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   Asad Talal
   *This classic essay challenges Clifford Geertz’s famous definition of religion, and suggests that the concept of religion itself may be a social construct that is fundamentally shaped by Western, Christian assumptions.*

2. Contested Meanings and Definitional Boundaries: Historicizing the Sociology of Religion
   Meredith B. McGuire
   *This essay recounts some of the history of the concept of religion, and argues that sociologists should be paying greater attention to the concept of lived religion rather than focusing primarily on official religions.*

### Imagining Religion’s Future  56

3. Selections from The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion
   Peter L. Berger
   *These selections from Berger’s classic book present the secularization thesis that was dominant in the sociology of religion throughout much of the twentieth century.*

   R. Stephen Warner
   *Warner’s classic “new paradigm” essay describes a movement away from secularization theory among some sociologists of religion. Warner suggests that a “new paradigm” of religious change is growing in the field.*

5. The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview
   Peter L. Berger
   *As if in reply to Warner’s essay, Berger began in the 1990s to openly renounce his allegiance to secularization theory. This essay offers a clear explanation of his decision.*

6. The Curious Case of the Unnecessary Recantation: Berger and Secularization
   Steve Bruce
   *Not all sociologists of religion have taken on Warner’s new paradigm. Some, particularly in Europe, continue to believe that European societies are becoming permanently secular. Steve Bruce is an*
important proponent of secularization theory, and in this essay he lays out his support for the theory, countering Berger’s arguments against it.

7. Selections from “Bringing the Sacred to Life: Explaining Sacralization and Secularization”
   Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead
   Heelas and Woodhead offer another perspective on religious change in Europe, suggesting that there has been a shift from “life-as religion,” or ascribed and dogmatic religion, to “subjective-life spirituality,” or a more personalized, negotiated form of religious belief and practice.
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8. Positioning Religion in Modernity: State and Buddhism in China 125
Yoshiko Ashiwa
Ashiwa’s article traces the complicated relationship between Buddhism and the Chinese state over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.

9. Realigning Religion and Power in Central Asia: Islam, Nation-State and (Post)Socialism 146
Chris Hann and Mathijs Pelkmans.
Hann and Pelkmans’ study of Islam in several central Asian states dovetails nicely with Ashiwa’s piece, offering not only a perspective on the role of religion in two former Soviet republics but also an analysis of the relationship between Muslims in Western China and the Chinese state.

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10. Civil Religion in America 165
Robert N. Bellah
Bellah’s classic essay on civil religion sparked the interest and curiosity of many scholars of religion. Written during the U.S. war in Vietnam, this piece concludes with a consideration of the U.S. culture’s response to what Bellah calls a “third time of trial.”

11. Civil Rights-Civil Religion: Visible People and Invisible People 179
Charles H. Long
Just as many scholars of religion have found the concept of civil religion helpful in pondering the relationship between religion and the nation, so too others have leveled powerful critiques against the concept. In this essay, Charles Long asks who is actually included in the civil religion of a country built on the backs of slaves.

12. The Militant Christian Right in the United States 185
Mark Juergensmeyer
Nationalism can take many forms, and one of those forms believes in the necessity of a theocratic future for the U.S. Juergensmeyer’s study introduces the reader to some of these movements.

13. Japan’s Holy War: the Ideology of Radical Shinto Ultranationalism 194
Walter A. Skya,
Skya explores the connections between religion and nationalism in early twentieth-century Japan, up to and including the Second World War. Though he does not mention civil religion, his analysis bears a striking resemblance to Bellah’s concept, raising the possibility that civil religion can be just as dangerous as, to Bellah, it is powerful.
### Section III Religion and Social Power

**INTRODUCTORY ESSAY: RELIGION, OPPRESSION, AND RESISTANCE**

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<td>W.E.B. Du Bois</td>
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<td><em>An early sociologist with a strong interest in Black cultures in the U.S., Du Bois offers a perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of religion in resisting the powerful forces of slavery and racism.</em></td>
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<td>Lara Medina</td>
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<td><em>The Nahuatl word n Pantla refers to a middle space. Medina uses this concept to theorize the lived religions of Latinas and their ancestors, blended religions that often exist en nepantla, or in the middle, between at least two official, or established, religions.</em></td>
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<td><em>This selection from Brown’s classic study of Vodou examines the ways in which Vodou practice and beliefs affect a Haitian-American family’s dealings with the racism and xenophobia of the state.</em></td>
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<td>Saba Mahmood</td>
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<td><em>Mahmood’s excellent study of conservative Muslim women in Egypt led her to question Western feminist ideas about agency and women’s oppression. In this selection, she explores how the women with whom she worked laid claim to authority and navigated the complex networks of power within Egypt at the end of the twentieth century.</em></td>
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<td>Andrew K.T. Yip</td>
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<td><em>This article offers readers a study of how British gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals negotiate with religious traditions often deemed homophobic, in order to create space for themselves within those traditions.</em></td>
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<td>20. <em>Intersexed Bodies in Mishnah: A Translation and an Activist’s Reading of Mishnah Androgynos and An Ancient Strategy for Managing Gender Ambiguity</em></td>
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<td><em>Dzamura’s essay complements Yip’s article, in that Dzuma demonstrates some of the strategies described by Yip. Drawing from the tradition of rabbinic commentary in Judaism, Dzamura argues that the Jewish tradition has both space and resources for the inclusion of transgender people.</em></td>
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Russell Jeung
Jeung bases his article on a lengthy study conducted while he was living in sub-standard housing in the San Francisco area. A scholar-activist, Jeung played a role in assisting his largely immigrant neighbors in their successful legal battle against their landlord for better living conditions. The article focuses on the role of religion in organizing for social justice.

