

Course Syllabus

Sociology of Religion

Sociology 3440-090

Tuesday and Thursday, 2:00 pm – 3:20

Beh. Sci. Bldg. Room 102

Fall 2014, University of Utah

Dr. Frank J. Page

Office Room 429 Beh. Sci., Office
Hours: Monday & Wednesday, Noon – 4:00-
pm

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I. Goals:

The primary goal of this class is to give students a sociological understanding of religion as a powerful, important, and influential social institution that is associated with many social processes and phenomena that motivate and influence how people act and see the world around them. The class will rely on a variety of methods that include comparative analysis, theoretical explanations, ethnographic studies, and empirical studies designed to help students better understand religion and its impact upon societies, global-international events, and personal well-being. This overview of the nature, functioning, and diversity of religious institutions should help students make more discerning decisions regarding cultural, political, and moral issues that are often influenced by religion.

II. Topics To Be Covered:

The course is laid out in three parts. The first section begins with a review of conventional and theoretical conceptions of religion and an overview of the importance and centrality of

religion to human societies. It emphasizes the diversity and nature of "religious experience" in terms of different denominations, cultures, classes, and individuals. This is followed by overview of sociological assumptions and theories and their application to religion. A variety of theoretical schools including, functionalism, conflict theory, exchange theory, sociology of knowledge, sociobiology, feminist theory, symbolic interactionism, postmodern and critical theory will be addressed and applied to religion.

The second part of the course begins with a comparative analysis of the major religions in terms of beliefs, values, norms, practices, and rituals as seen from different theoretical points of view. The comparative analysis surveys Western, Eastern, New Age, and Native American religions, and unaffiliated groups in terms of their defining beliefs and practices, and concludes with an analysis of the major commonalities and differences between Eastern and Western Religions, Alternative, Native American religions, and unaffiliated groups that include agnostics, atheists and existentialists.

The third part of the addresses issues associated with modernity, fundamentalism, and terrorism. This section also contains a critical analysis of religion in terms of the extent to which it can be constructive and destructive, and both an impediment to needed social change and an impetus for powerful social movements that address major social problems.

Throughout the course issues associated with social change, patriarchy, prejudice, violence, sexism, conflicts between science and religion, modernity, and the separation of church and state will be addressed. The course concludes with a study of master trends in religion in the 21st century, and the role that religion and spirituality may possibly play in meeting the challenges and problems of our age.

III. Pedagogy, Exams, and Papers:

This class will utilize a variety of teaching approaches that include lectures, in online responses and discussion, films, and guest speakers representing different religious perspectives. There will a midterm, a final exam, and a paper.

The paper can be from five to six double spaced pages in length. There are four options for the paper. The first option calls upon the student to do participant observer or ethnographic research on a religion or religious practice. The student who chooses this option will spend time throughout the semester in a particular religious institution or group that she is not affiliated with and record her experiences in a journal. The journal will conclude with a summary of her observations in terms of what she has learned and any insights or hypotheses that have been generated by her research in terms of existing theory and concepts. The student taking this option may also attempt to emulate a religious role model, say Jesus, Gandhi, Mohammad, Buddha, or a Shaman for a long period of time, and as something of a personal ethnography or breaching experiment, record his experience and the reactions of others and then analyze them in terms of what he has learned and how it relates to any theory or concepts discussed in class or any moral or political issues.

The second option allows the student to write a formal research paper that addresses a particular religion, religious practice, or a political or moral issue associated with religion or influenced by religious views. For this option, the student may also develop a hypothesis regarding religion and carry out an appropriate experiment or survey that will shed light on it.

The third option entails writing a comparative analysis of any two religions or religious and philosophical perspectives. For example, this could entail comparing Eastern and Western Religions or comparing western religion to existentialism, agnosticism to religious zealotry, science and religion, or faith verses skepticism.

