Secularization, Laicism, and Religion
SOC 3309 A
Professor Stuart Chambers
Summer 2011

COURSE OUTLINE

Class schedule: Tuesday (13:00-16:00)
Thursday (13:00-16:00)
Room: LPR155 (129 Louis-Pasteur)

Professor’s office hours: Tuesday (11:00-12:00)
Thursday (11:00-12:00)
Office: DMS 8113
Phone: (613) 562-5800 (ext. 1316)

E-mail: schamber@uottawa.ca
        stuart.chambers@sympatico.ca

On virtual campus: No

All questions sent by e-mail should receive a response within two working days or by the next class if it takes place within the 48 hours following receiving the email. Please note that the professor reserves the right to not respond to an email if the level of language is not appropriate.

OFFICIAL COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course emphasizes the following themes: sociological perspectives on the relationships between the religious and the secular; comparative and socio-historical analyses; secularization, laicism and the return of religion; use of existing data and research methods; and an analysis of different contemporary approaches emerging from the sociology of religion and political sociology.

COURSE CONTENT

A selection of controversial social issues will be discussed in the Canadian and global context to demonstrate how the interests of the religious and secular often clash or converge around various ethical dilemmas. Particular emphasis will be placed on the following contentious debates: euthanasia, female genital mutilation, and homosexuality;
“honour” killings, polygamy, and religious schooling. During discussions of selected readings, one main observation should become apparent, that being, we do not live in an exclusively secular or religious society. Depending on the issue and the context, secular and religious organizations/individuals might embrace normative assumptions that are diametrically opposed to one another, that are analogous to one another, or that contain a hybrid of the two affiliations. Overall, it is important to critically analyze the degree to which religious groups have not only become secularized, but also the degree to which secular institutions have retained “traces” of a religious tradition.

GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

As the course progresses, students are expected to acquire an understanding of pertinent sociological theories surrounding secularization, laicism and religion, to analyze how religious thinking permeates and shapes secular discourse, to understand how secularization impinges on religious freedom, and to acknowledge how emerging social issues challenge both religious and secular normative assumptions.

SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES

In terms of assignments, students will prepare their own notes based on four (4) readings per week, class lectures, guest speakers, and audio-visual presentations. The readings plus the lectures culminate in the midterm and final exams. Students typically score higher on exams when they provide precise details from both readings and lectures. Therefore, one should avoid writing general answers that are too vague to translate anything meaningful. Students must also complete a major research paper to demonstrate competency in three areas: (1) an ability to analyze the relationship between the religious and the secular; (2) an ability to understand the influence of religious and secular attitudes on contemporary social issues; and (3) an ability to write an academic paper free of technical errors.

TEACHING METHODS

This course is taught primarily using a social constructionist approach and places considerable emphasis on discourse analysis. Although the course content emphasizes a sociologico-religious perspective, a multidisciplinary approach is also required. When faced with challenges to established orthodoxy, a variety of discourses (e.g., philosophical, ethical, medical, political, legal) will converge to frame the boundaries of normative behaviour. It is important, therefore, to remain open to a multiplicity of academic fields when discussing relevant social issues.
EVALUATION

Components of Final Mark

1. Midterm Exam: 25%
2. Essay: 40%
3. Final Exam: 35%

Policy on language quality and late submissions

Class attendance is necessary to successfully complete this course. With a shorter semester, poor attendance will affect a student’s precision on major papers and exams.

For essays, you will also be judged on language quality; therefore, it is recommended that you take the appropriate measures to avoid mistakes such as spelling, syntax, punctuation, inappropriate use of terms, etc. You may be penalized up to 15% or to the professor’s discretion.

Late submissions are not tolerated. Exceptions are made only for illness or other serious situations deemed as such by the professor. There will be a penalty for unauthorized late submissions. University regulations require all absences from exams and all late submissions due to illness to be supported by a medical or funeral certificate.

Absence for any other serious reason must be justified in writing, to the academic assistants of the Faculty, within five business days following the date of the exam or submission of an assignment. The Faculty reserves the right to accept or refuse the reason. Reasons such as travel, jobs, or any misreading of the examination timetable are not acceptable.

In the case of illnesses, only the Counseling Service or a doctor can issue a valid certificate for justification of a late submission or an absence.

Advise your professor as early as possible if a religious holiday or a religious event will force you to be absent during an evaluation.

SCHEDULE: Weekly Topics, Exams, and Major Research Paper

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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>WEEKLY TOPICS</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENTS/EXAMS</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Religion and Secularization</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Religious and Secular Views</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>The Social Construction of Sexual Deviance</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Women’s Health: Secular and Religious Attitudes</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>July 12th, Tuesday, 1:00-2:15</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Polygamy: The Secular State and Religious Freedom</td>
<td>Major Research Paper</td>
<td>July 19th, Tuesday, 1:00 pm</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Religious Schooling, Identity, and Laicism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Exam Period</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Wed., August 3rd, 2011, from 13:00-16:00 pm in MRT 205.</td>
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SELECTED READINGS

PART I

Week 1: Religion and Secularization: General Theories (June 21st/23rd)


Week 2: Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide: Religious and Secular Viewpoints (June 28th/30th)


Week 3: **The Social Construction of Sexual Deviance** (July 5\textsuperscript{th}/7\textsuperscript{th})


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On July 12\textsuperscript{th} (Tuesday, first half), students are writing their **midterm exam** in class (LPR 155). Students must answer ten (10) questions from a total of sixteen (16) options. The questions will be divided equally between class lectures (section I) and class readings (section II). Each question will be worth five (5) marks [5 x 10=50/2=25\%]. Please use point form, charts, or short sentences for each answer; avoid paragraph writing. Be **very precise** with key details.

