

# Rel 317: New Religious Movements

Spring 2018

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Office: CCC 489a  
Office hours: Mon/Wed 2:00 to 2:30  
Tues 3:30 to 4:00 (or appt)

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## Required Texts

- Bromley, David G., and Douglas E. Cowan. *Cults and New Religions: A Brief History*. Second edition. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. (for rental)
- Schaefer, Richard T., and William W. Zellner. *Extraordinary Groups: An Examination of Unconventional Lifestyles*. Eighth or Ninth ed. New York: Worth Publishers, 2011. (for purchase)
- Course pack (available in the bookstore)

\* Students are expected to bring readings to class the day they are assigned to be discussed.

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## Course Description

A study of new religious movements, primarily in America, applying the methodologies of history, sociology, and religious studies. Topics may include cult formation, church and state questions, religious violence, gender, the anti-cult movement, and the role of popular media in shaping public perceptions.

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## Gen Ed Learning Outcomes

Rel 317 satisfies the General Education outcome for Interdisciplinary Studies, which are the two learning outcomes listed below.

1. Identify an issue or question related to the interdisciplinary course(s), and describe what each discipline contributes to an understanding of that issue.
2. Explain the benefits of being able to combine these contributions.

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## Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. produce oral and written overviews of the histories and characteristics of some of the most prominent NRMs in the United States over the last 200 years.
  2. differentiate methodologies of history and social science in the study of new religious movements.
  3. critically evaluate some controversial issue surrounding NRMs (such as gender roles, polygamy, violence, and brainwashing).
  4. investigate the role of news media in dispensing information and shaping public opinion around NRMs.
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Requirements  
and Expectations

1. **Preparation:** Students should complete the assigned readings and bring the readings with you to class every day. Online readings should be printed out and brought to class, unless otherwise noted on the reading schedule. Our ability to analyze texts critically depends on your having the material in front of you. Failure to bring assigned readings to class will cause you to be unprepared for class and negatively impact your grade. (If printing the online readings presents a problem for you, talk to me outside of class.)
2. **Participation:** Good participation requires active reading of the assigned texts, engagement with the materials in class, thoughtful involvement in class discussions, and active listening to your classmates. Further, if you have a cell phone, please be conscientious about turning off at the start of class.
3. **Civility:** Students are expected to show respect for course content, classmates, and opinions that may differ from their own in deference to the educational atmosphere. Civil discourse means that we can disagree and challenge colleagues while maintaining an atmosphere of respect for people and ideas.
4. **Due Dates:** Missed quizzes and exams cannot be made up unless arrangements have been made prior to the absence. Papers due throughout the semester cannot be made-up or submitted late. Students who miss an assignment because of illness or serious emergency should contact me as soon as possible. Students who know ahead of time that they will be absent should speak to me at least a week prior to the absence.
5. **Communication:** During the semester, if a personal event or circumstance impacts your ability to succeed in our course, please come speak to me right away—before the problem becomes insurmountable. If you have a learning disability that might impact your work in our course, please speak to me in person (not via email) at the beginning of the semester.

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Email Policy

As a general rule, it is unwise to email me if you have a time-specific question (e.g., “What’s on the exam on Monday?”) Also, do not email me because you want to know what you missed in class. For concerns such as these, speak with me in person. Good reasons to email me include:

- Letting me know about a technical problem with D2L that is affecting your preparation for an upcoming class,
- Scheduling a time to meet face-to-face,
- Informing me as to why you missed class,
- Sharing your personal thoughts about our course material.

\* When emailing me, always include “Rel 317” in your subject line.

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Attendance Policy

It is expected that you will arrive to class each day and on time. Over the course of the semester, you may miss three class periods (for whatever reason) without penalty. Students who miss more classes can expect to lose 3% percentage points from their final grade for each absence. If you have a severe illness or personal emergency that will affect your attendance, speak with me outside of class.

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**Tutoring- Learning Center**

The TLC is an excellent service every student should use. One-on-one tutors can help with writing papers, reading challenging assignments, preparing for exams, lab reports, resumes, research papers, and personal statements. To sign up, call 346-3568 or stop by the bottom floor of the Media Resource Center, room 018.

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**Academic Integrity**

The full text of the Community Rights and Responsibilities guidelines is available online in the Rights and Responsibilities section at: [www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs](http://www.uwsp.edu/admin/stuaffairs). Students will be expected to adhere to all university expectations.

