REL13350: Introduction to Religion and Politics  
Spring 2015-University of Texas at Tyler  
Adjunct Instructor Dr. Jimmie A. Reese  
Office: None provided. For an appointment call Dr. Reese at his home (903-586-4116) or contact him by E-Mail: jareese@aol.com.

Course Description: Religion has been a powerful phenomenon throughout human history, but what kind of phenomenon is it? In this course, we examine some of the classic answers to that question. We will consider psychological, sociological, economic, phenomenological, anthropological, and other theories of religion. Also to be included are sociological and political interpretations of society.

Learning Objectives: By the end of the course, students should:
1. Be able to demonstrate knowledge of the various academic definitions of what religion “is.”
2. Be able to identify the important academicians who have studied religion and be able to elaborate on their contributions to our understanding of religion. Examples may include Durkheim, Weber, Freud, Bonhoeffer, Buber and Marx. The actual list changes from semester to semester.
3. Be able to write intelligently on how religious experience is subjective in nature but can be shared by groups of people who believe similarly.
4. Be able to demonstrate an understanding of the chronology of how thinking about religion has changed over time and what are the implications for our understanding of the political order.
5. Be able to demonstrate an understanding of how the religious beliefs of individuals and communities impact the social orders of society including politics.

Required Texts:
Journal articles provided by the instructor will serve as required readings.  
Visual presentations (DVD and/or Video) are considered as text.  
Lectures are also considered as text.

Final Grading System.
Students will be evaluated based on the following:
1. There will be four exams on the readings, videos and/or lectures throughout the semester. These will account for three-fourths of your grade. Students may drop the lowest grade of the four exams provided all four are taken. There are no make-ups unless the student absence is due to representing the university for a sponsored event. The average of all four reflection papers (see number two below) may be used as a substitute grade for a missed exam except for the final. Please check with the university calendar for date of your final. Please read University policies below.

CAUTION: EXCESSIVE ABSENCE WILL RESULT IN GRADE ALTERATION.
2. There will also be four reflection papers of 3-5 pages each. Format will be explained in class. They will account for one-fourth of your grade. Students are allowed to miss one reflection paper as the average of the best three will be used in grading. In order for the average of reflection papers to be used as a substitute for a missed exam, all four reflection papers must be completed. Substitution does not apply to the final exam. Each paper will be written from each of the four parts of the course. Course content is subject to change.

Important Dates for Spring 2015
University of Texas at Tyler

FIRST DAY OF CLASS: January 12

Holiday: MLK, Jr. Day-January 19

FIRST EXAM: PART ONE: February 9
FIRST REFLECTION PAPER: Same week as above.

SECOND EXAM: PART TWO: March 4
SECOND REFLECTION PAPER: Same week as above.

Holiday: March 9-13

THIRD EXAM: April 1
THIRD REFLECTION PAPER: Same week as above.

FOURTH REFLECTION PAPER: THE WEEK BEFORE FINALS.

FOURTH EXAM DURING EXAM WEEK
. Please check the University calendar for date of course final.

Dates are subject to change. You will be notified at least a week in advance.

Due dates for Reflection Papers are only due dates. You may want to turn in your paper prior to the due date.

If you need to contact Dr. Reese, please use the following e-mail address: jareese@aol.com or call 903-586-4116.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Part One: Religion and Being Religious

January 12 & 14
Lecture & Discussion: Introduction to course and definitions of religion,

January 19-No class.

January 21
Lecture & Discussion: Describing philosophy of religion, theology, political theology and continuation of definitions of religion.

January 26
Lecture & Discussion: How do we know what we claim to know and developing a worldview based on the seven sources of how we come to know what we claim to know.

January 28
Lecture & Discussion: Cultural (social and political) and religious changes experienced.

February 2 & 4
Lecture & Discussion: Responding to religious diversity and introduction to part two of the course.

February 9: Exam one will cover the above content. Reflection paper number one due same week as exam.

Part Two: Religion and Politics in Dialogue

February 11 & 16
Lecture & Discussion: Introduction to sociology of politics and the major perspectives in sociology including the work of George Ritzer.

February 18
Lecture & Discussion: Social-Cultural and Political Values of America.

February 23
Lecture & Discussion: Toward a sociological-political analysis of religion in America and their political implications including a brief look at the political agenda of the religious right and left.

February 25
Lecture: What does it mean to use the word political.

March 2
Lecture: References to Religion in the U.S. Constitution, religion and our founders and a look at some issues in the church-state debate.

March 4: Exam two will cover the above content. Reflection paper due same week.
March 9-13 Spring Break

Part Three: The Orders of Society and Selected Topics

March 16
**Educational Order:** Discussion of article: *The Moral Uses and Responsibilities of Colleges and Universities.*

March 18
**International Order:** Video & Lecture: The Political Implications of the Immigration of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

March 23
**Domestic Order:** Video & Discussion on the politics of sexual orientation within a family and faith community.

March 25
**Economic Order:** Discussion of Article: *The War Against Rest.*

March 30
**Social Order:** PBS special: *On Earth as it is in Heaven.* An introduction to a people who believe the Christian Bible is the basis for all government, law and economics.

April 1
**Political & Religious Order:** PBS special: *The Battle for the Bible.* presented as a model for understanding how power politics works.

April 6-Exam Three will cover above material.
**Reflection paper number three due same week as exam.**

Part Four: Voices of Challenge
Part four will present a number of individuals, movements, and events that have made major contributions and/or challenged the religious-political experience in American life and other parts of the world.

