

## **Contemporary Trends Shaping A Changing Religious Landscape: Adaptations in light the COVID Pandemic (RS-668)**

The contemporary religious world is in a rapid state of flux made even more challenging at a result of the COVID19 Pandemic. In addition to the difficulties posed by the virus, increasing urbanization/suburbanization, emigrating populations and technological advances and other dynamics are creating significant changes in the spiritual contours of the globe. This course will focus mostly on the pluralistic situation in North America but will also intentionally trace the major socio-spiritual transitions taking place in world religions throughout the globe and especially in the United States. The course will reflect on how these changes are making a profound difference in the ways that all faith communities practice their religions. The course will be offered either online (synchronous and asynchronous sessions), or in hybrid in-person/online versions depending on the pandemic situation.

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Professor of Sociology of Religion Director of Hartford Institute for Religion Research and Doctor of Ministry program Contact Information: email: [sthumma@hartsem.edu](mailto:sthumma@hartsem.edu) I am available most days through zoom until 5 PM if arranged by email, otherwise my office hours are Tuesday and Thursday 12-4 PM by zoom or in person.

### **Aims of the Course:**

1. To learn the basic facets and character in contemporary religious life.
2. To identify the changes that are taking place in modern society generally and specifically in a local context.
3. To better understand the relationship between the societal and cultural context and changing expression and shape of religion today.
4. To examine in-depth one religious phenomenon and its relationship to the ever-changing contemporary society.

### **Learning Outcome:**

MA - #5 To demonstrate the ability to relate theory and practice in the social contexts in which a religion's communities exist.

Dmin - #1 To demonstrate knowledge of the larger social and cultural dynamics affecting religious life and organizations in the 21st century and their implications for ministry setting.

**This course will count for Colleague Seminar #1.**

### **Course Requirements:**

1. Attendance, class and web discussion participation 30 percent

2. 10 reading summaries posted to website 20 percent
3. Class presentation on a religious phenomenon 20 percent
4. 15-page paper exploring a contemporary religious phenomenon 30 percent

**Readings** – One or two books (depending on your level MA or Dmin will be chosen from a list of approved books) will be read and 2-3 page summaries for each of these will be posted to the course website.

Additionally, there will be readings for each week of the course. These will mostly be scholarly journal articles, book chapters and other contemporary popular writings from webpages, blogs and current magazines. Short reflections on 10 of these readings will be posted to the Canvas site weekly.

**Course Presentation** – Each student is required to do a short class presentation on a contemporary religious group that exemplifies the social and cultural dynamic being studied the week of the presentation. See the instructions below under research project.

**Research project** - Each student will choose a contemporary religious phenomenon or trend to focus on throughout the course of the semester. During the appropriate week of class, each student will gather information about this religious phenomenon or group for presentation to the class. The purpose of this presentation is twofold: 1) to uncover primary sources related to this phenomenon, and 2) to introduce more information about the phenomenon or trend to the class. The primary source might include a group's confessional statements, published materials from the organization, sermons, videos, news reports, web material and other items that furnish information about the phenomenon.

Students will use this material, plus other scholarly sources to write a 15-page (or longer, 20+ page if Dmin level) research paper on a topic related to this phenomenon or tradition and the place of this tradition in the contemporary global religious context. This paper must explore information about the phenomenon in relation to larger patterns of culture and societal changes that have taken place globally in the past twenty years. Please be prepared to sign up for a presentation topic by the third week of class and a preliminary idea of your final paper topic by the 7<sup>th</sup> week.

If anyone has any questions, suggestions, difficulties, or comments I would love to hear them and am always available by email [sthumma@hartsem.edu](mailto:sthumma@hartsem.edu) or during my office hours.

#### MA, and DMin Seminary Grading Scale

A (95-100) Demonstrates excellent mastery of the subject matter, a superior ability to articulate this, and provides helpful connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

A- (90-94) Demonstrates mastery of the subject matter, ability to articulate this well, and makes connections to daily life or contemporary issues. Exceeds expectations of the course.

