**UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**SOCIOLOGY 441 X01 (Fall, 2017)  
SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS SECTS**

**INSTRUCTOR**: Dr. Stephen A. Kent

**TELEPHONE**: 492-2204 (Please leave name and phone number if I am out.)

**Email:** [steve.kent@ualberta.ca](mailto:steve.kent@ualberta.ca)  **Website:** [http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~skent/](http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/%7Eskent/)

**PLEASE NOTE:** If a situation arises that will affect your performance in the course, then I expect to be informed immediately. Either speak with me directly or send an email or phone message with instructions as to how I can contact you. I will allow only approved absences from exams, according to a strict interpretation of University rules.

**Prerequisite:**Sociology 376, or consent of instructor

**Required READINGS:**

A list of readings for the course appears below. All of them are available for free, either through the Library article search system or the Internet. You also must obtain the following writing guides or manuals:

Required Books:

William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White, The Elements of Style. (any edition). New York: Macmillian, 1979 (or more recent).

Gibaldi, Joseph. 2003. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. New York: The Modern Language Association. [Note: You can substitute this manual of style with another one from a previous course, BUT you must have one that contains information about proper citation style FOR SOCIOLOGY.]

**Course Purpose and Objectives:**

I have designed the lectures and readings to provide an overview of the prominent theoretical issues in the sociology of religious sects, supplemented by historical and contemporary examples from a variety of cultural contexts. I emphasize Canadian issues whenever possible.

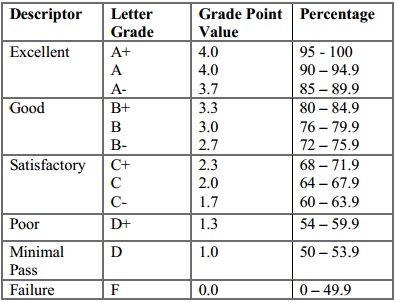
**Evaluation:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| First exam | 33.3% | October 12, 2017 | (Readings for the first half of the course) |
| Second exam | 33.3% | Regularly scheduled exam date between December 11-22, 2017 | (Readings for the second half of the course) |
| Term paper | 33.3% | December 7, 2017 | On a topic around sects/cult/new religions, of your choosing and my approval |

**Please Note:** Bring a pencil and your ONEcard to each exam. Each of the two exams likely will involve analysing one or more newspaper articles based upon the assigned readings for that half of the course. The exams will cover only the assigned chapters and accompanying lectures.

**Grading:**

Each exam will count 33 1/3%, which means that I do not give supplemental tests. I will tabulate and record the grades for each exam, add them together with the term paper grade, and then translate them into the University’s 4-point grading according to the following scheme:



Grading: The two exams will be based on a combination of readings, documentaries, and class lectures. Each one will count 33 1/3%, as will the term paper. The paper will involve extensive library research on a religious group or topic of your choice, subject to my approval. It will be at least 15 pages of text in length, and my standards for research and writing are high but reasonable. You are to type me a note that contains your proposed research topic, along with a tentative line of argument that you plan to pursue. If I approve of your topic and idea, then I will return the note to you, signed and with comments. You must assume responsibility, however, for ensuring that sufficient library material exists for you to complete your paper successfully. Each person must meet with me and show me your major sources, your manual of style, several pages of text, and several bibliography entries.

On Thursday, November 23rd, each person will bring to class at least 5 typed pages of his or her term paper and exchange it with another student, who will offer helpful comments about writing, style, coherence of argument, etc. Feedback about style, grammar, etc., will depend heavily on advice found in *The Elements of Style*, as will my own assessment of the final product. Students who do not show up at this class with at least five typed pages for peer review will be penalized one grade decrement (for example, from a “B” to a “B-”) on the term paper. I will provide examples of typical writing problems that will help facilitate the peer feedback process. I also will provide a style-and grammar checksheet for each student to use to review his or her term paper before signing it and turning it in. I WILL NOT MARK YOUR PAPER UNTIL I HAVE THE SIGNED CHECKSHEET.

I will read the exam answers and term papers, assign letter grades to them, and then translate the grades into the multi-layered four-point scale for the final grade (see above). For the exam questions, primarily I am looking for facts that help analyse the questions that I ask. I give a point for each factual statement, a point for every time you use a particular source among the readings or the documentaries, and sometimes I give a few extra points for answers that are especially well-organized and clearly presented. I count the number of points in each answer, compare them to other answers, determine what the class average is for the number of points, and then make the grade determinants. I try to ensure that students who identify at least the key elements to the questions receive an acceptable grade.

The term papers receive their grades according to: organization (clear introductions, factual presentations that link theories with facts, and conclusions), the range and quality of sources, writing quality (as we will discuss in class), and any unique or important dimensions to the overall argument.