In particular, please familiarize yourself with the definition of plagiarism and the disciplinary process. According to chapter 14 section 3 of the Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures, “Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to: cheating on an examination; collaborating with others in work to be presented, contrary to the stated rules of the course; submitting a paper or assignment as one's own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another; submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas....”

If you have questions about this policy, contact me. Infractions will be reported to the university and the minimum penalty for a violation of academic integrity is a failure (zero) for the assignment, although more severe infractions may be assessed.

To ensure a fair assessment process in this course, students will be required to submit their papers to the D2L dropbox prior to the due date in class. D2L has plagiarism detection software, and will flag papers that are derivative of published texts, websites, and other student writing.

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**Assignments**

Participation.....	50 points
Short Papers .....	20 points each
D2L Quizzes.....	15-20 points each
Midterm .....	approx. 150 points
Final Exam .....	approx. 150 points

**Final Exam: Wednesday, May 16, 2:45 to 4:45 PM**

Rel 317: New Religious Movements  
Reading Schedule

**Week 1**

Mon Jan 22	<b><u>Introductions</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Welcome!
Wed Jan 24	<b><u>Media and New Religions</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Please bring a laptop or tablet to class today. (Laptops are best. No, your phone does not count.)

**Week 2**

Mon Jan 29	<b><u>Introduction to New Religions</u></b>  <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Paper #1: Invent a new religion!</b> Write a 500-word paper (two pages) in which you create a new religion. Your goal is to persuade your readers that this religion will grow into the most successful of all time. How can you persuade people to join a new religion? What makes a religion successful? Format your paper as follows: Times Roman, 12 point time, one inch margins. The title of your paper should be the name of your new religion. <u>Submit to the D2L discussion board prior to the start of class today.</u>
Wed Jan 31	<b><u>NRMs: Success and Failure</u></b>  <b><u>Topic:</u></b> Why do some NRMs grow substantially while others fail to catch on?  <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Rodney Stark, “Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail: A Revised General Model” pgs 259–268 [D2L]. Print out this article and bring it to class.  <b><u>Reading suggestion:</u></b> This is a substantial reading with a great deal of information packed into a few pages. <u>Reading it twice</u> will greatly help you identify and understand key points. Come to class with questions about points you find unclear or want more information about.

### Week 3

Mon Feb 5	<p><b><u>NRMs: Success and Failure</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Topic:</u></b> Why do some NRMs grow substantially while others fail to catch on?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Completing our discussion of Stark.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> “The Greatest Religion in the World” assignment will be distributed and explained today</li></ul>
Wed Feb 7	<p><b><u>Shakers and Oneida Perfectionists</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Stephen J. Stein’s “Communitarians Living on the Margins” [coursepack]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete:</u></b> D2L Quiz, “19<sup>th</sup> Century Communitarian NRMs”</li></ul>

### Week 4

Mon Feb 12	<p><b><u>19<sup>th</sup> Century Apocalyptic Traditions</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Stephen J. Stein’s “Apocalyptic Traditions: Watching and Waiting for the End” [coursepack]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete:</u></b> D2L Quiz, “19<sup>th</sup> Century Apocalyptic NRMs”</li></ul>
Wed Feb 14	<p><b><u>Case Study: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Schaefer and Zellner, <i>Extraordinary Groups</i>, The Mormons, pgs 119–133 (If you are reading the 8<sup>th</sup> edition of <i>Extraordinary Groups</i>, stop at the subheading “Organization of LDS”)</li></ul>

### Week 5

Mon Feb 19	<p><b><u>Case Study: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Schaefer and Zellner, <i>Extraordinary Groups</i>, chapter 4: The Mormons, pgs 134–158</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete:</u></b> D2L Quiz on The Mormons reading prior to coming to class today.</li></ul>
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Wed	<b><u>Frontline: The Mormons</u></b>
Feb 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Download the handouts on D2L for “Frontline: The Mormons Part I Questions” and “Frontline: The Mormons Part II Questions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Prior to class today, visit “eReserve” (available from the ‘content’ tab in D2L) and watch the relevant sections of The Mormons Parts I and II.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete</u></b> the question sheets and bring the sheets to class.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Don’t miss:</u></b> See assignment described below, which is due Feb 25.</li> </ul>

