

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE
Department of Sociology

**Religion in a Global World
Winter 2024**

Professor: Smriti Upadhyay
Class time:
Classroom:

Email:
Office hours:
Office:

Course Description:

What are the social functions of religion? How does religion shape our everyday experiences and the way we make meaning of the world? What is the relationship between religion and structures of power? This course tackles these questions by engaging in sociological perspectives on religion. We begin the semester with theoretical interventions from classical social theorists like Marx, Weber and Durkheim. We will then move to critical perspectives on the social functions of religion, which will be based on empirical material and analysis that is rooted in the context and experience of post-colonial societies in the global South. Students will have the opportunity to develop critical perspectives on different facets of religion and their intersections with structures of power, including imperialism, colonialism, class, gender, and race.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this class, students will have acquired the tools to:

- Think critically about the place, forms and dynamics of religion in the world and its intersection with wide-ranging political and economic processes such as colonization, development, and globalization, political power and the everyday.
- Use and elaborate fundamental theories of the social functions of religion and related concepts such as modernity, secularization, and rationalization
- Conduct original research on a topic related to the sociology of religion

Course Materials and Resources:

There is no textbook for this class. All materials for this course will be available on Canvas.

Course Requirements, Assessments, and Grading:

Requirements:

The most important requirement for this course is that you commit to being present, prepared, and engaged in the course throughout the semester.

Participation begins with attending all classes, but it does not end there. Effective participation in class may include initiating a topic or question, providing information, reacting to discussions, disagreeing and explaining why, synthesizing what has been discussed, restating what others have said to ensure that you have understood, and respectfully encouraging others to participate.

YOUR EVALUATION WILL BE BASED ON QUALITY OF INTERVENTION

RATHER THAN QUANTITY. This means that one or two thoughtful and engaged comments or questions may earn a high participation grade, while frequent interventions that are off-topic or which are not connected to our learning outcomes will not. Effective participation will be based on having done the readings, being willing to ask for further explanation, saying that you do not know or understand something, and being willing to share what you think you understand with the rest of the class.

To participate effectively, you must also be *prepared* for class. To be best prepared for class, you **MUST** complete the required readings and give yourself enough time to reflect on them. You are required to complete the readings assigned each week ahead of the first class of that week. I have assigned a manageable reading load for each week. Give yourself several days to complete the reading and the reflection. It is not possible to “cram” readings or reflections the night before they are due. Instead, I would encourage you to start early so that you have time to process what you are reading and to write a thoughtful reflection. I would encourage you to highlight and take notes of what you find compelling and confusing while you are reading. This is an important strategy that has many payoffs. Not only will it help you stay engaged while reading, but it will also help you in writing your reflections and essays, as well as preparing for your presentation.

All readings will be available online. Given that there is no required textbook to purchase, I would **HIGHLY** recommend that you bring a hard copy of the readings to class and/or your detailed notes.

Assessments:

1. Weekly reading reflections – 25%
2. Essays – 25% each
3. Student-led discussion– 25%

Weekly reading reflections (25%): Each week, you will submit a 200 to 400-word response to the readings for that week. These should be thoughtful and engaged response to the readings. They should NOT be summaries of the readings/materials. Your reflections will explain how you understand the main argument(s) presented in the reading, raise questions, critiques, apply the concepts or theories of the reading to a relevant topic or context, etc. You must submit the weekly reflection on the Discussion Board on Blackboard **by midnight on Wednesday evening**, before we meet for our first class of the week on Thursday. Post them regularly and post them on time. I read them carefully and use them to inform the lecture for that week. This allows me to get a sense of how you are engaging with the readings. The reading reflections are also an opportunity for you to inform the content of the course by raising questions or concerns that you would like to spend time discussing as a group.

The reading reflections are perhaps the most important part of the course and are central to your success. I would recommend giving yourself plenty of time to write the reflections, especially at the start of the semester. Writing reflections is a challenging task, but a very rewarding one. You need to give yourself time to become familiar with the concepts, terminology, and style of the writings as well as your own rhythms of reading and writing.