The fourth option entails writing a sociological analysis or response to one of the books or movies on the suggested readings and movies lists. These papers should summarize the major themes and ideas and conclude with a critical analysis of the book or movie in terms of concepts and research addressed in the class.

Plagiarism will result in an E grade, so be sure to do your own work and use proper citations following either the ASA or APA guidelines.

Videos are essential to this class. There are three categories of videos, (1) Required, (2) Recommended, and (3) Suggested. Required and Recommended videos can be watched on line on Canvas. There are about a dozen Required videos and they must be watched and will be on exams. Some of these are very short, from 15 to thirty minutes, and all students should watch them, as they are on the exams. The Recommended Videos should be watched if you want a more complete and deeper grasp of the materials. Suggested videos are videos or full-length movies that you can watch and write a paper about. They are not online. You can find them at the Marriott Library, online, or at local video stores.

Students are advised to stay at least one week ahead in the readings and assigned videos. Much of the class discussion will be based on the readings and videos, so please complete them in a timely fashion. Also, while it may appear that there are a lot of readings, most of the readings in the reader and on E-Reserve are very short, from two to four pages. The key to doing well in this class is doing the readings, watching or listening to the lectures, watching the assigned videos, and reflecting on the materials addressed in class. It is a reading, thinking, writing class.

IV. Exams and Grading

Grading for this class is based on two exams, a an objective midterm with 50 questions, an objective final with 100 questions which is not comprehensive, but does cover the material in the second part of the course, and a paper. Before each exam there will be a review and time for the instructor to respond to any emailed questions concerning the exam. The paper is worth 50 points, making a total of 200 points possible.

Students can earn an additional 10 extra credit points. To earn 5 of these extra credit points simply go online to the class web page and post a comment or question or reply on the discussion board 5 times during the semester. Make sure your responses have to do with class materials. Posting up to set up study groups or find out when the exam is won't count as extra credit, so post up with a comment or response. Students can also receive an additional 5 points by watching one of the recommended online-videos posted on line, and writing and submitting a two page double spaced paper summarizing the video. Extra credit work must be completed before the final exam. Extra credit points will raise your overall percentage score. The grading scale for the class will be 90-100%=A, 80-89%=B, 70-79%=C, 60-69%=D, 60 and below=E. If no one or only a few students gets 100%, I will add points to all the scores until a number of students get 100%, thus adjusting the curve upward. If given adequate notice the syllabus may be changed and does not constitute a contract.

In studying for exams, I urge the students to first read the materials and watch assigned videos, then go over your lecture notes and weekly reviews. Much of the exam materials will be on the weekly reviews.

Graduate students taking this lower division class for graduate credit must cover the required readings and videos and all the recommended readings and videos, and when relevant, address them in any written work or papers which may be substantially longer than papers required for undergraduates. Of course, all students are invited to read the recommended readings and watch the recommended videos, as they will enhance your understanding of the subject matter, but they are not required.

Lecture notes can be found on Pages on the Homepage in Canvas. I advise students to print out the week's lecture notes and have them in hand as you watch the lectures. On average, we will cover about five lectures per week. In that the lecture notes are divided into half hour segments, that's the equivalent of a class meeting three times a week. I will be posting them as the class progresses.

V. Texts: There are two texts and some readings on E-Reserve at the Marriott Library. The majority of the E-Reserve Readings are short introductory articles that may be only two or three pages long. The total amount of time spent per week on reading materials and watching videos should average about three to four hours per week, which is appropriate if not light for a three credit hour class.

Gods in the Global Village. The World's Religions in Sociological Perspective. Second Edition, Pine Forge Press, 2007

God and His Demons. Michael Parenti, Prometheus Books, 2010

Assigned Readings on E. Reserve: These can be accessed through direct links on the home page, or on the Pages Page, or through the Marriott Library under course reserves. You may want to print out some articles that may be hard to read on your computer screen.