**Week 6**

Mon	<b><u>Latter-Day Saint Classroom Visit</u></b>
Feb 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Submit to D2L dropbox:</u></b> By the end of the day on <b>Feb 25</b>, write seven to ten questions that you would like to ask our LDS guests. For each question, explain (a) why you believe the question is important, and (b) what you hope to learn from the answer.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Example: Are you familiar with popular perceptions of Latter-Day Saints on South Park or the musical, The Book of Mormon? If so, what do you think about those types of depictions of the Latter-Day Saints? I think this question is important because popular media often have a strong impact on how the public perceives new religions. I hope to learn how members of new religions feel about how they are depicted in media, and whether they think such depictions are harmful or helpful.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>After class today:</u></b> Write a one-page (300 word) reflection paper on the visit by our LDS guests. What did you learn from this experience? How is speaking with members of a new religion different from studying them in class? What surprised you? This paper should be submitted to the D2L dropbox by <b>Feb 27</b>, midnight</li> </ul>

Wed	<b><u>Case Study: Christian Science</u></b>
Feb 28	<p><b><u>Topic:</u></b> We will examine Mary Baker Eddy’s Church of Christ, Scientist, focusing on its early history, organization, beliefs, practices, and change over time. Why has Mormonism enjoyed such enormous growth while The Church of Christ, Scientist has struggled in recent years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Schaefer and Zeller, “Christian Scientists,” [coursepack]</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete:</u></b> D2L Quiz on Christian Scientist reading prior to coming to class today.</li> </ul>

### Week 7

Mon	<b><u>LDS and Christian Science: Models for Stark's Analysis?</u></b>
March 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Finish our analysis of Christian Science and compare Christian Science and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.
Wed	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
March 7	

### Week 8

Mon	<b><u>NRMs and Brainwashing</u></b>
March 12	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Think about:</u></b> Margaret Singer, a psychologist in the 1980s, was the leading scholar arguing that new religions brainwashed their members. Many scholars have since challenged her arguments. Then read Richardson's opposing viewpoint. Be prepared to discuss which you find more persuasive and why. <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Singer, "The Process of Brainwashing" [coursepack] <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Richardson, "A Critique of Brainwashing" [coursepack]
Wed	<b><u>NRMs and Brainwashing</u></b>
March 14	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Robbins, "Constructing Cultist Mind Control" [coursepack] <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete:</u></b> D2L quiz on "NRMs and Brainwashing"

**Week 9**

Mon  March 19	<p><b><u>Joiners and Leavers</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Topics:</u></b> What kinds of people join New Religious Movements? What leads them to become members? And why do some stay and others leave?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Lorne Dawson, “Who Joins New Religious Movements and Why?” [coursepack]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Some tips for reading: Dawson refers to many different NRMs in this chapter. For now, don’t worry about trying to distinguish them. Focus instead on the central points of the reading: what does current social science teach us about who joins new religions and why?</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Paper:</u></b> Drawing on the assigned reading, write a series of diary entries for a person who joins a new religious movement, describing your reasons for joining. It does not matter which NRM it is—or even if it really exists. Instead, focus on describing the kind of person and the circumstances why he or she joined a new religion. The paper should be a minimum of three pages (900 words) and can be comprised of a few longer diary entries, or a series of shorter entries. <u>Your paper will be graded by how well you display an understanding of the key points in the assigned reading</u> by Dawson. In order to receive credit for this paper, you must <b>SUBMIT TO DROPBOX ON D2L</b> prior to class <b><u>AND BRING A PRINT OUT TO CLASS TODAY.</u></b></li></ul>
Wed  March 21	Class Canceled