Essays (25% each): You will write TWO essays over the course of the semester. The first essay will be due in the middle of the semester and the second at the end of the semester (see dates below in the Course Schedule). The mid-term essay will be your extended engagement with the concepts and theories from the course, and the final essay will pull together the theoretical engagement from the mid-term with research that you will conduct on a topic of your choosing. I will provide you with specific instructions about the essays closer to their due date.

Student-led discussion (25%): Depending on the class size, you will form groups to prepare a presentation for a week of your choosing. There is an online sign-up sheet for the presentation which you will find via the course's Blackboard site.

The presentation can be up to 30 minutes long. It is an opportunity for you to lead a stimulating discussion in class on the reading for that week. You should plan to spend half of the presentation leading the class in establishing the main argument and defining the central concepts of the reading. You may also want to draw connections between the readings. The second half of the presentation should be devoted to a critical discussion of the reading. You are responsible for coming up with questions that will stimulate an interesting discussion. The presentation can be in any format you choose.

Grading:

I use a 20-point grading scale for papers and presentations. The grading scale is designed to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses, as well as to improve the quality of your work over the course of the semester. I will evaluate your work according to the four components:

- C **Clarity** of writing/oral presentation
- G **Grasp** of the class readings
- A **Application** of theoretical concepts/incorporation of evidence
- CT **Critical** thinking/analysis

I use a 5-point scale to evaluate the four components above:

- 5 Excellent
- 4 Good
- 3 Satisfactory
- 2 Insufficient
- 1 Failing

Your score will be determined by adding up the four individual scores. I use the following scheme to convert your total grade (out of 20) to a percentage which corresponds to a letter grade:

Letter	Percentage
A	95-100
A-	90-94.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9
C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.9
D	60-69.9
E	0-59.9

Course Policies:

Late assignments: Late assignments will not be accepted without penalty unless there is an emergency situation, and you contact me immediately to discuss an extension. Otherwise, one late assignment will be penalized by 5% of the final grade, two late assignments by 10% of the final grade, three late assignments by 15% and so on.

Classroom behaviour: The classroom is a place where we discuss and exchange our ideas freely to learn from each other and from the texts we are reading. Some of the topics we cover might be controversial and thus we should allow all perspectives to be expressed during class discussions within the limits of respect towards others. Thus any remark that insults or discriminates against a person or a group of people based on their opinion, economic status, race, looks, gender, religion, sexual orientation etc. is forbidden in the classroom.

Devices: I will not allow devices in the classroom. You will be required to resort to “old fashioned” techniques of reading from paper and taking notes by hand. Studies have shown that students who hand write notes have a stronger conceptual understanding and are better able to apply concepts than students who took notes with their laptops. See the following for more information:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-learning-secret-don-t-take-notes-with-a-laptop/>
<https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20200910-the-benefits-of-note-taking-by-hand>

Mobile phones are **STRICTLY FORBIDDEN** while class is in session. I also recommend that you turn off notifications on ALL your devices (including watches and anything else that may buzz, beep, or ring). Please turn them off or put them on silent before the class begins. If I catch you fiddling with your phone during class, I will call you out. If this happens repeatedly, I will ask you to deposit their devices with me at the start of the class.

University Policies:

Academic Honor Principle

It is required that your syllabus refers to the Academic Honor Principle and includes a link to the policy. Please include this language and link in your syllabus:

The faculty, administration, and students of Dartmouth College acknowledge the responsibility to maintain and perpetuate the principle of academic honor, and recognize that any instance of academic dishonesty is considered a violation of the [Academic Honor Principle](#).

In addition, it is important that you discuss with your students your specific expectations regarding academic integrity and the Honor Principle in your courses. You might also include this [resource on proper citation of sources](#). Additionally, please consider clarifying under what circumstances it is acceptable to you for students to work together or use outside sources on assignments. If you have questions about the Honor Principle, please contact your department/program chair or your associate dean.

