging in "tone policing" or mandating emotionless argument: sometimes authentic academic/public discourse can become heated! Rather, it involves the difficult task of combining our passionate personal, intellectual, political, moral, or religious convictions with what the philosophical and psychological literature refers to as "intellectual humility," defined as a "willingness to improve one's knowledge of the world" and "low concern for intellectual domination" over others. It is "closely allied with traits such as open-mindedness, a sense of one's fallibility, and being responsive to reasons. Thus, intellectual humility advocates for conviction through critical self-reflection" ([humilityandconviction.uconn.edu](http://humilityandconviction.uconn.edu)). Let's work together to listen to, and learn from, our different experiences and understandings of the world, even when we find it difficult to do so.

Please keep these ideas in mind, revisiting them at times throughout the term to aid our collective efforts at promoting civil discourse and learning across difference at Carleton:

- Listen carefully to what others are saying, even when you strongly disagree with what is being said. Comments you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker's actual points.
- Respect others' rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own. When you disagree, challenge or criticize the idea, not the person.
- Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
- Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.
- Share responsibility for including all voices in the discussion. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute.
- Recognize that we are all still learning. Be willing to change your perspective, and make space for others to do the same. ([www.crlt.umich.edu/examples-discussion-guidelines](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/examples-discussion-guidelines))

*Position Papers #1 and #2:* 4-page papers, topics TBA.

*Midterm Exam:* A short answer/essay exam, administered in class on Wednesday, Oct 27.

*Discussion Leadership Assignment:* Those who have a say in how and what they learn tend to learn more and enjoy the process better. As such, each student, with a partner, will have the opportunity to facilitate class discussion for roughly one half of one class period (~30 minutes) during the term. This means you will be “extra familiar” with the required reading assignments, arrive with discussion questions, presentation, or other prepared discussion format, and be the primary discussion facilitators for the first segment of one class period. You will email me a brief outline of your discussion leadership plans by 9pm the day before you lead discussion.

*Final Position Paper Presentation:* A 3-4 minute presentation, describing your final position paper's main idea & argument, followed by peer discussion.

*Final Position Paper:* 8-page paper, topic TBA.

*Paper Formatting:* All papers must be uploaded to Moodle in either a Microsoft Word or PDF file format and use APA, MLA, ASA, or Chicago citation styles.

*Important Note:* If at any point in the term you become concerned about your grade, a particular assignment, classroom participation or classroom climate issues, falling behind, or anything else, *please don't wait to come visit me during office hours or otherwise contact me!* The sooner we identify potential problems and concerns, the more effectively we will be able to work together to address them.

### **Plagiarism & Academic Integrity**

In line with Carleton's policy on [academic integrity](#) and [plagiarism](#), it is assumed that a student is the author of all coursework submitted by that student. Please refer to Carleton's [full policy](#) for

additional information or see me if you have questions.

## **Academic Support**

*Taking Care & Well-Being:* With the college, I urge you to take care of yourself—your health and well-being—throughout this term and your entire Carleton career. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, don't hesitate to contact me and/or other campus resources such as [Student Health and Counseling](#) or the [Office of Health Promotion](#). If your personal situation (due to COVID-19 illness or other circumstances) begins to impact your ability to engage with the course, please contact me and/or the Dean of Students Office.

*Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:* Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Office of Accessibility Resources (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact [OAR@carleton.edu](mailto:OAR@carleton.edu) or call Sam Thayer ('10), Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources (x4464), to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

*Technological Resources for Students with Disabilities:* The Assistive Technologies program brings together academic and technological resources to complement student classroom and computing needs, particularly in support of students with physical or learning disabilities. Accessibility features include text-to-speech (Kurzweil), speech-to-text (Dragon) software, and audio recording Smartpens. If you would like to know more, contact [aztechs@carleton.edu](mailto:aztechs@carleton.edu) or visit [go.carleton.edu/aztech](http://go.carleton.edu/aztech).

*Learning Strategies & Time Management:* Oscar Alvarez, Academic Skills Coach, is eager to help you develop learning strategies that work in the Carleton context. His goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and to offer different ways you can approach your academic work so you're more efficient and effective. For details on how to schedule a videoconference with Oscar, visit: [Learning Strategies & Time Management](#). If you prefer to learn these skills and strategies on your own, visit "[Helpful DIY Resources](#)."

*Library:* Librarians work as liaisons to academic departments, and yours can be found at <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/library/help/help/liaisons/>. You can make an online appointment with your library liaison or chat with a librarian online 24/7. You can also [email and call](#). Librarians help students find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information on hours and librarians, visit the Gould Library website at [go.carleton.edu/library](http://go.carleton.edu/library).

*The Writing Center:* The Writing Center a space with peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more

information can be found on the [writing center website](#). You can reserve specific times for conferences by using their [online appointment system](#).

*The Term-Long Program for Multilingual Writers:* If English is not your first language and you believe you might benefit from working regularly with a writing consultant this term, email Melanie Cashin, [Multilingual Writing Coordinator](#), at [mcashin@carleton.edu](mailto:mcashin@carleton.edu). She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

*Title IX:* Carleton is committed to fostering an environment free of sexual misconduct. Please be aware all Carleton faculty and staff members, with the exception of Chaplains and SHAC staff, are “responsible employees.” Responsible employees are required to share any information they have regarding incidents of sexual misconduct with the Title IX Coordinator. Carleton’s goal is to ensure campus community members are aware of all the options available and have access to the resources they need. If you have questions, please contact Laura Riehle-Merrill, Carleton’s Title IX Coordinator, or visit the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website: <https://www.carleton.edu/sexual-misconduct/>.