VI. Course Outline

Week One, (August 26, 28): Introduction / Defining and Studying Religion / Religious Vocabulary

- Gods in the Global Village Chapter One: Religious Life in the Global Village.
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction, Wade Clark Roof (1-4)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Classical Sociological Definitions of Religion, Patricia Chang (5-8)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Elementary Forms of the Religious life, Emile Durkheim. (9-14)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: From Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law, Karl Marx (15-16)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Religion as a Cultural System, Clifford Geertz (16-22)

- Online Video: The Amish (Required)

- Lectures: Intro and 1-3

Week Two (September 2, 4): Basic Sociological Model and Religion / Institutions and the Social Order / Social Roles & Identity/ Status / Class / Stratification, Authority / Power / Social Change

- God's in the Global Village. Chapter Five. The Religious Ethos.
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Religious Organizations, Institutions, and Authority, Susanne C. Monahan (225-230)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Race, Ethnicity, and Religion, Michael Emerson (78-79)
- E-Reserve: Mountain People. Colin N. Turnbull
- E-Reserve, Jonestown as Perverse Utopia, Rose Laub Coser.
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Social Class and Religion, William Mirola (144-150)

- **Recommended Online Video: Bill Moyers Interview with Ann Provost on the Bible as literature**

Lectures: 4 -12

[Week Three, \(September 9, 11\): Sociological Theory and Religion: Functionalism / Theories of Deviance / Free Will & Participant Observer Bias / Social Change](#)

- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Belief and Ritual, Susanne Monahan (30-34)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: The Sacred Canopy, Peter L. Berger (23-29)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Religious Experience, William MacDonal Angels, and Kenneth Woodward. (55-57)

- Online Video: Magic and Religion (Required)
- Online Video: The Polygamists (Required)

- **Recommended E-Reserve. The Sacred Canopy; Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion. Peter L. Berger, Chapter Three, The Problem of Theodicy**

- Lectures 13-19

[Week Four, \(Septebmer 16, 18\) Sociological Theory and Religion: Conflict Theory / Exchange Theory / Symbolic Interactionism](#)

- God and His Demons. Part I. All in the Bible.
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Ways of Seeing Ecstasy in Modern Society: Experiential-Expressive and Cultural-Linguistic Views., David Yamane, Megan Polzer (70-77)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Salvation on Sand Mountain, Gaines (37-42)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Gender and Religion, Lori Beaman (115-117)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Introduction to Sexual Identity and Religion, William Mirola. (173-175)
- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion Reader: Negotiating a Religious Identity: The Case of the Gay Evangelical, Scott Thumma (189-195)

- Online Video: Bill Moyers On Faith and Reason. Interview with Salmon Rushdie (Required)
- Online Video Abundance Theology, (14 minute clip) (Required)
- Online Video Elmer Gantry (15 minute clip) (Required)

- **Recommended E-Reserve, Escape From Evil, Chapter 8, The Nature of Social Evil.**
- **Recommended Video. Martin Luther King, "I Have a Dream."**
- **Recommended Video: Pink Smoke Over the Vatican. (religion and sexism)**

- Lectures 20-24

Week Five. (September 23, 25): Social Theory and Religion / Symbolic Interactionism / Sociology of Knowledge / Phenomenology / Feminism, Neo-Marxists / Critical Theorists / Post-modernism

- God and His Demons Part II. Divine Design
- God and His Demons Part III. When the Ethereal Becomes Material
- E-Reserve Downloading God, "Big Box Churches, and the Crystal Shop around the Corner; Religious Adaption in the High Tech, Digital Age," Religion Matters, Emerson, Mirola, and Monahan
- **Recommended Online Audio Lecture: The Political Uses of Religion. Michael Parenti**
- **Recommended Online Video: Evil in the Modern World (Susan Neiman and Bill Moyers)**
- Lectures 25-30

Week Six. (September 30, October 2): Gods, the Devil, Evil, and Faith as Social Constructions / Axial Age, Pre-Axial Age, Polytheism to Monotheism / Midterm Review

