

Rel 317: New Religious Movements

Spring 2017

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Office: CCC 489a
Office hours: Mon/Wed 3:30 to 4:00
Tues/Thurs 2:00 to 2:30

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*. Ninth ed or Eighth edition. 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.

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.

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.

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. provide 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, sociology, and the humanities 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.
5. integrate and engage with primary and secondary source material while conducting research on NRMs.

**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.

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 the name of our class and section in your subject line.

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.

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.

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. 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.

Assignments

Participation.....	50 points
Short Papers	20 points each
Newspaper Research Paper	100 points
D2L Quizzes.....	15-20 points each
Midterm	approx. 150 points
Final Exam.....	approx. 150 points

Final exam: Monday, May 15th 2:45–4:45

Week 1

Tues Jan 24	<u>Introductions</u>
Thurs Jan 26	<u>Introduction to New Religions</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Paper #1: Invent a new religion! Write a 750-word paper (three pages) in which you create a new religious movement. Your goal is to persuade your reader how your religion will be the most successful in history. What has to happen in order to make a religion successful? Paper should be formatted as follows: Times Roman, 12 point type, 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>

Week 2

Tues Jan 31	<u>New Media and New Religions</u> <input type="checkbox"/> <u><i>Class will meet in the library (aka, Media Resource Center; aka, Albertson Hall), room 316. Bring a laptop or tablet if you have one.</i></u>
Thurs Feb 2	<u>NRMs: Success and Failure</u> <u>Topic:</u> Why do some NRMs grow substantially while others fail to catch on? <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> 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. <u>Reading suggestion:</u> 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

Tues Feb 7	<p><u>NRMs: Success and Failure</u></p> <p><u>Topic:</u> Why do some NRMs grow substantially while others fail to catch on?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Completing our discussion of Stark.
Thurs Feb 9	<p><u>Applying Stark</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Last week, you and your classmates invented new religions. This week, we are going to apply Stark's arguments to determine which of our invented religions is truly the best. You received a bracket last class pitting your religions against each other. Prior to class today, each of you will be assigned two religions to analyze. You will read two of your classmates papers, then you will write a one-to-two-page paper (250 to 500 words) identifying which religion was the "winner." Your paper should be formatted as follows:<input type="checkbox"/> #1: Which two papers did you read? (List the authors and the titles.)<input type="checkbox"/> #2: Of the two, which paper would be the most successful as recruiting members? (List the winner.)<input type="checkbox"/> #3: Defend your answer. What aspects of this new religion successfully reflect Stark's model?<input type="checkbox"/> #4: Consider counter-examples: What aspects of Stark's model were not reflected in this religion?<input type="checkbox"/> The due-date for this assignment will be on bracket itself. Don't be late!

Week 4

Tues Feb 14	<p><u>Historical Context: NRMs of the Nineteenth Century</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> New Religions in America, the 19th Century
Thurs Feb 16	<p><u>Case Study: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> Schaefer and Zellner, <i>Extraordinary Groups</i>, The Mormons, pgs119–133 (If you are reading the 8th edition of <i>Extraordinary Groups</i>, stop at "Organization of LDS")

Week 5

Tues	<u>Case Study: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints</u>
Feb 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> Schaefer and Zellner, <i>Extraordinary Groups</i>, chapter 4: The Mormons, pgs 134–158<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Complete:</u> D2L Quiz on The Mormons reading prior to coming to class today.
Thurs	<u>Frontline: The Mormons</u>
Feb 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Prior to class today, visit “eReserve” (link available at the top of our D2L page) and watch “Frontline: The Mormons” part II.<input type="checkbox"/> Then download the handout “Frontline: The Mormons Part II Questions” accompanying the video and answer the questions. You can type or hand-write your answers.<input type="checkbox"/> Bring the completed sheet to class<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Don’t miss:</u> See assignment described below, which is due Feb 26.

Week 6

Tues	<u>Latter-Day Saint Classroom Visit</u>
Feb 28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Submit to D2L dropbox:</u> By the end of the day on Feb 26, 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.<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.<input type="checkbox"/> <u>After class today:</u> Write a one-page (300 word) reflection 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?

