Religious Studies 395 Alternative Religious Movements

MW 3:30-4:45 p.m. * 3 credits * Storm Hall 136
Dr. Moore, 4226 Adams Humanities, 619-594-6252
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Office Hours
MW 10 a.m.-12 noon, and Tu 2-3:45 except for Feb 7, Mar 7, April 11, and May 9 in 4226 AH, and by appointment. Please knock if you see the door closed. Despite appearances, I may be inside. If you need accommodation due to a disability, please let me know.

Course Description
Because the term "cult" bears negative connotations, sociologists of religion call a variety of non-traditional religious groups new religious movements (NRM for short), new religions, alternative religions, and so on. Because many of these religious groups are not new to their native lands, it is preferable to call these groups "Alternative Religious Movements." They are alternatives to traditional, mainline or mainstream religious views held by the majority of people in the United States. They may be innovative religions; they may demand a deep commitment from those who participate in them; they may cater primarily to immigrant populations. Course topics include: the attraction of ARMs; the issue of choice vs. brainwashing in the commitment of members; sociological elements alternative religions share in common; dynamics of charismatic leadership; gender roles; the contributions of secularization and post-modernism to their popularity; and relations with media, government, and the anti-cult movement, including the conflict between freedom of religion and the protection of society. Course methods include lectures, discussions, guest speakers, videos, and field research.

Course Goals
What I would like you to learn...
- the diversity of religious thought and practice outside mainstream religions as it exists globally and in the U.S.
- specific facts about a number of important groups in U.S. society and abroad

What I would like you to learn how to do...
- identify key issues and concepts in understanding ARMs, such as autonomy, brainwashing, agency, freedom of religion, etc.
- improve our ability to think critically, write coherently, speak articulately, and work cooperatively.

Required Texts
Lorne L. Dawson, ed. Cults and New Religious Movements
James R. Lewis and Jesper Aagaard Petersen, eds., Controversial New Religions
Additional readings TBA on the Internet, including:
http://religiousmovements.org
http://religiousstolerance.org

I encourage you to buy these texts USED online if possible.
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| 8 March   | **Asian and Asian-Inspired Groups**: Soka-Gakkai and Falun Gong  
             Lewis/Petersen: ch. 7, 9 (note we are not reading chapters in order!);  
             and articles on Falun Gong online through Blackboard. |
| 13-17 March | **Spring Break - No Class!**                                          |
| 20 March  | **Asian and Asian-Inspired Groups**: Aum Shinrikyo, Aumist Religion  
             Lewis/Petersen: ch. 8, 10 (note we are not reading chapters in order!)
| 22 March  | **Esoteric and New Age Groups**: Scientology  
             Lewis/Petersen: ch. 11; and articles online TBA |
| 27 March  | **Esoteric and New Age Groups**: Theosophy, Solar Temple  
             Lewis/Petersen: ch. 12 and 13; and articles on Blackboard TBA |
| 29 March  | **Esoteric and New Age Groups**: Ramtha, Spiritual Inner Awareness  
             Lewis/Petersen: ch. 14, 15; and articles on Blackboard TBA |
| 3 April   | **Test # 2 on Lewis/Petersen, chs. 1-15, Internet Sources**          |
| 5 April   | **Other Groups**: Outer Space  
             Lewis/Petersen: ch. 16, 17; [Heaven's Gate website](#) |
| 10 April  | **Other Groups**: Neopaganism and Wicca  
             Articles on Blackboard TBA |
| 12 April  | **Other Groups**: Christian Identity  
             Lewis/Petersen: ch. 18; white supremacist websites TBA |
| 17 April  | **Other Groups**: Nation of Islam  
             Readings on Blackboard TBA |
| 19 April  | **Other Groups**: Satan and Satanism  
             Lewis/Petersen: ch. 19; websites TBA |
| 24 April  | **Reading Assignments from Classmates; Class Presentations**         |
| 26 April  | **Reading Assignments from Classmates; Class Presentations**         |
| 1 May     | **Reading Assignments from Classmates; Class Presentations**         |
| 3 May     | **Reading Assignments from Classmates; Class Presentations**         |
| 8 May     | **Reading Assignments from Classmates; Class Presentations**         |
| 10 May    | **Reading Assignments from Classmates; Class Presentations**         
             **Due: Final Paper** |
| 12 May    | **Test # 3 on Lewis/Petersen chs. 16-19, plus readings on Blackboard and  
             on websites. 3:30-5:30 p.m.** |