- God and His Demons. Part IV. Hypocrites, Reactionaries and Vipers
- God and His Demons. Part V. Theocracy, Past, Present and Future
- Lecture 31 (Review for midterm, weeks 1-6)

Week Seven: (October 7, 9): Midterm on Weeks 1-6, Lectures on Zoroastrianism / Judaism and the Ten Commandments / Separation of Church and State

- Online Midterm on Weeks 1-6, February 21-23
- Gods in the Global Village Chapter 3. The Tour: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. (Judaism, Christianity)
- E-Reserve, The World As I See It. Albert Einstein. Religion & Science
- Online Video: Ten Commandments: History Channel (Required)

Week Eight: (October 14, 16): Fall Break: Christianity and Islam

- Online Video: Inside Islam. (Required)
- Online video: Western Religions (Required)

[Week Nine: \(October 21, 23\): Islam and Christianity](#)

Lectures 32-38

- Gods In the Global Village: Chapter 2, Turning East
- Online Video: Bill Moyers On Faith and Reason: Interview with Pema Chodron on Buddhism (Required)
- Online Video: The Twentieth Century, True Believers (Required)
- Online Video: Lust for Life (14 minute clip) (Required)
- **Recommended E-Reserve: Think on These Things. Krisnumurti, Education: pp 1-26.**
- **Recommended E-Reserve: Gandhi on Non-Violence, Introduction by Thomas Merton, Book by Mark Kurlensky**
- **E-Reserve Mini Ching (Divination), by Sheila Heti, Harper's Magazine July 2013**

[Week Ten: \(October 28, 30\) Eastern Religions: Hinduism / Buddhism, Confucius / Taoism / Shintoism, Gandhi in Practice..](#)

- Lectures 39-43
- God's in the Global Village. Chapter 4, Indigenous Religions.
- E-Reserve Spiral Dance, Starhawk, Chapter One
- Online Video: Hopi (Required)

[Week Eleven: \(November 4, 6\): Alternative and Emergent Religions / Native American Religions / Comparative Analysis of East, West / New Age Religions](#)

- Lectures 44-49
- E-Reserve: Emma Goldman, "The Philosophy of Atheism," Mark Twain, "Thoughts of God," From "Fables of Man, Bible Teaching and Religious Practice From Europe and Elsewhere" and "A Pen Warmed Up in Hell," Albert Einstein, Selected Writing on Religion, Salman Rushdie, "Imagine There's No Heaven," all from The Portable Atheist, Christopher Hitchens Editor. (approx. 20 pages)
- E-Reserve Lower Than Angels: Benjamin Hale, Harper's Magazine 6/11
- Online Video: Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason: Interview with Colin McGinn Atheist (Required)
- **Recommended Online Video: Religulous with Bill Maher**

[Week Twelve: \(November 11, 13\) Agnostics / Atheists / Existentialists, 2nd Midterm on Weeks 7-11](#)

- 2nd Midterm 14th – 15th
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- Lectures 50-53

- Online Video: Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason. Interview with Mary Gordon (Christian) (Not on Midterm, but Required for Final)
- Online Video: Crisis of Faith, Not on Midterm, but Required for Final)

- **Recommended Video: Shop Till You Drop: Crisis of Consumerism**
- **Recommended E-Reserve: Sils-Maria, Obituary Notice, Friedrich Nietzsche**

[Week Thirteen: \(November 18, 20\): Philosophical, Biological, Psychological, and Anthropological views on the Origins Religion and Magic \(Zeitlin\)](#)

- Lectures 54-57
- Gods in the Global Village: Chapter 6, Modernism and Multiculturalism.
- E-Reserve Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved Frans De Wall, Princeton University Press, 2006, Introduction pp. x-xix.
- E-Reserve: The Moral Landscape. Sam Harris, pp. 145-152

- Online Video: Bill Moyers On Faith and Reason: Interview with Mary Gordon on Faith (Required)