## Spring Break: March 23<sup>rd</sup> to April 1

**Either during Spring Break, or after you return, complete the following assignment (due April 7)**

- Watch one of the following movies: “Faults” (dir. Riley Stearns, 2015), “Holy Smoke” (dir. Jane Campion, 1999), “Ticket to Heaven” (dir. Ralph L. Thomas, 1981). Ticket to Heaven is available in full on Youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoavV7D74BU>. “Faults” and “Holy Smoke” are available on e-reserve, in the Content tab on our D2L page. These movies all deal with the issue of “cults” and “brainwashing.” After watching your film, write a 900-word (three page) paper on the film you chose, on one of the two topics below. Your paper needs an introduction with a thesis statement, it needs to be well organized with a conclusion that reiterates your argument. Submit the paper to the D2L dropbox by the end of the day on **April 7**.
- Topic #1:** Imagine if Margaret Singer, James Richardson, and Thomas Robbins watched your movie. First, which of their perspectives on brainwashing is best supported by the movie you watched? Second, how would Singer, Richardson, and Robbins each react to the movie? In other words, what critique would they offer. Support your argument with specific references to our readings as well as your film.
- Topic #2:** Consider whether your film supports or challenges the argument Lynn Neal made in her essay, “They’re Freaks!” and Sean McCloud made in “New Religions in the Media.” Does your film, as Neal argues, “constitute a powerful force in defining and policing the boundaries of religious legitimacy in American culture”? How would you analyze your film in the context of McCloud’s historical essay? In other words, does your film reinforce the media narrative of the 1950s/1960s, the late 1960s / earlier 1970s, or the homogenous portrayals of the 1990s? Or does your film not fit any of the periods in question? Support your argument with specific references to our readings as well as your film.

## Week 10

Mon	<b><u>NRMs and Pop Culture</u></b>
April 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Read:</b> Lynn Neal, “They’re Freaks! The Cult Stereotype in Fictional Television Shows, 1958–2008” [coursepack]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Read:</b> Sean McCloud’s “New Religions in the Media” [coursepack]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Complete:</b> Quiz, “New Religions in Popular Culture”</li></ul>
Wed	<b><u>NRMs and Science: Scientology</u></b>
April 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Read:</b> <i>Extraordinary Groups</i>: “The Church of Scientology”</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Complete:</b> D2L Quiz on Scientology reading prior to coming to class today.</li></ul>

## Week 11

Mon	<b><u>NRMs and Science: Transcendental Meditation</u></b>
April 9	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> <i>Cults and New Religions</i> chapter 3: “Transcendental Meditation” <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete:</u></b> D2L Quiz on Transcendental Meditation reading prior to coming to class today.
Wed	<b><u>Wicca</u></b>
April 11	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> Cowan, “Wicca, Witchcraft, and Modern Paganism” [coursepack] <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete:</u></b> D2L quiz on “Wicca, Witchcraft, and Modern Paganism”

## Week 12

Mon April 16	Class Canceled
Wed April 18	<b><u>Satanism</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Read:</b> Gallagher, “Satanism” [coursepack]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Complete:</b> D2L quiz on “Satanism”</li></ul>

## Week 13

Mon April 23	<b><u>Selena Fox Classroom Visit</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Submit to D2L dropbox:</b> By the end of the day on <b>April 22</b>, write seven to ten questions that you would like to ask our guest, a leader in the Wiccan and Pagan movement. For each question, explain (a) why you believe the question is important, and (b) what you hope to learn from the answer.</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>After class today:</b> Write a one-page (300 word) reflection paper on the visit by our LDS guests. What did you learn from this experience? How is speaking with members of a new religion different from studying them in class? What surprised you? This paper should be submitted to the D2L dropbox by <b>April 25</b>, before class.</li></ul>
Wed April 25	<b><u>The Unification Church</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Read:</b> <i>Cults and New Religions</i> chapter 5, “The Unification Church</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Complete:</b> D2L Quiz on The Unification Church reading prior to coming to class today.</li></ul>

## Week 14

Mon April 30	<b><u>The People’s Temple</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Read:</b> Hall’s “People’s Temple” [coursepack]</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Quiz:</b> People’s Temple</li></ul>
Wed May 2	<b><u>Religion and Violence: Branch Davidians</u></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> <b>Read:</b> <i>Cults and New Religions</i>, chapter 7, “The Branch Davidians”</li></ul>

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**Complete:** D2L Quiz on Branch Davidians reading prior to coming to class today.

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**Week 15**

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Mon	<b><u>Religion and Violence: Heaven's Gate</u></b>
May 7	<input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Read:</u></b> <i>Cults and New Religions</i> , chapter 8, "Heaven's Gate" <input type="checkbox"/> <b><u>Complete:</u></b> D2L Quiz on Heaven's Gate reading prior to coming to class today.
Wed	<b><u>Conclusion: Where We Came From and Where We Are</u></b>
May 9	

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**Last Day of Classes: May 11**

**Reading Day May 12**

**Examination Days May 14-18**

**Final Exam: Wednesday, May 16, 2:45 to 4:45 PM**

**Commencement: May 19**