

# RLST A135: RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIETY

Item	Value
Curriculum Committee Approval Date	12/02/2020
Top Code	151000 - Religious Studies
Units	3 Total Units
Hours	54 Total Hours (Lecture Hours 54)
Total Outside of Class Hours	0
Course Credit Status	Credit: Degree Applicable (D)
Material Fee	No
Basic Skills	Not Basic Skills (N)
Repeatable	No
Grading Policy	Standard Letter (S)
Associate Arts Local General Education (GE)	• OC Humanities - AA (OC1)
Associate Science Local General Education (GE)	• OCC Humanities - AS (OSC2)
California General Education Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC)	• Cal-GETC 3B Humanities (3B)
Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC)	• IGETC 3B Humanities (3B)
California State University General Education Breadth (CSU GE-Breadth)	• CSU C2 Humanities (C2)

## Course Description

Examines religious, spiritual, and secular views of the relation of persons and society with emphasis on contemporary issues of personal and social ethics, societal structure, and political responsibility from diverse academic, religious, and spiritual perspectives. Transfer Credit: CSU; UC.

## Course Level Student Learning Outcome(s)

1. Demonstrate an understanding of different forms of religious and spiritual experience and theories which explain social forces which shape and are shaped by these experiences.
2. Compare and contrast social dynamics of two or more religious groups as they relate to societal forces and to individual religious/spiritual experience.

## Course Objectives

- 1. Demonstrate knowledge of some major theories on the relation of religion to society.
- 2. Critically analyze contemporary issues such as separation of church and state, secularism, freedom of religion, taxation of religious groups, religion and gender and societal roles, provision of medical care.
- 3. Demonstrate an understanding of social dynamics of religious groups and the various categories we use to describe them such as cults, churches, sects, denominations.
- 4. Identify arguments as representative of certain schools of thought, of certain religious views, and of secular views.

- 5. Explain the use and misuse of entheogens as shortcuts to spirituality, such as LSD, DMT, Ayahuasca, peyote, and the effect on society and individuals of non-spiritual use.
- 6. Describe various religious and spiritual responses to societal crises such as climate change, terrorism, economic system dysfunction, corruption, substance use.
- 7. Demonstrate knowledge of general problem of individual privacy in light of developments such as DNA, social media, integrated banking/financial systems, cell phones, facial recognition technology, and similar developments.
- 8. Describe several New Religious Movements and analyze them as a response to societal change.

## Lecture Content

1. Introduction to religion and spirituality Academic approaches to delineating differences in interior experience. Methodologies for studying (ethnographic, scientific, quantitative, etc) Societal responses to each, both historical and contemporary. Comparison with mystic experience and societal response. 2. Social psychology of religion Major theories: Freud, Jung, Maslow, Fromm Psychological factors in development of religious views, attitudes, and practices. Uses and limits of social psychological approach to understanding religion. 3. Introduction to sociology of religion Major theories: Durkheim, Geertz, Bellah, Rappaport Examination of uses and limits of sociological approach to study of religion and spirituality. 4. Sociological organization of religious groups Examples of social definition: Church, denomination, sect, cult Models of formation of apparent extramental groups, including examples such as Jonestown, Aum Shinrikyo, Heavens Gate, Waco. Formation of stable groups such as Oneida community, Latter Day Saints, Rainbow Family, Scientology. 5. Religion in contemporary society Religious and spiritual responses to societal crises such as climate change, terrorism, economic system dysfunction, corruption, substance use. 6. Governmental interface with the religious group and the individual in matters of societal organization including separation of church and state, secularism, freedom of religion, taxation of religious groups, religion and gender and societal roles, provision of medical care. Societal response to intrusions on individual interiority, including privacy in light of developments such as DNA, social media, integrated banking/financial systems (cashless society/ all transactions documented), cell phones and location technologies, facial recognition technology, and similar. 7. Expansion of secularization as a response to growth of scientific knowledge. Ideational and cultural change in response to scientific discoveries. Theories of secularization and declarations of potential disappearance of religion, including Durkheim, Nietzsche, Weber, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins. 8. Theories of religious conversion and socialization. Models including Unification Church (Moonies), NXIVM, FLDS. Formation of New Religious Movements as negation of ideas of the eventual triumph of secularism. Incorporation of science for exploration of interiority: MRIs measuring meditative states, Neurotheology incorporating knowledge of brain structure and function to create new ideas of faith, etc. Responses to contemporary situations as arising, and application of the theories learned in the semester to analyze the intersection of religion, spirituality, and society as responses are formulated in real time.

## Method(s) of Instruction

- Lecture (02)
- DE Live Online Lecture (02S)

## **Instructional Techniques**

Lecture, group work, in-class writings, discussion, videos.

## **Reading Assignments**

1. Course reading assignments are published in a syllabus and this material will be analyzed in the tests. 2. Student papers will include:  
a. Resource authors viewpoints. b. Religious views which are involved in proffered arguments. c. Explanation of the differences in religious views. d. Relationship of cultural and political views to religious views. e. Development of relationship between religious traditions and the modern secular world. (1 hour nightly reading)

## **Writing Assignments**

Students will write two papers: one describing a particular religious traditions relationship to modern society and another paper describing how a non-religious aspect of secular society can be viewed in religious terms. 2. All papers will include at least two footnotes and two references in their bibliography. 3. Students will also write one to two papers describing their experiences in visiting two different religious/semi-religious sites. 4. Papers will follow prompt that analyses their site of choice according to the phenomenological aspects of religion. 5. Students will include personal experience to reported view. (2-3 hour per paper plus 1-2 hours prep and research)

## **Out-of-class Assignments**

Students will write one to two papers describing their experiences in visiting two different religious/semi-religious sites. 2. Papers will follow prompt that analyses their site of choice according to the phenomenological aspects of religion. 3. Students will include personal experience to reported view. (2 hour minimum visitation)

## **Demonstration of Critical Thinking**

Writing assignments will require critical analysis of the dimensions of religion. Exams will require comparison and contrast of various aspects of religion and religious traditions.

## **Required Writing, Problem Solving, Skills Demonstration**

Writing assignments will require critical analysis of the dimensions of religion. Exams will require comparison and contrast of various aspects of religion and religious traditions.

## **Eligible Disciplines**

Religious studies: Masters degree in religious studies, theology, or philosophy OR bachelors degree in any of the above AND masters degree in humanities OR the equivalent. Masters degree required.

## **Textbooks Resources**

1. Required Jeffrey Kripal. Comparing Religions, 1 ed. West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014 Rationale: Modern conceptualizations of current issues using traditional and new theories. 2. Required Ellwood, Robert. Many Peoples, Many Faiths, 10th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2016 3. Required Richter, K. E. Rapple, E. M.. Understanding Religion in a Global Society, ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005 Rationale: Most recent edition of a canonical text