- Online Video: Jesus Camp (Required)

- **Recommended Online Video: The Glory and the Power: Fighting Back**
- **Recommended E-Reserve. The God Delusion, Richard Dawkins, Chapter Five.**

[Week Fourteen: \(November 25\): Crisis of Modernity, Conflict, Cults. No Class Thursday, Thanksgiving](#)

- E-Reserve: Sociology of Religion, Lundscow, Chapter 7, Cults.
- E-Reserve: Beyond Fundamentalism: Confronting Religious
- Extremism in the Age of Globalization, Reza Aslan. Prologue and Introduction

- Online Video: Inside the Mind of a Suicide Bomber (Required)

- **Recommended E-Reserve, Terror in the Mind of God, Mark Juergensmeyer**
- **Recommended E-Reserve: Infidel, Ayann Hirisi, Chapter Two. Under the Tala Tree**
- **Recommended E-Reserve: Acts of Faith, The Story of An American Muslim, The Struggle for the Soul of a Generation, Eboo Patel,**

Week Fifteen: (December 2, 4): Fundamentalism / Terrorism .

- Lectures 58-59
- Gods in the Global Village. Chapter 8. Religion and Social Conflict.
- Online Video: Bright Light: When Spirit Meets Action, (Spiritual and religious social activism) (Required)
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- Recommended E-Reserve: The Role of Religion in International Terrorism, Thomas Bradley, Sociology of Religion Reader, Monahan, Mirola, and Emerson pp. 374-377E-Reserve:
- Recommended E-Reserve Contrasting Secular and Religious Terrorism: Sociology of Religion Reader, Monahan, Mirola, and Emerson. pp. 378-387
- Recommended E-Reserve: Is Religious Violence Inevitable? James K Wellman, Jr. and Kyoko Tokuno, Sociology of Religion Reader, Monahan, Mirola, and Emerson Religion,
- Recommended E-Reserve Violence and Peacemaking, Sharon Erickson Nepstad, Sociology of Religion Reader, Monahan, Mirola, and Emerson. pp. 403-408
- Recommended E-Reserve, The True Believer, The Desire for Substitutes, Eric Hoffer,
- Recommended E-Reserve, The Causes of World War Three, Chapter 21, A Pagan Sermon, C. Wright Mills.

Week Sixteen: (December 9, 11): Concluding Interdisciplinary Analysis of Religion as Functional and Dysfunctional. / Trends in Religion, Secularization or New Axial Age, (Lundscow, Armstrong, Walsh, Krisnumurti, Wallis)

- Gods in the Global Village. Chapter 7. Religious Movements for a New Century.E-Reserve:
- E-Reserve, On God's Side, Jim Wallis, Chapter One, A Gospel For the Common Good.
- Papers Due April 21.
- Recommended E-Reserve: Tomorrow's God, Neale Donald Walsh, Chapter 1 & 2
- Recommended E-Reserve: Does God Have A Future? Karen Armstrong
- Recommended E-Reserve: God's Politics. Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It. Jim Wallis . Introduction. pp. xvii-xxviii Why Can't We Talk about Politics.

Week Seventeen (December 16-18): Final

- Online Final on Weeks 12-16. December 16-18

VII. Required Online Video and Audio Content

- The Amish (40 min.)
- Religion and Magic (30 min.)
- Ten Commandments (History Channel) (100 min)
- Inside Islam: Religion in the Modern World (100 min.)
- True Believers: In the Modern Century (100 min.)
- The Polygamists (50 min.)
- Jesus Camp (60 min.)
- Inside the Mind of a Suicide Bomber. (60 min.)
- Crisis of Faith (60 min.)
- Colin McGee (Interview with Bill Moyers) 30 minutes
- Elmer Gantry (clip) (Fundamentalism) 14 minutes.
- Lust for Life (clip) (Liberation Theology) 14 minutes.
- Bill Moyers on Faith and Reason: Salmon Rushdie
- Fierce Light: When Spirit Meets Action, (Spiritual Social Activism)
- The Hopi
- Western Religions (survey)
- Bill Moyers Interview with Pema Chadron