On July 12\textsuperscript{th} (Tuesday, second half), students will cover the complete essay instructional package. A period will be spent outlining the essay instructions, providing **important direction**, and highlighting the **strengths and weaknesses of essay writing**. Attending this class provides students with a good opportunity to improve their essay mark. The essay is worth **40\% of the final mark**, so it should not be taken lightly.

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PART II

Week 4: **Women’s Health: Secular and Religious Attitudes** (July 12th/14th)


Week 5: **Polygamy: The Secular State and Religious Freedom** (July 19th/21st)


[Note:* Both* articles by Stephen Kent and Lori G. Beaman are required to answer the final exam essay.]
Week 6: **Religious Schooling, Identity, and Laicism** (July 26th/July 28th)


Week 7: **Final Exam** (Wednesday, August 3rd, 2011, 13:00-16:00 pm—MRT 205)

On August 3rd, 2011 (Wednesday), students are writing their final exam from 13:00-16:00 pm in MRT 205. Students must answer eight (8) questions from a total of twelve (12) options (see PART II of coursepack). The questions will be divided equally between class lectures (section I of the exam) and class readings (section II of the exam). Each question will be worth five (5) marks [5 x 8=40/2=20%]. Please use point form, charts, or short sentences for each answer; avoid paragraph writing. Be very precise with key details.

Section III of the exam will consist of an essay question (see PART II of coursepack). The essay must be written in two (2) pages single-spaced. Therefore, if you are efficient, you only require one exam booklet for the entire exam. The essay is worth thirty (30) marks [30/2=15%]. All sections combined total 35% of the final mark.
Resources for you

**Mentoring Centre** - [http://www.sciencessociales.uottawa.ca/mentor/fra/](http://www.sciencessociales.uottawa.ca/mentor/fra/)
The goal of the Mentoring Centre is to help students with their academic and social well being during their time at the University of Ottawa. Regardless of where a student stands academically, or how far along they are in completing their degree, the mentoring centre is there to help students continue on their path to success.

A student may choose to visit the mentoring centre for very different reasons. Younger students may wish to talk to their older peers to gain insight into programs and services offered by the University, while older student may simply want to brush up on study and time management skills or learn about programs and services for students nearing the end of their degree.

In all, the Mentoring Centre offers a place for students to talk about concerns and problems that they might have in any facet of their lives. While students are able to voice their concerns and problems without fear of judgment, mentors can garner further insight in issues unique to students and find a more practical solution to better improve the services that the Faculty of Social Sciences offers, as well as the services offered by the University of Ottawa.

**Academic Writing Help Centre** - [http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/writing/](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/writing/)
At the AWHC you will learn how to identify, correct and ultimately avoid errors in your writing and become an autonomous writer. In working with our Writing Advisors, you will be able to acquire the abilities, strategies and writing tools that will enable you to:

- Master the written language of your choice
- Expand your critical thinking abilities
- Develop your argumentation skills
- Learn what the expectations are for academic writing

**Career Services** - [http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/careers/](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/careers/)
Career Services offers various services and a career development program to enable you to recognize and enhance the employability skills you need in today's world of work.

**Counseling Service** - [http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/personal/](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/personal/)
There are many reasons to take advantage of the Counseling Service. We offer:

- Personal counseling
- Career counseling
- Study skills counseling

**Access Service** - [http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/acces/](http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/acces/)
The Access Service contributes to the creation of an inclusive environment by developing strategies and implementing measures that aim to reduce the barriers to learning for students who have learning disabilities, health, psychiatric or physical conditions.

The Student Resources Centers aim to fulfill all sorts of students needs.
**Be Aware of Academic Fraud!**

Academic fraud is an act committed by a student and it can negatively effect your school evaluation (with respect to assignments, tests, exams, etc.). It is not tolerated by the University. Anyone found guilty of fraud will be liable to severe penalties.

Here are some examples of Academic Fraud:
- Plagiarize or cheat in any way;
- Present falsified research data;
- Submission of an assignment that, in part or in entirety, you are not the author of;
- Presentation of, without written permission of the professor(s) concerned, the same work from another course;

Over the years, the perfection of the Internet has strongly facilitated the discovery of cases of plagiarism. The tools that are at the disposal of your professors permit, with the help of only a few words, to retrace the origin of a text on the Web.

For more information on fraud and how to avoid it, you can refer to the Faculty web page, which offers tips to help you with your studies and the writing process for university level projects at the following address: [http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/eng/ugrad_tips.asp](http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/eng/ugrad_tips.asp). You can also refer to the Faculty web page for information on plagiarism and university assignments: [http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/eng/ethics.asp](http://www.socialsciences.uottawa.ca/eng/ethics.asp).

The person who committed or attempts to commit academic fraud or who was an accomplice will be punished. Here are some examples of sanctions that could be imposed:
- The assignment or course in question will receive a grade of “F”;
- An additional requirement will be added to the program of study (3 to 30 credits);
- Suspension or expulsion from the Faculty.

Over the past session, the majority of people found guilty of fraud received an “F” in their course and will need to obtain three to twelve extra credits in their program of study.

You may refer to the following address to find the regulations: [http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/info/newsletter/fraud_e.html](http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/info/newsletter/fraud_e.html)