B+(87-89) Demonstrates a very good understanding of the subject matter, able to articulate lessons learned in the assignment well. Meets expectations of the course.

B (83-86) Demonstrates an understanding of the subject matter and the ability to articulate lessons learned. Meets expectations of the course.

B-(80-82) Demonstrates an understanding of the material at hand, has some difficulty articulating this, and basic connection of the material to daily life or contemporary issues/life. Meets basic expectations for the course.

C+(77-79) Demonstrates a basic comprehension of the subject matter, weak articulation and connections. Does not meet expectations for the course.

C (70-76) Demonstrates a minimal comprehension of the subject matter and has difficulty making connections. Does not meet expectations of the course.

F (below 70) Unable to meet the basic requirements of the course.

- Please note: A+'s and C-'s are not part of the grading system.

DMin Grading Scale: High Pass (95-100), Pass (83-94), Low Pass (70-82), and Fail (below 70)

General Classroom Policies:

Student Handbook can be found at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/student-handbook/>

Writing Style and Assistance:

All academic papers are to conform to conventional technical, grammatical, and stylistic standards referred to in the General Guidelines for a Research Paper which can be found in the online forms center of the Seminary website. The Hartford Seminary Grading Guidelines will be the standard of evaluation for the course. If you need writing assistance to produce an acceptably written MA/Dmin quality paper, the seminary offers free writing tutors. Please make use of them.

Plagiarism warning:

Plagiarism, the failure to give proper credit for the words and ideas of another person, whether published or unpublished, is strictly prohibited. Credit will not be given for written work containing plagiarism, and plagiarism can lead to failure of a course. All written material submitted by students must be their own original work; where the words and ideas of others are used they must be acknowledged. Additionally, if students receive editorial help with their writing they should also acknowledge it appropriately.

Credit will not be given for work containing plagiarism, and plagiarism can lead to failure of a course. Faculty will report all instances of plagiarism to the Academic Dean. The Academic Dean will then collect documented details of the case and advance any recommendations for further action to the Academic Policies Committee. Through this process the situation will be reviewed and any additional penalties that may be warranted (up to and including expulsion from the school) will be determined.

Attendance policy – Generally, the following practices are standard:

For a semester course—1-2 absences with prior notice is acceptable, or if not acceptable then the participation grade should be lowered, 3 - 4 or more absences without a serious reason should be an automatic failure “without explanation or permission.”

For online courses—3 or more weeks without posts equal 3 class absences and should be dealt with in the same manner.

If students cannot attend class but would like to join via Zoom I will make every effort to accommodate this request. Obviously, we do not know what the fall semester will bring in terms of gathering modality; therefore, the attendance policy might shift depending on the way the course is offered. However, regular attendance is essential.

Inclusive language – Hartford Seminary is committed to a policy of inclusion in its academic life and mission. All members of the community are expected to communicate in language that reflects the equality of genders, openness to diverse cultural and theological perspectives, and sensitivity to one another’s images of God.

Email Policy –The instructor will use the official Hartford Seminary student email address for all course communications. Students should check their hartsem.edu email account regularly.

The standard Seminary policies regarding plagiarism and writing style apply to this course. For more information about these policies see the student handbook or the Seminary’s website. Academic policies are listed at <http://www.hartsem.edu/current-students/policies/> .

**TENTATIVE - The Schedule of Topics & Readings might change prior to the time the course begins.**

**Weekly Schedule: LIKELY TO CHANGE PRIOR TO START OF THE COURSE DUE TO THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE PANDEMIC SITUATION**

*Where we are headed*

**Week 1) Introduction to the course, the American religious context in the midst of a Pandemic**

**Week 2) The Dynamic of Social and Religious Change – and the reality of the COVID pandemic.**

Peter Berger, “Sociological and Theological Perspectives” in *The Sacred Canopy* 1967

Robert Bellah, “Religious Evolution”

<http://bit.ly/2c8Fvvz> (Links to an external site.)

