



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Sociology of Religions

2627-3-E4001N111

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#### Learning objectives

The course introduces students to the main theoretical approaches and analytical tools of the sociology of religion, providing an overview of both classical and contemporary perspectives. By the end of the course, students will be able to critically analyze religious phenomena and understand their cultural, social, and political implications in contemporary societies.

The course aims to achieve the following learning outcomes:

#### Knowledge and understanding

Students will acquire a solid knowledge of the main concepts, theoretical approaches, and analytical tools of the sociology of religion, developing an understanding of the processes that shape religious phenomena in contemporary societies.

#### Applying knowledge and understanding

Students will be able to apply the concepts and theories acquired during the course to the analysis of contemporary religious phenomena, interpreting the dynamics of secularization, new forms of spirituality, the changing configurations of the sacred, the relationship between religion and politics, and the role of religion in everyday life.

#### Making judgements

Through individual and group assignments, as well as the discussion of case studies, students will develop the ability to formulate independent and critical assessments of religious phenomena and their transformations in contemporary societies.

#### Communication skills

The course promotes the development of communication skills through individual and group presentations, enabling students to present, discuss, and critically evaluate theoretical perspectives and empirical research findings.

#### Learning skills

By engaging with a plurality of theoretical approaches and the analysis of empirical research, students will develop the capacity for independent learning and will be able to pursue further study in the sociology of religion autonomously beyond the completion of the course.

## **Contents**

The course is organized into two main sections. The first section examines the principal theoretical approaches in the sociology of religion, from the classical traditions to the most recent developments in the field. The second section explores the transformations of religion in contemporary societies, with particular attention to new configurations of the sacred, alternative forms of spirituality, and the processes of change and adaptation affecting religious institutions and practices in the context of secularization and globalization.

## **Detailed program**

Part one: theoretical questions

Religion as ideology (Marx and the Marxist tradition)

The disenchantment of the world (the Weberian approach)

Religion, the sacred and society (Durkheim and the Durkheimian tradition)

Religiosity and religious forms (Simmel's approach)

The invisible religion and the heretical imperative (Luckmann, Berger and the phenomenological approach)

Religious marketplace and the theory of religious economy.

Part two: transformations of contemporary religious phenomena (case studies and researches)

Secularization and religious pluralism

Religions and public sphere

Forms of religious individualism

Fundamentalisms and alternative spiritualities

Mediatization of religion

## **Prerequisites**

There are no prerequisites for the course.

## **Teaching methods**

The course consists of 56 hours of instruction, organized approximately as follows:

70% lecture-based teaching, including lectures supported by slides and multimedia materials (16 two-hour sessions delivered in person and 5 two-hour sessions delivered online).

30% interactive teaching, including practical exercises, individual assignments, and small-group presentations.

The language of instruction is Italian.

## **Assessment methods**

The exam consists of a written test lasting 90 minutes, during which students must answer three open-ended questions based on the suggested course materials. Each answer will be graded on a scale from 0 to 11. The final grade will be the sum of the three scores. A total score below 18 will result in a failing grade; a score of 31 or higher will correspond to the highest grade of 30 cum laude. The written test will be evaluated according to the following criteria: level of knowledge of the topic, appropriate use of scientific language, clarity of expression, and argumentative ability.

Students who participate in group work during class may alternatively submit an individual critical review paper on topics and texts agreed upon with the instructor. The paper must be submitted at least five days before the exam date. Specific guidelines for writing the paper will be provided during the course. The criteria for evaluating the paper are: ability to critically analyze texts, appropriate use of scientific language, clarity of exposition, argumentative ability.

No ongoing tests are planned.

## **Textbooks and Reading Materials**

E. Pace, *Introduzione alla sociologia delle religioni*, Roma, Carocci, 2015 (escluso capitolo 5)

J. Casanova, *Oltre la secolarizzazione. Le religioni alla riconquista della sfera pubblica*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2000.

U. Beck, *Il Dio personale*, Roma, Laterza, 2009

R. Marchisio, *La religione nella società degli individui*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2010

F. Garelli, *Gente di poca fede. Il sentimento religioso nell'Italia incerta di Dio*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2020.

Further bibliographical information will be provided during the course.

## **Sustainable Development Goals**

QUALITY EDUCATION | REDUCED INEQUALITIES | PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

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