22. Religious Coalitions for and Against Gay Marriage: The Culture War Rages On 345
David C. Campbell and Carin Robinson
Many people in the U.S. and elsewhere believe that the only role religion plays in debates over same-sex marriage is a conservative one, seeking to maintain the status quo and working against efforts to legalize same-sex marriage. However, Campbell and Robinson demonstrate that, as with many social issues, religious groups have coalesced on all sides of the same-sex marriage debates.

Lisa Ann Smith and Lori G. Beaman
The “Trident Three” peace activists significantly damaged a submarine control center in Scotland, bringing a sizeable number of Britain’s nuclear weapons offline. Smith and Beaman discuss the roles that religion played in the activists’ motivation and in the subsequent trial.

Religions as Social Movements 374
24. When Prophecy is Not Validated: Explaining the Unexpected in a Messianic Campaign 374
William Shaffir
Shaffir’s study focuses on Hasidic Judaism – a pietistic, ultra-Orthodox movement that believed its chief rabbi to be the Messiah – and considers how the movement reacted to the rabbi’s death. In the process of considering these events, Shaffir revisits Leon Festinger’s mid-twentieth century work on the failure of prophecy.

25. The Age of Satan: Satanic Sex and the Black Mass, from Fantasy to Reality 387
Hugh B. Urban
There is perhaps no better example of the power of stereotypes than that of the new religious movement known as the Church of Satan. Besieged – sometimes to followers’ dismay, sometimes to their delight – by images of Satanists as rapists, animal torturers, and child molesters, the Church of Satan is in reality an anti-religion hedonist group that has more in common with Nietzsche than with the serial killers that fill horror movies. In this selection, Urban traces the history and development of this much-maligned group.
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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY: LOCAL AND GLOBAL: BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES

Religion, Immigration, and Transnationalism 421

26. A New Religious Architecture 421
   Peggy Levitt
   Drawn from a larger study of religion and immigration, this selection proposes a number of
   models for the interaction of religion with immigrant and transnational communities.

27. Immigrants’ Religious Participation in the United States 437
   Ilana Redstone Akresh
   One of the few quantitative studies among these readings, Akresh’s work revisits the long-standing
   question of how immigrants change their religious practices and commitments when they arrive in the
   U.S. She confirms the suggestion that others have made based on qualitative and historical data,
   that involvement in religious institutions increases upon immigration.

28. Islam as a New Urban Identity? Young Female Muslims Creating a Religious Youth
   Culture in Berlin 449
   Synnøve Bendixsen
   In this study of young Muslim women in Berlin, Bendixsen explores the phenomenon of a “return
   to Islam” and the women’s quest for a “pure” as opposed to “traditional,” form of their religion.

Religion and Violence, Local and Global 462

   Nancy Nason-Clark
   Nason-Clark, who has dedicated her career to work on religion and domestic violence, reviews in this
   article the varied and complex interactions between Christianity and domestic violence, from resources
   for working against domestic violence to teachings that encourage it.

30. The Cross-Generational Transmission of Trauma: Ritual and Emotion among
    Survivors of the Holocaust 470
    Janet Jacobs
    Jacobs’ article examines the relationship to Jewish ritual among Holocaust survivors and their
    descendants. Jacobs finds that even though the descendants did not experience the Holocaust directly,
    they are indirectly and powerfully affected by it. Those effects, in turn, fundamentally influence
    their relationship – both positive and negative – to Jewish ritual.

31. How the Millennium Comes Violently 482
   Catherine L. Wessinger
   Wessinger proposes a model for understanding the connections between millennialism – the
   belief in an end time – and violence perpetrated both by and against religious groups.

