This course offers an overview of current religious trends in the United States. Given the size and diversity of the country, obviously only a few of the more important trends can be examined. The goal is to sensitize us to a variety of issues across several domains of American experience and to develop a sociological imagination of the diversity and complexity of religion. A crucial feature of our society is that, religiously speaking, it is fluid and dynamic, always evolving and taking on new forms. At any given time, we catch only snapshots of the religious situation.

Books to Be Read:
- Smith, C and P. Snell, Souls in Transition
- Covington, D., Salvation on Sand Mountain
- Eck, D., A New Religious Pluralism
- Marti, G., Hollywood Faith
- Einstein, M., Brands of Faith

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1) Two Written Exercises: 15 points each. Exercises are NOT accepted by email; must be turned in at the beginning of class on the date assigned. Grammar, organization, style, documentation all very important.
2) Mid-term – Worth 30 points.
3) Final Examination – Worth 35 points.
4) Class Attendance – Worth 5 points.

A word about class attendance: Attendance will be taken at random within 5 minutes after class is scheduled to begin. Students coming to class late, i.e., after the first five minutes, are considered late. Each absence (including late attendance) reduces the course grade average by one point. Only acceptable excuses for missed classes or examinations are written medical reports and obituaries.

GRADING: 10 Point Scale, i.e., 90=100; B= 80-89, etc.
RESOURCES
www.beliefnet.com
www.adherents.com
www.materialreligion.org
www.fas.harvard.edu/~pluralism/
http://religions.pewforum.org/

TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Jan. 10-12, 17-19 THE CHANGING AMERICAN SETTING
Cultural Worlds of Emerging Adults
Generational Themes
The Religious and the Spiritual
Regional Patterns
Religion Inherited, Religion Reconstructed

READING: Souls in Transition

Jan. 24-26, 31-Feb. 2 AN EXPanding/DIVISIVE RELIGIOUS AMERICA
Diversity versus Pluralism
Defining Pluralism
Culture Wars
Progressive versus Conservative Movements

READING: A New Religious Pluralism

EXERCISE #1: Go to www.pewforum.org. Go to bottom on right to US Religious Landscape. Select TWO constituencies, compare and contrast them on demographics, beliefs, social and political attitudes. Cite at least TWO additional references for documenting why one or the other religious constituencies are as they are. Not to exceed 6pp., double-spaced. Due Feb. 7 at beginning of class.

Feb. 7-9, 14 NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS
“Cults” and “Sects”
Types of Movements
Why They Emerge/Life-Cycles
Religion and Violence

READING: Salvation on Sand Mountain

Feb. 16 MID-TERM EXAMINATION

Feb. 21-23 CIVIL RELIGION
God’s Country
Rituals, Beliefs, Symbols, Sites
Priestly and Prophetic
Civil Religion, or Religious Nationalism?

MARKETING RELIGION
28-March 1-6 The Changing Religious/Spiritual Marketplace
New Shape of Evangelicalism
Designer Spirituality
Individual Autonomy and Choice

READING: Brands of Faith

EXERCISE #2: Go to:
http://religiousmovements.libvirginia.edu/profiles/listalpha.htm
Once into the site, go to religious group profiles. Select TWO groups. Compare and contrast them on beliefs, history, and anything else you think is important. Cite TWO references, one on each of the groups to document what you say about them. Not more than 6 pp., double-spaced. Due on March 13, beginning of class.

March 8, CALIFORNIA
13-15 Overview of Religions and Trends
Religious or Secular Setting?
Hollywood Faith

READING: Hollywood Faith

FINAL EXAMINATION