## Course Outline and Reading Schedule

\* Please read the selections in order as they are listed on the syllabus, and be sure to bring the day’s readings with you to class. Stop and start your reading at the obvious place (section beginning/end, first/last paragraph, etc.) unless otherwise noted.

### **PUBLIC RELIGIONS & SECULARIZATION (OR NOT)**

Wed 9/15 (Week 1)

Introduction

Fri 9/17

Public Religion & U.S. Civil Society

- Wes Markofski, “The Public Sociology of Religion,” pp. 1-5
- Paul Lichterman and C. Brady Potts (Eds.), *The Civic Life of American Religion*, pp. 1-11 (stop at “Michael Schudson’s”) & Chapter 6

Mon 9/20 (Week 2)

American Civil Religion

- Philip Gorski, *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present*, Preface, Chapter 1, pp. 191-203

Wed 9/22      (*Position Paper #1 distributed*)

Public Religions in the Modern World

- Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Introduction: pp.3-7 (finish sentence on p.8), Chapter 1: pp.17-39, Chapter 2: pp.40-45,55-66

Fri 9/24

Public Religion & Secularization Theory

- Phil Gorski and Ates Altinordu, “After Secularization?”

Mon 9/27 (Week 3)

Secularization & Religious Vitality: The Case of American Evangelicalism (1)

- Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, Chapter 2: pp.20-21 (“Measuring Religious Vitality”) & Chapter 3

Wed 9/29

**\*\*\* Position Paper #1 Due \*\*\***

Secularization & Religious Vitality: The Case of American Evangelicalism (2)

- Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*, Chapter 4, Conclusion

### **ORTHODOX (AND MODERNIST) PUBLIC RELIGIONS**

Fri 10/1

Culture War & Public Religion in the U.S. (*Position Paper #2 distributed*)

- *Is There a Culture War?: A Dialogue on Values and American Public Life*, Chapter 1
- Nancy Davis and Robert Robinson, “Religious Orthodoxy in American Society: The Myth of a Monolithic Camp.”
- Wes Markofski, *New Monasticism and the Transformation of American Evangelicalism*, pp. 31-32 (stop at “The first part”), 60-62 (stop at “Throughout this chapter”), 65-67 (stop at “We may conclude”), 70-71 (finish sentence on p.72), 139-141 (“Excursus”)

Mon 10/4 (Week 4)

Orthodox Public Religion & Moral Cosmology Theory

- Nancy Davis and Robert Robinson, *Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare*, Introduction & Chapter 1

Wed 10/6 (*Position Paper #2 Distributed*)

Orthodox Public Religion: The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt

- Nancy Davis and Robert Robinson, *Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare*, Chapter 2

Fri 10/8

Orthodox Public Religion: The Shas in Israel

- Nancy Davis and Robert Robinson, *Claiming Society for God: Religious Movements and Social Welfare*, Chapter 3, Conclusion

**PUBLIC RELIGIONS IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: ISLAM, SECULARIZATION, & DEMOCRACY**

Mon 10/11 (Week 5)

Secularization & Religious Difference in Egypt

- Saba Mahmood, *Religious Difference in a Secular Age: A Minority Report*, Introduction & Epilogue

Wed 10/13

**\*\*\* Position Paper #2 Due \*\*\***

Islam & Feminism in Egypt (1)

- Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Both Prefaces (pp. ix-xxiv) & Chapter 1 (excluding pp. 17-21, 25-29, 32-34)

Fri 10/15

Islam & Feminism in Egypt (2)

- Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, Chapter 2, Chapter 5: pp.174 (from “The Paradoxes of Piety”)-188

Mon 10/18 (Week 6)

Midterm Break

Wed 10/20

Islam & Feminism in Indonesia

- Rachel Rinaldo, *Mobilizing Piety: Islam and Feminism in Indonesia*, Chapters 1 & 6

Fri 10/22

Islam & Democracy in Indonesia (1)

- Jeremy Menchik, *Islam & Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism*, Chapters 1 & 2

Mon 10/25 (Week 7)

Islam & Democracy in Indonesia (2)

- Jeremy Menchik, *Islam & Democracy in Indonesia: Tolerance without Liberalism*, Chapters 6 & 7



Wed 10/27

**\*\*\* Midterm Exam \*\*\***

**SOCIAL MOVEMENTS & PUBLIC RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES**

Fri 10/29

Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide (1)

- Ruth Braunstein, *Prophets and Patriots: Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide*, Chapter 1 & Methodological Notes

Mon 11/1 (Week 8)

Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide (2) (*Final Position Paper Assignment distributed*)

- Ruth Braunstein, *Prophets and Patriots: Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide*, Chapters 2 & 3

Wed 11/3

Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide (3)

- Ruth Braunstein, *Prophets and Patriots: Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide*, Chapters 4 & 5

Fri 11/5

Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide (4)

- Ruth Braunstein, *Prophets and Patriots: Faith in Democracy across the Political Divide*, Chapters 6 & 7

Mon 11/8 (Week 9)

Civil Rights Movement and the Black Church (1)

- Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 3

Wed 11/10

Civil Rights Movement and the Black Church (2)

- Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, Chapters 4 & 7

Fri 11/12

Civil Rights Movement and the Black Church (3)

- Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, Chapter 8, Chapter 9, pp. 286-290

Mon 11/15 (Week 10)

Race, Religion, & Trump

- *Religion and American Culture* FORUM: “Studying Religion in the Age of Trump,”  
(read selections by Randall Balmer, Anthea Butler, Wes Markofski, Grace Yukich)

**CONCLUSION**

Wed 11/17

**\*\*\* *Final Position Paper Presentations* \*\*\***

Fri 11/19

**\*\*\* *Final Position Paper Due* \*\*\***

Conclusion

- TBA