32. The Association of ‘Religion’ with Violence: Reflections on a Modern Trope 495
    Richard King
    King’s article brings the book full-circle, in that like Asad, King is suspicious of Western-centered
    explanations of religion – in this case, specifically of religion and violence – that purport to be
    universal yet rely on few examples from outside of Europe and North America.

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INVESTIGATING SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON religion can require significant research. There are classic articles to read, authors whose inclusion is a must, and alternate perspectives that can be hard to dig up if you’re not already aware of them. The books that have existed up until now offer either a summary of these perspectives or simply a collection of articles with little connecting information at all. Religion in Today’s World addresses the need for a comprehensive book that both includes key works and also places those works in the broader context of the sociology of religion. Designed as a hybrid between a textbook and a course reader, this text contains everything that an instructor or an interested general reader might need to explore the social dimensions of religion.

Social Scientific Perspectives on Religion

The social sciences, and the interdisciplinary field of religious studies, approach religion as a social phenomenon to be studied. There is no question here of the veracity of any religion; rather, the fact that someone believes certain things to be true, or holds certain practices to be effective, is in itself of interest. I often teach students to approach the study of religion using the tools suggested by early phenomenologist (and ancestor of the social sciences) Gerardus van der Leeuw (1938): epoché and verstehen. The first term, epoché, refers to a suspension of judgment. Through this lens, one approaches the religion to be studied not with questions of truth or falsehood, good or evil, but with questions about what truth is for the practitioners of that particular religion. This is where verstehen, or empathetic understanding, comes in. The social scientist of religion endeavors to comprehend the religion under study as best she can, striving as much as possible to mentally get inside the world of the religious practitioners in order to better understand the religion itself.

This is a very different approach from those that study religion in order to identify which is correct, or in order to fulfill a spiritual quest, or in order to better understand the “enemy.” Neither, however, are social scientific approaches to religion actively sympathetic to the religion under study. This is not to say that social scientists are firmly objective; I am persuaded that all of us enter our work with our own personal biases and perspectives that are impossible to eradicate. Thus, our efforts at epoché and verstehen are
always only partially successful. We can, though, be aware of our biases and our differing perspectives, and through a clear analysis of them and a balancing with others’ (equally but differently skewed) perspectives, we can come to an approximation of objectivity about a religious phenomenon.

This book represents largely the perspectives of the sociology of religion, with some voices from the anthropology of religion and from religious studies itself. Readers will also notice a focus on qualitative readings; I have chosen primarily qualitative and theoretical reading selections because I believe both to be more accessible to a range of readers than is most quantitative work. The readings included here encompass the work of early scholars and contemporary ones; the work of well-known scholars and more obscure ones; and studies of both mainstream and marginal topics in the study of religion.

Using this Book

The goal of Religion in Today’s World is to provide a comprehensive introduction to sociological perspectives, and social scientific perspectives more broadly, on the phenomenon we call religion. The book is divided into five sections, covering different areas in the study of religion and society. The first questions what religion actually is, what its past has been, and what its future will be. The second section examines interactions between religion, state, and nation. The third takes up a topic that threads through much of the social science of religion without being clearly articulated: religion and social power. The fourth section considers the intersections of religion and social movements, in terms of both religion’s role in social movements and religion itself as a social movement – here, the study of new religious movements comes into play. Finally, the fifth section considers some of the results of globalization and the resulting localization movement: immigration, transnationalism, and violence. Each section contains an introductory essay that covers key sociological concepts and findings relevant to the section’s topic; what follow are several reading selections that either demonstrate the concepts covered or push them further. Every essay also includes an “extended application” that demonstrates how the concepts covered in the chapter can be applied to recent or contemporary issues.

This text can be used in many ways. A general reader unfamiliar with the social scientific study of religion may want to begin simply by reading the introductory essays in order, and then returning to the selected readings. An instructor may wish to have students read through the entire textbook in order, or to rearrange by theme or chronology of articles. Those instructors with extensive experience in the sociology of religion may wish to assign the introductory essays as reviews or complements to class lectures, while less experienced instructors may find the essays helpful for introducing the key topics in each new section. Finally, the course reader aspect of the book’s design allows both instructors and general readers to select the readings they find most helpful, to rearrange the order of the readings, or to read the book cover to cover.

Two aspects of this text will be especially useful in classroom settings, although again they may also be of interest to the general reader. The first is the glossary, found in the
back of the book, which contains concise definitions of key terms introduced in the introductory essays. Instructors may wish to draw from this for vocabulary tests, or to refer students to it as a study aid. Second, each introductory essay concludes with exercises that can be completed for fun by a general reader, or as homework or in-class assignments for students.

Sociological perspectives on religion can open new windows onto this complex, socially and politically critical phenomenon. Discovering new perspectives on religion can be both challenging and delightful, and I wish you much enjoyment as you work through this book.