April 8
Lecture & Discussion: Liberation Movement. & signal figures.

April 13
Video & Discussion: The Story of Bill Coffin. Coffin was an American religious-political activist and leader.

April 15
Video & Discussion: Politics and Folk Music. A look at the work of the late Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie.

April 20
Video, Lecture & Discussion: Thomas Merton. Merton was a religious-political activist monk.

April 22: Open Day.
Finals. Exam four will cover the above content. Reflection paper number 4 due on or before the final exam. Class content subject to change.

REFLECTION PAPER GUIDELINES

PART ONE: WHAT IS A REFLECTION PAPER?

First of all-a reflection paper is not a research paper. It is an opportunity for the student to reflective on what has been encountered in class, namely lecture, readings and videos.

PART TWO: GUIDELINES FOR WRITING THE PAPER

Your paper is to be divided into three parts. Please follow the outline provided as follows.

1. Descriptive. Write what you heard, saw, and/or read. This is an objective question that requires that you ONLY describe what you experienced. PLEASE- NO PERSONAL OPINIONS. You are trying to explain to someone who knows nothing of what you experienced the content of what you heard, saw and/or read. Example of a descriptive statement: the coffee is black.

2. Opinion. Now you can give your personal evaluation of what you have just described. This is a subjective question. You are now trying to explain to someone what you personal reaction is to what you heard, saw and/or read. You will want to be able to defend your opinion. Example of your opinion: the coffee taste good. Not everyone will agree with you, but it is your own unique experience and evaluation. Explain yourself.

3. Contextualization. In what ways will the content of your report have relevancy for your own context or will it? Show how you might apply what you have learned or explain how what you learned will not work in your context.

PART THREE: PRESENTATION

All papers will be computer generated OR typed on a typewriter. Be forewarned: handwritten papers will not be accepted. Please double-space all pages.

The following format is to be placed in the middle of your front cover page.
Name:
Course Title:
Due Date:
Paper Number:
Source: Title of Video, article or lecture with name of source

Identify each section of your paper with the following words in Bold Type:

Section I- Description.
Section II- Opinion.
Section III- Contextualization
The length of the paper should not be less than three pages of double spaced manuscript. That allows for one page per section. No matter the length of any section, no section should be less than one full page. I will read whatever you turn in, but would rather not have more than five pages per paper. You will be graded on both content and whether or not you follow my instructions on the required format. NOTE: RIGHT AND LEFT MARGINS ARE TO BE ONE INCH.

Further Reminders

Students Rights and Responsibilities
To know and understand the policies that affect your rights and responsibilities as a student at UT Tyler, please follow this link: http://www.uttyler.edu/wellness/StudentRightsandResponsibilities.html

Attendance and Make Policy
Attendance is required for this course and non-attendance will cause a grade reduction. No exam make-ups are allowed; one exam missed will count as the lowest grade dropped. All written assignments (for example, book reports, abstracts and/or research papers) are due on the date assigned. Late papers will not be excused without serious justification. Broken printers or computers do not count as serious justification. Students need to back up all written data.

Grade Replacement/Forgiveness
If you are repeating this course for a grade replacement, you must file an intent to receive grade forgiveness with the registrar by the 12th day of class. Failure to do so will result in both the original and repeated grade being used to calculate your overall grade point average. Undergraduates will receive grade forgiveness (grade replacement) for only three course repeats; graduates, for two course repeats during his/her career at UT Tyler.

State-Mandated Course Drop Policy
Texas law prohibits a student who began college for the first time in Fall 2007 or thereafter from dropping more than six courses during their entire undergraduate career. This includes courses dropped at another 2-year or 4-year Texas public college or university. For purposes of this rule, a dropped course is any course that is dropped after the 12th day of class (January 26th).
Exceptions to the 6-drop rule include, but are not limited to, the following: totally withdrawing from the university; being administratively dropped from a course; dropping a course for a personal emergency; dropping a course for documented change of work schedule; or dropping a course for active duty service with the U.S. armed forces or Texas National Guard.
Petitions for exemptions must be submitted to the Registrar's Office and must be accompanied by documentation of the extenuating circumstance. Please contact the Registrar's Office if you have any questions.

Disability Services
In accordance with federal law, a student requesting accommodation must provide documentation of his/her disability to the Disability Support Services counselor. If you
have a disability, including a learning disability, for which you request an accommodation, please contact Ida MacDonald in the Disability Support Services office in UC 282, or call (903) 566-7079.

**Student Absence due to Religious Observance**
Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform the instructor of such absences by the second class meeting of the semester.

**Student Absence for University-Sponsored Events and Activities**
If you intend to be absent for a university-sponsored event or activity, you (or the event sponsor) must notify the instructor at least two weeks prior to the date of the planned absence. At that time the instructor will set a date and time when make-up assignments will be completed.

**Social Security and FERPA Statement:**
It is the policy of The University of Texas at Tyler to protect the confidential nature of social security numbers. The University has changed its computer programming so that all students have an identification number. The electronic transmission of grades (e.g., via e-mail) risks violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; grades will not be transmitted electronically.

**Emergency Exits and Evacuation**
Everyone is required to exit the building when a fire alarm goes off. Follow your instructor’s directions regarding the appropriate exit. If you require assistance during an evacuation, inform your instructor in the first week of class. Do not re-enter the building unless given permission by University Police, Fire department, or Fire Prevention Services.