VIII. Recommended Online Videos

- Bill Moyers Interview with Mary Gordon
- The Glory and the Power: Fighting Back (60 min.)
- Evil in the Modern World (Susan Neiman and Bill Moyers)
- Michael Parenti, Part One and Two. (audio only)
- Bill Moyers: Ann Provost (Noah's Arc), and David Grossman (Samson)
- The Glory and the Power: This is Our Land (fundamentalism)
- The Glory and the Power: Remaking the World (fundamentalism)
- The Longest Hatred (Anti-Semitism)
- End of Times, Left Behind (History channel)
- Constantine's Sword (James Carroll)
- The World In Our Eyes (Native American Religion)
- Richard Dawkins: An Atheists call to Arms.
- Prayer In America
- Tao Te Ching (audio only)
- Eastern Religions (survey)
- History of God, Karen Armstrong
- The Power of Nightmares (Christian and Muslim neo-conservatives)
- Peace, Propaganda and the Promised Land. (Israeli Palestinian conflict and media, Noam Chomsky)
- Inside the Great Silence (life in a monastery)
- Letting Go of God. (Comedians move to atheism)
- Voodoo Rituals (documentary)

- Satan: Prince of Darkness (History Channel)
- The Four Horsemen: Hitchens, Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, (atheist dialogue)
- Missionaries of Hate : (documentary on Evangelicals and anti-gay politics in Uganda)
- Sex in a Cold Climate: (Documentary on Cruel Catholic Work Houses run by Nuns in Ireland)
- The Magdalene Sisters: (Movie based on documentary about cruel catholic work houses run by Nuns. in Ireland)

IX. Suggested Readings:

- 50 Spiritual Classics, Tom Butler-Bowdon
- God's Politics, Jim Wallis (Religious social activism)
- On God's Side, Jim Wallis (Religious activism on politics)
- Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth
- The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success, Rodney Stark
- Everything You Know About God is Wrong, Edited by Russ Kick
- Why God Won't Go Away, Brain Science & the Biology of Belief, Newberg & Rause
- Why I Am Not A Christian, Bertrand Russell (classic philosophical view of Christianity)
- Civilization and its Discontents, Sigmund Freud
- Varieties of Religious Experience, William James
- Life is a Miracle, Wendell Berry (Deep Ecologist addresses religion and science)
- The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, Emile Durkheim (classic)
- The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Max Weber (classic)
- The "God" Part of the Brain, A scientific Interpretation of Human Spirituality and God, Mathew Alper
- Journey to Ixtlan, Carlos Castaneda (60's spirituality and anthropology)
- The Places That Scare You.: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times. Pema Chodron (Application of Buddhism to modern world)
- The Tao of Physics. The Parallel Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism. Fritjof Capra
- Strong Religion, The Rise of Fundamentalism Around the World, Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan
- The True Believer, Eric Hoffer (classic on origins of social movements)
- The Voice of the Buddha. The Dhammapada and other key Buddhist Teachings. Manjusura
- The Confessions of Saint Augustine, Saint Augustine (classic theology)
- When Religion Becomes Evil, Charles Kimball
- The Denial of Death or Escape From Evil, Ernest Becker
- Consilience, Edward O. Wilson (Debate between science and religion)
- The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion, Peter Berger
- The Sociology of Religion, Max Weber
- The End of Faith, Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason, Sam Harris
- Is Religion Killing Us? Violence in the Bible and the Quran, Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer

- Remember, Be Hear Now. Ram Dos
- The Autobiography of Malcolm X. Alex Haley
- Black Elk Speaks. Diary of a Holy Man. John G Neihardt
- The Anatomy of Peace, The Arbinger Institute
- The Devil, Peter Stanford
- A History of God, Fundamentalism, Karen Armstrong
- The Great Transformation, Karen Armstrong (religious trends)
- Wherever You Go There You Are, Jon Kabat Zinn (Buddhist applications to modernity)
- Mountains and More Mountains. Dr. Paul Farmer (modern liberation theology practitioner)
- Under the Banner of Heaven, A Story of Violent Faith, John Karkauer (religious deviance)
- Galileo's Daughter, A Historical Memoir of Science, Faith, and Love, Dava Sobel
- The God Delusion, Richard Dawkins
- American Theocracy, Kevin Phillips
- Beyond Good and Evil, Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche
- Think on These Things, Krishnamurti
- Infidel, Ayaan Hirsi Ali
- The Infidel's Guide to the Koran. Robert Spencer
- Acts of Faith, The Story of An American Muslim. Eboo Patel
- The Angel and the Beehive: The Mormon Struggle with Assimilation, A. L. Mauss
- Mormon America, The Power and the Promise. R. N. Ostling and J. K. Ostling
- Secret Ceremonies, Deborah Laake (Mormon experience with ostracism)
- The Crucible, Arthur Miller (Salem Witch Trials)
- Tomorrow's God: Our Greatest Spiritual Challenge. Neal D. Walsch
- The Portable Atheist, Christopher Hitchens
- God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything, Christopher Hitchens
- Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know, Steven Prothero
- In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror, Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg (Terror Management Theory)
- Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence, M. Juergensmeyer
- The Razor's Edge, Sumerset Maugham (Existentialist novel)
- Siddhartha, Herman Hesse (novel based on life of Siddhartha)
- Beyond the Chains of Illusion, Eric Fromm (critique of religion)
- The Power of Now. Eckhart Tolle (New spirituality applied to modern world)
- Long Way Gone, Memoirs of a Boy Soldier, Ishmael Beah (Telling story of boys forced into violent soldiering)
- The Art of War, Sun Tzu (Taoist text) (classic eastern philosophy applied to everyday life)
- God's Battalions, The Case for the Crusades, Rodney Stark
- Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved. Frans De Wall
- The World As I See It. Albert Einstein
- Conversations with God. Neal Walsch
- Road to Mecca, Muhammad Asad (classic)
- Screwtape Letters, C.S. Lewis (Christian apologist book)

- How to Win a Cosmic War, God, Globalization and the End of the War on Terror, Reza Aslan. (Religion and Terrorism)
- The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of The Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess. Starhawk (modern spirituality and shamanism)
- The Way of the Peaceful Warrior. Dan Millman ((Buddhist application)
- The Qur'an. Bruce Lawrence
- The Purpose Driven Life. Rick Warren
- Seven Theories of Religion. Daniel L. Pals
- The Moral Landscape: Sam Harris
- American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon, Stephen Prothero
- The Glorious Qu'ran, Marmaduke William Pickthall
- Upanishads (Hindu philosophical meditations)
- Rig-Veda (Hindu hymns to Pantheon of gods)
- Quran (Koran)
- Old or New Testament, Bible
- Torah (First five books of the Bible)
- The Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith
- Wu Ching, (Confucianism, five classic works)
- Sutra Pitka (Discourse of the Buddha)
- Tao Te Ching, Lao Tse (Taoism)
- The Art of Loving, Erich Fromm (classic on living moral and meaningful life)
- The Art of Being, Erich Fromm (classic on living a moral and meaningful life)
- Escape From Freedom, Erich Fromm (Critique of modernity and capitalism)
- The Happiness Hypothesis, Jonathan Haidt, (Social Psychological Research on happiness)
- The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Become Evil. Philip C. Zimbardo (Role playing and cruel behavior, authority)
- American Fascists: The Christian Right and The War on America, Chris Hedges
- Why I Am Not an Atheist: Christopher Hedges
- Siddartha, Herman Hesse
- The Stranger, Albert Camus (Existentialism)
- The New New Testament: A Bible for 21st Century Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts: Hal Tausig
- Fiver and the Psychology of Rabbits, Dr. Frank J. Page, (novel, exploring modernity, morality and meaning)