Religious Observances

Students may wish to participate in religious observances during the academic term. Please include this language on your syllabus:

Dartmouth has a deep commitment to support students' religious observances and diverse faith practices. Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me as soon as possible—before the end of the second week of the term at the latest—to discuss appropriate course adjustments.

To assist with calendar planning and awareness of our diverse religious and spiritual community, please refer to the Tucker Center for Spiritual and Ethical Life's [holy day calendar](#). The list represents major holy days which may impact campus events in general, as well as student course attendance, exams, Commencement, and participation in activities in the coming year. If you have any questions about these dates or other concerns, please contact Rev. Nancy Vogele, chaplain and director of the Tucker Center.

Student Accessibility and Accommodations

It is required that this paragraph is included on your syllabus:

Students requesting disability-related accommodations and services for this course are required to register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS; [Apply for Services webpage](#); student.accessibility.services@dartmouth.edu; 1-603-646-9900) and to request that an accommodation email be sent to me in advance of the need for an accommodation. Then, students should schedule a follow-up meeting with me to determine relevant details such as what role SAS or its [Testing Center](#) may play in accommodation implementation. This process works best for everyone when completed as early in the quarter as possible. If students have questions about whether they are eligible for accommodations or have concerns about the implementation

of their accommodations, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

For detailed information regarding expectations of the faculty to ensure accessibility for students with disabilities, please see [Student Accessibility Services' faculty pages](#).

Recommended Syllabus Statements

Mental Health and Wellness

The Committee on Student Life, with the approval and consideration of the COI, recommends including the following in your syllabus:

The academic environment is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including: the [Counseling Center](#) which allows you to book triage appointments online, the [Student Wellness Center](#) which offers wellness check-ins, and your [undergraduate dean](#). The student-led [Dartmouth Student Mental Health Union](#) and their peer support program may be helpful if you would like to speak to a trained fellow student support listener. If you need immediate assistance, please contact the counselor on-call at (603) 646-9442 at any time. Please make me aware of anything that will hinder your success in this course.

Title IX

The Council on Graduate Studies recommends the following language for inclusion in graduate course syllabi. DCAL recommends including this language in undergraduate course syllabi as well:

At Dartmouth, we value integrity, responsibility, and respect for the rights and interests of others, all central to our Principles of Community. We are dedicated to establishing and maintaining a safe and inclusive campus where all have equal access to the educational and employment opportunities Dartmouth offers. We strive to promote an environment of sexual respect, safety, and well-being. In its policies and standards, Dartmouth demonstrates unequivocally that sexual assault, gender-based harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are not tolerated in our community.

The Sexual Respect Website (<https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>) at Dartmouth provides a wealth of information on your rights with regard to sexual respect and resources that are available to all in our community.

Please note that, as a faculty member, I am obligated to share disclosures regarding conduct under Title IX with Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator. Confidential resources are also available, and include licensed medical or counseling professionals (e.g., a licensed psychologist), staff members of organizations recognized as rape crisis centers under state law (such as WISE), and ordained clergy (see https://dartgo.org/titleix_resources).

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dartmouth's Title IX Coordinator or the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for the Guarini School. Their contact information can be found on the sexual respect website at: <https://sexual-respect.dartmouth.edu>.

Socioeconomic Differences and Financial Difficulty

Students value when faculty acknowledge and affirm the variety of financial backgrounds and situations that Dartmouth students experience. Socioeconomic diversity can be invisible, and it is likely that some students will experience financial difficulties related to the cost of textbooks, materials, or other necessities for your class. DCAL recommends this brief syllabus statement:

If you encounter financial challenges related to this class, please let me know.

Faculty may refer students to the Office of Financial Aid, the [Undergraduate Financial Assistance Request form](#), and the [Campus Resources Funding Guide](#).

Consent to Record

Particularly during remote teaching and learning terms, it is recommended that faculty include the following language in their course syllabus or Canvas site. You may also want to review this policy with your students, pointing in particular to the section about the instructor's copyright of materials and about the prohibition of recording one-on-one meetings.

