# Sociology of Religions

## Prof. Rita Bichi

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The objectives of the Sociology of Religion course are as follows:

1. for students to learn the basic concepts and specialist terminology specific to the sociological study of religion;
2. for students to recognise and express the multidimensional nature of the religious phenomenon, of its anthropological premises and its relationship with society, with a particular emphasis on contemporary society;
3. for students to explore, from a historical perspective, the thought of the major sociologists of religion and the main paradigms.

*Knowledge and understanding*

By the end of the course, students will:

1. be able to use the key categories and concepts of the sociology of religion;
2. recognise the essential differences between the various sociological paradigms relating to the study of religious people;
3. be able to link the key authors to the paradigms and academic traditions to which they belong;
4. be able to identify the various dimensions of the religious experience, comparing the various forms it takes in the various religious faiths.

*Ability to apply knowledge and understanding*

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. recognise the multiple forms in which religious phenomena appear in contemporary society;
2. formulate questions and research hypotheses regarding the religious phenomena of contemporary society;
3. select the most appropriate tools and methodological techniques for a given research object.

***COURSE CONTENT***

The course aims to analyse the social dimension of the religious phenomenon in its many forms: from the collective and institutionally founded one, typical of the great ‘institutional religions’, up to the private one, which is expressed as a path of interior and personal research and defined as ‘contemporary spirituality’ by social studies. The path of this journey within oneself can lead subjects to intertwine their personal ‘creed’ with the symbols and contexts of the more traditional religions, for their own interpretation or with an ‘innovative’ perspective from the new religious movements, the sects and cults born in the West from the mid of the twentieth century and ‘often placed’ outside the institutional religions.

The course will introduce students to the key thinkers in the field of the sociology of religion, reconstructing the main developments in sociological thought on the subject of religion, exploring the fundamental dimensions of religiosity and dealing with the experience and forms of religious belief in the contemporary world, also with reference to ‘new offers’ of the ‘religious market’. In particular, it will explore the following aspects:

- Sociology and the religious phenomenon: concepts of religion, religiosity, spirituality and the sacred.

- Social research on religiosity.

- Religion and society according to the classic authors.

- Secularisation, de-secularisation and the public role of religion.

- New religious movements.

- Religion and globalisation.

– The forms of contemporary spirituality.

***READING LIST***

Students may choose between two syllabus options, A and B, for the exam. The first (A) is for attending students; the second (B) is for students who are unable to attend.

*Students taking option A* must prepare the following material:

* E. Pace, *Introduzione alla sociologia delle religioni*, Carocci, Roma, 2022;

– S. Tomelleri-M. Doni (ed.), *Sociologie del sacro. Emozioni, credenze, miti e liturgie nelle scienze umane*, Morcelliana, Brescia, 2009.

One text chosen from:

– R. Bichi-P. Bignardi, *Dio a modo mio. Giovani e fede in Italia*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2015 [Introduction and chapters 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 13].

– R.Bichi-F. Introini-C. Pasqualini (ed.), *Di generazione in generazione. La trasmissione della fede nelle famiglie con background migratorio*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2018 [chaps. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5].

– P. Bignardi-F. Introini-C. Pasqualini (edited by), *Oasi di fraternità. Nuove esperienze di vita comune giovanile*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2021 [Introduction, First Part and Second Part].

– P. Bignardi-D.Simeone (edited by), *(D)io allo specchio. Giovani e ricerca spirituale*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2022 [part I and part II]

– B. Nicoli, *Ai confini tra scienza e religione. Genetica e neuroscienze di fronte alle questioni ultime*, Mimesis, Milano 2021 [chapters I, II, III, V, VIII, XII]

*Students taking option B* must prepare the following:

* E. Pace, *Introduzione alla sociologia delle religioni*, Carocci, Roma, 2022;

– S. Tomelleri-M. Doni (ed.), *Sociologie del sacro. Emozioni, credenze, miti e liturgie nelle scienze umane*, Morcelliana, Brescia, 2009.

– P. Bignardi-D.Simeone (edited by), *(D)io allo specchio. Giovani e ricerca spirituale*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2022 [part I chapter 1 and part 2 whole].

Two texts chosen from the followin three:

* R. Bichi-F. Introini-C. Pasqualini (ed.), *Di generazione im generazione. La trasmissione della fede nelle famiglie con background migratorio*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2018 [Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 5] .

– R. Bichi-P. Bignardi (ed.), *Dio a modo mio. Giovani e fede in Italia*, Vita e Pensiero, Milan, 2015 [Introduction and chapters 1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 13].

– P. Bignardi-F. Introini-C. Pasqualini (ed.), *Oasi di fraternità. Nuove esperienze di vita comune giovanile*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano, 2021[Introduction, First Part and Second Part].

– B. Nicoli, *Al confine tra scienza e religione. Genetica e neuroscienze di fronte alle questioni ultime*, Mimesi, Milano 2022.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Classroom lectures (50%), seminars (40%), active learning (10%).

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

*Students following Syllabus A*

The final mark will be the weighted average of the marks awarded for the oral exam (60%) and for the seminar component of the course (40%). For the seminar, students will prepare and deliver a class presentation (using PowerPoint) on a theme or author from the field of the sociology of religion (from the Doni-Tomelleri volume). Students will be assessed on their PowerPoint presentation (20%), their understanding and knowledge of the chosen topic/author (50%) and their communication and presentation skills (30%). During the oral exam students will be assessed on how thoroughly they studied the material, on their understanding of its content (70%), and on their use of language and ability to make effective, well-supported arguments (30%). The achievement of the intended learning outcomes will be continually assessed throughout the course by means of one or more of the following active-learning tools: comprehension quizzes, think-pair-share activities, brainstorming, concept maps and free writing.

*Students following Syllabus B*

Students will be assessed by means of an oral exam in which students will be assessed on how thoroughly they have studied and understood the content (60%) and their use of language and ability to make effective, well-structured arguments (40%).

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course is also available on Blackboard Platform; students are requested to constantly control the platform. Blackboard Platform is either a communication tool between students and lecture or the archive of additional reading material completing the programme stated in this document.

The course covers the main aspects of sociology from the perspective of the study of religion as a phenomenon. There are no prerequisites or particular notices regarding the course.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.