**Week 3) Methods of studying religious phenomena during a Pandemic**

Scott Thumma, *Studying Congregations*, Methods chapter

Reflections on a virtual worship service

#### **Week 4) The Current National Context and the Patterns of the past 25 years.**

Robert Putnam, *American Grace* excerpts in week 4 module (Dmin Students are required to read most of this book.)

Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* pp. 48-64 in week 4 module

You should read these short reports:

David Roozen, Faith Communities Today Decade of Change Report –  
<http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/default/files/Decade%20of%20Change%20Final%200.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Ihsan Bagby, Mosque 2010 Report –  
<http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/default/files/The%20American%20Mosque%202011%20web.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Stephen Cohen, Synagogue 2010 Report –  
<http://synagoguestudies.org/sites/default/files/factreport.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

#### ***A Changing Organizational Landscape***

#### **Week 5) Size – Bigger & Smaller are Better – or are they, in a pandemic?**

Scott Thumma, “The Shape of Things to Come: Megachurches, Emerging Churches and Other New Religious Structures Supporting an Individualized Spiritual Identity.” in *Faith in America: Changes, Challenges, New Directions*. Charles Lippy Pp. 185-206.  
<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/organizationalchangechapter.doc> (Links to an external site.)

Scott Thumma, Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: their characteristics and cultural context.  
[http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma\\_article2.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article2.html) (Links to an external site.)

Alice Mann, *The Smaller Congregation - Pathways in Challenging Times*. in week 5 module

Optional: Scott Thumma & Warren Bird, Megachurch 2015 Report  
[http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/2015\\_Megachurches\\_Report.pdf](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/2015_Megachurches_Report.pdf) (Links to an external site.)

Optional: Surratt, Ligon and Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church in Many Locations* pp. 9-42 in week 5 module

#### **Week 6) Denominations versus Networks versus Independents**

David Roozen & Kirk Hadaway, Denominational Growth and Decline  
<http://www.hartfordinstitute.org/bookshelf/Church&Denomgrowth/ch&dngrw-pt.1.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

David Roozen and Adair Lummis, Congregational Splits & Denominational Apostasy  
<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/cong/congregational-splits.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Christopher Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Nonprofits* Chap 1-2. in week 6 module

Scott Thumma, What God Makes Free is Free Indeed: Nondenominational Church Identity and its Networks of Support [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma\\_article5.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article5.html) (Links to an external site.)

<https://religionnews.com/2020/05/18/coronavirus-restrictions-on-mosques-bring-women-to-the-fore/>

Optional - US Religion Census 2012 overview  
[www.rcms2010.org/press\\_release/ACP%2020120501.pdf](http://www.rcms2010.org/press_release/ACP%2020120501.pdf) (Links to an external site.)

### ***A Changing Demographic Landscape***

#### **Week 7) Generational and Family Patterns**

Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How 20 and 30 somethings are shaping the future of American religion*. Pp. 1-70, 183-200. in week 7 module

Gallup Marriage in Young Adults article.... in week 7 module

Christian Smith, with Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Young Adults*. Chapter 2: “The Cultural Worlds of Emerging Adults”, pp. 33-87. 2009 in week 7 module

Optional: Youth Religion - Generational Shifts in week 7 module.

Optional: Stephen Warner & Rhys Williams, The role of families and religious institutions in transmitting faith among Christian, Muslims and Hindus in the US. in Collins-Mayo & Dandelion *Religion and Youth* pp.159-165 in week 7 module

#### **Week 8) A Diverse Population with national borders closed – Immigration and religious pluralism, Transnational Religious Networks and Becoming an American “Church”**

Stephen Warner Immigrants and the Faith They Bring <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2946> (Links to an external site.) also in week 8 module

Robert Wuthnow, “The Challenge of Diversity” presidential address *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43:2, June 2004 p.159-170. in week 8 module

Michael Emerson, *The Emergence of Multiracial Congregations* in week 8 module

David Roozen, *American Congregations Reach Out To Other Faith Traditions From Faith Communities Today* 2010

[http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/default/files/American\\_Congregations\\_Reach\\_Out.pdf](http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/sites/default/files/American_Congregations_Reach_Out.pdf) (Links to an external site.)