(1) Consent to recording of course meetings and office hours that are open to multiple students.

By enrolling in this course,

a) I affirm my understanding that the instructor may record meetings of this course and any associated meetings open to multiple students and the instructor, including but not limited to scheduled and ad hoc office hours and other consultations, within any digital platform, including those used to offer remote instruction for this course.

b) I further affirm that the instructor owns the copyright to their instructional materials, of which these recordings constitute a part, and my distribution of any of these recordings in whole or in part to any person or entity other than other members of the class without prior written consent of the instructor may be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth.

(2) Requirement of consent to one-on-one recordings

By enrolling in this course, I hereby affirm that I will not make a recording in any medium of any one-on-one meeting with the instructor or another member of the class or group of members of the class without obtaining the prior written consent of all those participating, and I understand that if I violate this prohibition, I will be subject to discipline by Dartmouth up to and including separation from Dartmouth, as well as any other civil or criminal penalties under applicable law. I understand that an exception to this consent applies to accommodations approved by SAS

for a student's disability, and that one or more students in a class may record class lectures, discussions, lab sessions, and review sessions and take pictures of essential information, and/or be provided class notes for personal study use only.

If you have questions, please contact the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Course Introduction

Durkheim, E. *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. "Introduction" and "Book One: Preliminary Questions" pp. 1-44

Berger, Peter L. *Sacred Canopy* "Religion and World-Construction" and "Religion and World-Maintenance" pp. 9-65

Week 2 Defining Religion

Weber, M. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Raines, John (ed) *Marx on Religion*

Week 3 Studying Religion

Geertz, C. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. "Religion as a Cultural System" pp. 87-125

Week 4 (29 Sept) Interrogating Secularism

Asad, T. *Formations of the Secular*

Calder, R. "Halalization: Religious Product Certification in Secular Markets" *Sociological Theory* 38 (4)

Week 5 Religion & Power: Imperialism and Colonialism

Van der Veer, Peter. *Imperial Encounters*, "Secularity and Religion" and "The Moral State" Religion, Nation, and Empire"

Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J. 1991. "Conversion and Conversation" in *Of Revelation and Revolution* Vol 1. University of Chicago Press: Chicago

Week 6 Religion & Power: Colonial Resistance

Umar, M. "Muslims' Eschatological Discourses on Colonialism in Northern Nigeria" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 67(1) pp. 59-84

Van der Veer, Peter. *Imperial Encounters*, "The Spirits of the Age: Spiritualism and Political Radicalism" pp. 55-77

Raza, S. "The Sufi and the Sickle: Theorizing Mystical Marxism in Rural Pakistan" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 64(2) pp. 300-334

Week 7 Religion & Power: Gender

Mahmoud, S. *Politics of Piety*. "The Subject of Freedom" pp.1-39

Van der Veer, Peter. *Imperial Encounters*, "Moral Muscle: Masculinity and Its Religious Uses" pp. 83-104

Week 8 Christianity

Robbins, Joel. "The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 33. pp. 117-143

Gibson, Ian. 2017 "Pentecostal peacefulness: virtue ethics and the reception of theology in Nepal" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23(4)

Gellner, David. 2005 "The Emergence of Conversion in a Hindu-Buddhist Polytrophy: The Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, c. 1600-1995" *Comparative studies in society and history*

Week 9 Islam

Hansen, T. "Predicaments of Secularism: Muslim Identities and Politics in Mumbai" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institution* pp. 255-272

Fanon, F. "Algeria Unveiled" *A Dying Colonialism* pp.35-67

Week 10 Hinduism and Buddhism

Ganguly, D."Buddha, *bhakti* and superstition: A Post-secular reading of Dalit Conversion" pp. 49-62

Viswanathan, G "Religious Conversion and the Politics of Dissent" in Peter van der Veer ed. *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity*. Pp 89-114

Gupta, Charu. "Allegories of 'Love Jihad' and 'Ghar Vapasi'" *Archiv Orientalni* 84 pp.291-316