VIII. Suggested Videos (full length movies) (documentaries)

- Moloki, The Story of Father Damien, (Christianity in practice with lepers)
- The Ten Commandments, Charlton Heston (conventional view of Old Testament)
- For The Bible Tells Me So. (Critical documentary about gays religious experience.)
- A Light in the Jungle, (classic on Albert Schweitzer, a true liberation theologian and practitioner)
- The Rapture, (fictional drama about evangelical beliefs regarding end times)
- Everyman for Himself, and God Against All, (socialization without God)

- When Nietzsche Wept, (Excellent drama/bio on Nietzsche & Freud) Armand Assante, Ben Cross)
- Religulous, Bill Maher (atheist criticism of religion)
- Elmer Gantry, Burt Lancaster (fundamentalist hegemony)
- The Black Robe, (religious / cultural imperialism)
- Gulliver's Travels, Jonathan Swift (social criticism of religion and government)
- Galileo's Daughter, (Knowledge and the conflict between religion and science)
- What the BliB Do I Know? (human nature, epistemology, spirituality)
- Jesus Camp, (documentary on aggressive evangelicals)
- 8:The Mormon Proposition. (Mormon politics)
- Mind Walk, (existential and religious views on modernity)
- The Razor's Edge, (classic on existentialism) Bill Murray
- The Mission, (religion and colonial exploitation), Robert De Niro
- Jonestown, The Life and Death of the Peoples Temple, (Documentary on mass suicide)
- The Last Temptation of Christ, (Radical dramatization of the crucifixion of Christ)
- The Mormons PBS
- God in America. PBS
- Friendly Persuasion, Gary Cooper (Classic on Colonial American, Puritans, a study in syncretism)
- The Crucible, Arthur Miller (Salem Witch Trials)
- September Dawn, John Voight (Mountain Meadow Massacre)
- Inherit the Wind, George C. Scott, (Scopes Trial)
- Resurrection, Ellen Burstein (Gift of Healing, Faith in modern world)
- A Serious Man. Cohen Brothers (anomie and religious culture)
- Lust for Life, Kirk Douglas (Biography of Vincent Van Gogh)
- Sons of Perdition, (ex Mormon Polygamists)
- The Examined Life. (Morality, Existentialism, Modernity)
- Martin Luther (Stacy Keach) bio-drama
- The Four Horsemen: Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, Dnaiel C. Dennett, Sam Harris, (atheist dialogue)
- The Scarlet Letter. Colonial Puritan America
- Sex in a Cold Climate (Documentary on Cruel Catholic Work Houses run by Nuns in Ireland)
- The Magdalene Sisters (Movie based on documentary about cruel catholic work houses run by Nuns. in Ireland)
- The Bible, In the Beginning, George C. Scott, (Old Testament, Hollywood style)
- Missionaries of Hate, (Evangelical persecution of Gays in Uganda) (documentary)
- Peaceful Warrior. (drama, fiction, Buddhism applied in modern America)
- Rabbit Proof Fence. (Religion and modernity)
- Breaking the Wave (religion, guilt, crisis of modernity)
- Fierce Light: When Spirit Meets Action
- Fill the Void. (love and marriage in a conservative Jewish community)
- Mandela: The Long Walk to Freedom, (Bio on Nelson Mandela)
- King: From Montgomery to Memphis
- Pink Smoke Over the Vatican. (Religion and Sexism)
- Burying the Past: Legacy of the Mountain Meadow Massacre.

- Fierce Light: When Spirit Meets Action
- A History of God. Karen Armstrong (History Channel)
- Constantine's Sword (Religious Prejudice)
- I Am, (Solutions to Modern Problems)
- Malcom X
- Fiddler on the Roof. (Jewish life)
- With One Voice (modern spirituality vs organized religion)