The professor reserves the right to lower the cut-off points but not to raise them.

**Academic integrity:**

Please review the amendments to the Code of Student Behaviour, especially Section 30.3.2(2). In a phrase, if I catch you cheating, then I’m coming down on you like a ton of bricks (and I have done it before). You likely will wind up in a hearing before a Dean. Believe me, it isn’t worth it.

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.governance.ualberta.ca) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.” Visit the Student Conduct and Accountability website to learn more about academic integrity at <http://www.osja.ualberta.ca/en.aspx> .

**MISSED EXAMS:**

Strict university rules require that I follow a rigid procedure for students seeking approval for missed exams. Here is information about the policy:

***Absence from Exams (See*** [***Attendance***](http://calendar.ualberta.ca/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=806#Attendance) ***in the University Calendar)***

*Excused absence for a missed exam is not automatic and is granted at the discretion of the instructor (in the case of term exams) or the student’s Faculty (in the case of final exams).*

*Instructors and Faculties are not required to grant excused absences for unacceptable reasons that include, but are not limited to personal events such as vacations, weddings, or travel arrangements.* ***When a student is absent from a term or final exam without acceptable excuse, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of zero for the exam missed****. Any student who applies for or obtains an excused absence by making false statements will be liable under the Code of Student Behaviour.*

**To apply for an excused absence from MID-TERM EXAMS,** a student first must notify me by e-mail **within two working days** of the missed exam. Second, a student must provide me with supporting documentation pertaining to the absence. ALL STUDENTS WILL WRITE ALL EXAMS, and no procedures exist for replacing an exam with another kind of work. Make-up exams for the two tests will occur at times that are negotiated between the professor and the students.

For **medical illnesses**, students can present one of the following:

* **“**[**University of Alberta Medical Statement**](http://www.registrarsoffice.ualberta.ca/en/Online-Services/~/media/registrar/Forms/2010_Medical_Statement.pdf)**”** signed by a doctor *(this cannot be required, but will be accepted if provided in lieu of other documents)*
* **"**[**Medical Declaration Form for Students**](http://www.foa.ualberta.ca/Undergraduate_Programs/Student_Services/Forms%20Cabinet.aspx)"*(for Faculty of Arts students)*
* **"Statutory Declaration"** (*for students in Faculties other than Arts, to be obtained from home Faculty or the Office of the Registrar)*

For **other acceptable absences**, such as domestic afflictions or religious convictions, the student should submit appropriate documentation to the situation. This could include the following:   
For a death in the family – a copy of the death certificate

* For a religious conflict – a letter (on letterhead) from a priest, rabbi, imam, pastor, or other recognized religious congregational leader
* For a car accident – a copy of the accident report
* For other serious afflictions – consult with Instructor or Department about appropriate documents

**If you are unable to write the FINAL EXAM,** you must formally apply to *your* Faculty office within two working days following the missed final exam in order to be considered for a deferred final examination (or as soon as you are able in regard to the circumstance underlying the absence).  The decision to grant a deferred final exam is not the instructor’s. *Only the student's home Faculty can grant a deferred final exam.* Deferred examinations are intended to accommodate students who have experienced an incapacitating illness or severe domestic affliction; applications based on minor or inconsequential ailments will not be approved. A deferred exam will not be approved if a student (i) has not been in regular attendance where attendance and/or participation are required, and/or, (ii) excluding the final exam, has completed less than half of the assigned work.

Late term papers will be docked a mark (e.g., A to A-; then A- to B+, etc.) for each two-day period that it is late.

**Any student who is granted a deferred final exam will write the make-up on Saturday, January 13, 2018 at 9:00AM in BUS 1-10**

**A few further notes:**

**1. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Students who require accommodation in this course due to a disability are advised to discuss their needs with Student Accessibility Services and see the U of A’s policy for students with disabilities: <http://www.ssds.ualberta.ca/Students.aspx>

E-mail: [sasrec@ualberta.ca](mailto:sasrec@ualberta.ca)    
Telephone:  780 492 3381

2. “Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s).”

3. Policy about course outlines can be found in [Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading](http://calendar.ualberta.ca/content.php?catoid=6&navoid=806" \l "course-requirements,-evaluation-procedures-and-grading) of the University Calendar.

SAMPLE EXAM QUESTION:

1. I have provided you with a newspaper article that discusses a debate about a group variously called a sect, a cult, or a new religion. In your essay, identify various aspects of this group that contribute to controversies about it, and use theories and concepts from the course (our readings, class discussions, and documentaries) to shed academic light on various issues. Every time you use a new source, you get a point for doing so, as you also do for each new fact. I am looking for facts and details, and am not particularly worried about the overall construction of your essays (as I will be for the term papers).

