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**PHIL/SOC 305: Religion**  
**MWF 11:00 H 202**  
**Spring, 1999**

**Dr. Jim Christiana, SM**  
**735-4880**

**Course Description:**

This course will look at religion from the perspectives of the social sciences and philosophy. We will explore the nature of religion; the Sacred; peak (mystical) experiences; the utilization of various substances and practices (from psychedelic drugs to incense; from singing to sex) in religion; the relationship between faith and reason; religion and politics, morality, and social structure. We will also discuss some of the seminal issues in the philosophy of religion: the problem of evil; death and immortality; paths to salvation; and the existence of God. This course will draw heavily on the rich anthropological materials on comparative religions.

**Required Text:**

Karen Armstrong, *Visions of God: Four Medieval Mystics*  
--Most of the readings for this course will be placed on library reserve

**Organization of the Course and Requirements:**

This course will attempt to integrate lectures and small group discussions. Your final grade will be determined as follows:

- exams of various formats 60%
- brief writing assignments/group presentations 40%

**Please Note:** It is expected that students be present on the days of exams and when assignments/presentations are due. Students are never automatically entitled to makeup exams or extensions. It is always up to the discretion of the instructor to determine if and when makeups or extensions are given, and under what circumstances and penalties. Students who accumulate more than three (unexcused) absences will have their final grade reduced significantly. As in all my courses I encourage students to meet with me throughout the semester.

# TENTATIVE COURSE SYLLABUS

## WEEKS

## (TENTATIVE) TOPICS

I---IV

The Foundational Texts and Issues in the  
Philosophy/Sociology of Religion:  
--Plato on creation; necessity; perfection;  
fate; and responsibility  
--Tylor, Frazer, Durkheim, Eliade, and Turner:  
animism; magic; ritual; the Sacred; and  
morality.  
Introduction to the study of comparative  
religion  
--Marx and Freud: religion as alienation from  
a healthy personality and society  
--Maslow; Bellah and Geertz: religion; culture;  
and the construct of self and meaning

V---IX

The Nature of Religious Experience; Mysticism;  
Shamanism; Sexuality; and Revelations  
Faith and Reason: Beyond the Rational  
Evil and the Reality of God  
Death, Immortality, and Finality

X---XIV

Modernization and Fundamentalism  
The nature of Religion in the US  
Revitalization Movements  
Sociological Models of Religion  
Conversion to religion and cults  
Secularization and the (post) modern  
world

XV--end

Religion and the Meaning of Life?