<https://religionnews.com/2020/05/18/four-young-people-of-faith-move-into-a-home-together-then-a-pandemic-happens/>

Read one of these three –

- Robert Wuthnow, *America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity* Princeton University Press, 2005. Chapter 7 p.188-229 Chapter 8 p. 230-258 in week 8 module
- H.R.Ebaugh and Janet S. Chafetz, *Religion Across Borders: Transnational Religious Networks*. AltaMira Press, 2002 pp. 165-191 in week 8 module
- Robert Wuthnow and Stephen Offutt, *Transnational Religious Connections* *Sociology of Religion* 2008 69:2 pp. 209-232 in week 8 module

### **Week 9) Changing Population – Urbanization & Suburbanization Globally**

Nancy Eiesland, *A Particular Place*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. 1997. Chapter 2 Pgs – 22-4 in week 9 module

Scott Thumma and Warren Bird *Global Megachurches in the Megacity* in week 9 module

*Global Christianity* in week 9 module

### ***A Changing Cultural Landscape***

### **Week 10) Individualism & Consuming Faith**

Robert Bellah, et al. *Habits of the Heart* pp. 219-245

5 Things Netflix Is Showing Church Leaders About the Future. <http://careynieuwhof.com/2014/07/5-things-netflix-is-showing-church-leaders-about-the-future/> (Links to an external site.)

Marler, P. L., and D. A. Roozen. 1993. From church tradition to consumer choice: The Gallup surveys of the unchurched American

<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/Church&Denomgrowth/ch&dngrowth-ch12.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Mason, Singleton and Webber. Part of Chapter 9: "From obligation to consumption": Spirituality, Culture and Society" *The Spirit of Generation Y*. (Victoria, AU: John Garratt Publishing, 2007). pp. 228-247.

### **Week 11) Spiritual not Religious and “Lived Religion”**

Marler & Hadaway, “Being Religious” or “Being Spiritual” in America: A Zero-Sum Proposition? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41:2 (2002) pp 289–300

Nancy Ammerman, Golden Rule Christianity

<http://hrr.hartsem.edu/sociology/articles/Golden%20Rule%20Christianity.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

### **Week 12) Nones and Others**

Pew Nonaffiliates Study at <http://www.pewforum.org/unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx> (Links to an external site.)

[http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious\\_Affiliation/Unaffiliated/NonesOnTheRise-full.pdf](http://www.pewforum.org/uploadedFiles/Topics/Religious_Affiliation/Unaffiliated/NonesOnTheRise-full.pdf) (Links to an external site.)

Elizabeth Drescher, Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America’s Nones chapter one pgs 16-52.

Gray and Thumma, “The Gospel Hour: Liminality, Identity, and Religion in a Gay Bar.” published in Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader, Eiesland and Becker (eds.), Alta Mira Publishers, 1997

### **Week 13) The Role of the Internet?**

Heidi Campbell Spiritualizing the Internet. Uncovering Discourses and Narratives of Religious Internet Usage 2005 <http://archiv.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/volltextserver/volltexte/2005/5824/pdf/Campbell4a.pdf> (Links to an external site.)

Scott Thumma, Virtually Religious: Technology and Internet Use in American Congregations <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/technology-Internet-use.html> (Links to an external site.)

Saminaz Zaman, “From Imam to Cyber-Mufti - Consuming Identity in Muslim America” in *The Muslim World*, vol 98, Oct. 2008.

### **Week 14) Adaptations of the Pandemic. Where are we headed? And how might we get there?**