Thurs	<u>Case Study: Christian Science</u>
Mar 2	<p>Topic: 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> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Read: Schaefer and Zeller, “Christian Scientists” [coursepack]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Complete: D2L Quiz on Christian Scientist reading prior to coming to class today.</p>

Week 7

Tues	<u>LDS and Christian Science: Models for Stark’s Analysis?</u>
Mar 7	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Finish our analysis of Christian Science and compare Christian Science and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.</p>

Thurs	<u>The Joiners</u>
Mar 9	<p>Topics: What kinds of people join New Religious Movements? What leads them to become members? And why do some stay and others leave?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Read: Lorne Dawson, “Who Joins New Religious Movements and Why?” [coursepack]</p> <p><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?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Paper: 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 SUBMIT TO DROPBOX ON D2L prior to class <u>AND BRING A PRINT OUT TO CLASS TODAY.</u></p>

Week 8

Tues	<u>Case Study: Jehovah's Witnesses</u>
Mar 14	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> Schaefer and Zellner, "Jehovah's Witnesses" <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Complete:</u> D2L Quiz on Jehovah's Witnesses reading prior to coming to class today.
Thurs	<u>Jehovah's Witness Guest Speaker?</u>
Mar 16	

Spring Break

Week 9

Tues	<u>Midterm Exam</u>
Mar 28	
Thurs	<u>Historical Context: NRMs of the 1960s</u>
Mar 30	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> Wuthnow, "The New Spiritual Freedom," [coursepack]

Week 10

Tues	<u>Satanism</u>
Apr 4	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> Gallager, "Satanism" [coursepack] <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Complete:</u> D2L quiz on "Satanism"
Thurs	<u>Wicca</u>
Apr 6	<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> Cowan, "Wicca, Witchcraft, and Modern Paganism" [coursepack] <input type="checkbox"/> <u>Complete:</u> D2L quiz on "Wicca, Witchcraft, and Modern Paganism"

Week 11

Tues	<u>NRMs and Media</u>
Apr 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Read: Rowe and Cavender, “Caldrons Bubble, Satan’s Trouble, but Witches are Okay” [coursepack]<input type="checkbox"/> Read: Sean McCloud’s “New Religions in the Media” (posted on D2L and distributed in class)
Thurs	<u>NRMs and Pop Culture</u>
Apr 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Read: Lynn Neal, “They’re Freaks! The Cult Stereotype in Fictional Television Shows, 1958–2008” [coursepack]

Week 12

Tues	<u>NRMs and Brainwashing</u>
Apr 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Think about: 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"/> Read: Singer, “The Process of Brainwashing” [coursepack]<input type="checkbox"/> Read: Richardson, “A Critique of Brainwashing” [coursepack]
Thurs	<u>NRMs and Brainwashing</u>
Apr 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Read: Robbins, “Constructing Cultist Mind Control” [coursepack]<input type="checkbox"/> Complete: D2L quiz on “NRMs and Brainwashing”<input type="checkbox"/> We will discuss the final paper in class today, which is due April 27. (See April 27 schedule for description of final paper.)

Week 13

Tues	<u>The Unification Church</u>
Apr 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Read: <i>Cults and New Religions</i> chapter 5, “The Unification Church<input type="checkbox"/> Complete: D2L Quiz on The Unification Church reading prior to coming to class today.

<p>Thurs Apr 27</p>	<p><u>Brainwashing Stereotypes in Film /</u> <u>Media Treatment of New Religions in Film</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ 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. All of which are about “cults” and “brainwashing.” Then write a 900-word (three page) paper on the film you watched. Choose one of two topics on which to focus. Your paper needs an introduction with a thesis statement, it needs to be well organized, and it should have a conclusion that reiterates your argument. □ 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.
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Week 14

<p>Tues May 2</p>	<p><u>NRMs and Science: Scientology</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Read: <i>Extraordinary Groups</i>: “The Church of Scientology” □ Complete: D2L Quiz on Scientology reading prior to coming to class today.
<p>Thurs May 4</p>	<p><u>NRMs and Science: Transcendental Meditation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Read: <i>Cults and New Religions</i> chapter 3: “Transcendental Meditation” □ Complete: D2L Quiz on Transcendental Meditation reading prior to coming to class today.

Week 15

Tues May 9	<p><u>Religion and Violence: Branch Davidians</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> <i>Cults and New Religions</i>, chapter 7, “The Branch Davidians”<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Complete:</u> D2L Quiz on Branch Davidians reading prior to coming to class today.
Thurs May 11	<p><u>Religion and Violence: Heaven’s Gate</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> <u>Read:</u> <i>Cults and New Religions</i>, chapter 8, “Heaven’s Gate”<input type="checkbox"/> <u>Complete:</u> D2L Quiz on Heaven’s Gate reading prior to coming to class today.