READINGS FOR THE 1st EXAM:

I. RESEARCH DIFFICULTIES

1. Ayella, Marybeth. 1990. "'They Must Be Crazy:' Some of the Difficulties in Researching 'Cults.'" *American Behavioral Scientist* 33 No. 5 (May): 562-577.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/194919909/34F8785FBC5B469BPQ/9?accountid=14474>

2. Kent, Stephen A. 1990. "Deviance Strategies and Normative Designations Within the Canadian 'Cult/New Religions' Debate," *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 15 no.4: 393-416.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://www.jstor.org/stable/3341128?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

II. THEORETICAL APPROACHES

A. Biopsychosocial

3. Kent, Stephen A. 2004. “Scientific Evaluation of the Dangers Posed by Religious Groups: A Partial Model.” *Cultic Studies Review* 3 No. 2: 101-134.

<https://skent.ualberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/biopsychosocial-and-violence.pdf>

4. Lys, Candice. 2005. “The Violence of Jim Jones: A Biopsychosocial Explanation.” *Cultic Studies Review* 4 No. 3: 267-294.

<http://www.icsahome.com/articles/the-violence-of-jim-jones-a-biopsychosocial-explanation>

5. Lane, Jodi; and Stephen A. Kent. 2008. “Malignant Narcissism. L. Ron Hubbard, and Scientology’s Policies of Narcissistic Rage.” English Original of “Politiques de Rage et Narcissisme Malin.” *Criminologie* 41 No. 2: 117-155;

<file:///C:/Users/skent/Downloads/Lane-Kent_HubbardsNarcissism_EN_December08-2008.pdf>

6. Raine, Susan. 2005.“[Reconceptualising the Human Body: Heaven's Gate and the Quest for Divine Transformation](http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&site=eds-live&scope=site&db=rfh&AN=ATLA0001567392" \t "_blank).” *Religion*, 35 no. 2 (April): 98-117.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048721X0500028X>

7. Kent, Stephen A. “Narcissistic Fraud in the Ancient World: Lucian’s Account of Alexander of Abonuteichos and the Cult of Glycon.” *Ancient Narrative* 6 (2007): 77-99, 161; reprinted in *Cultic Studies Review* 7 No. 3 (2008): 225-253.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=36488624>

B. Family Deviance Model

8. Cartwright, Robert H. and Stephen A. Kent. 1992. "Social Control in Alternative Religions: A Familial Perspective." *Sociological Analysis*. (Winter): 345-361.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://www.jstor.org/stable/3711432?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

C. Social Psychology Model

9. Kent, Stephen A. “Misattribution and Social Control in the Children of God.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 33/1 (Spring 1994): 29-43.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/BF02354497>

IV. SOCIAL-ORGANIZATIONAL, SOCIAL STRUCTURAL, AND SOCIO-RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES (for 2nd exam):

10. Hall, Deana. 1998. “Managing to Recruit: Religious Conversion in the Workplace.” *Sociology of Religion* 59 No. 4: 393-410.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://www.jstor.org/stable/3712124?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

11. Raine, Susan. 2009. “Surveillance in New Religious Movements: Scientology as a Case Study.” *Religious Studies and Theology* 28/1: 63-94.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/RST/article/view/7007/4732>

12. Kent, Stephen A.; and Robin Willey. 2013. “Sects, Cults, and the Attack on Jurisprudence,” *Rutgers Journal of Law and Religion*: 306-360; <http://lawandreligion.com/sites/law-religion/files/Sects-Cults-Kent-Willey.pdf>

13. Kent, Stephen A. 2012. [“Religious Justifications for Child Sexual Abuse in Cults and New Religions.” *International Journal of Cultic Studies* 3: 49-73.](https://skent.ualberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Cults-Religious-Justifications-for-Child-Sexual-Abuse.pdf)

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=sih&AN=85225163>

14. Kent, Stephen A. 2006. “A Matter of Principle: Fundamentalist Mormon Polygamy, Children, and Human Rights Debates.” *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 10 Issue 1: 7-29.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/nr.2006.10.1.7?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

15. Kent, Stephen A. 2003. ["Spiritual Kinship and New Religions." *Religious Studies and Theology*22 No.1: 85-100.](https://skent.ualberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Spiritual-Kinship.pdf)

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/194782746/2BC1038676C84866PQ/7?accountid=14474>

16. Acosta, Benjamin T. “The Suicide Bomber as Sunni-Shi’i Hybrid.” *Middle Eastern Quarterly* 17 3 (2010): 13-20.

<http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=poh&AN=53164801>