

SPECIALTY SOCIOLOGY

Master's Program in SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION

Educational qualification: MASTER

Professional qualification: MASTER IN SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION

Duration of study: 1 year

Form of study: full-time

QUALIFICATION CHARACTERISTICS

The Master's program "**Sociology and Anthropology of Religion**" for specialists is designed for graduates with a Bachelor's or Master's degree in fields within the professional area 3.1: Sociology, Anthropology, and Cultural Studies. The program is also suitable for young professionals who are focused on analyzing religious dynamics and on conducting and interpreting sociological research.

The main goal of the program is to build a sense and skills for comparative analysis, expert behavior and dialogue in the field of religions through the use of various academic methods and practices. It is planned to use various academic methods to build a sense and reflective skills for comparative analysis, expert behavior, etc. Students gain knowledge in basic disciplines such as: major world religions, qualitative methods and research of religions, demography, psychology of religion, religious denominations in Bulgaria.

Students who graduate from the master's program possess:

- a wide range of theoretical and practical knowledge, specialized in the relevant field, which builds on what has been achieved in the previous stage of training, know and understand theories, concepts, principles and patterns in the development of religions;
- possess highly specialized practical and theoretical knowledge that forms the basis for originality in the development and implementation of new ideas and solutions, demonstrate critical awareness of knowledge in the field and the connections between the various fields studied;
- a rich set of practical knowledge and approaches necessary for understanding abstract problems and developing creative solutions and diagnosing problems, based on modern research by integrating knowledge from new or interdisciplinary fields.

Students who graduate from the master's program possess the following skills:

- make adequate judgments in situations characterized by incomplete or limited information and unpredictability, develop new and diverse skills in response to emerging knowledge and practices, demonstrate the free application of innovative methods and tools distinguished by their innovativeness in solving complex tasks and unpredictable problems in the specialized field of work, and find and maintain arguments when solving problems of an interdisciplinary nature;

- show initiative in working and learning in a complex and unpredictable environment, requiring problem-solving with multiple interacting factors, possess skills to create and lead networks or teams, allocate time and manage human and financial resources, and solve complex problems through new technological methods and tools;

- quickly find, extract, arrange, synthesize and evaluate the necessary information from various sources; have the skills to solve and overcome critical problems in the field of research and/or innovation; quickly acquire new qualities and skills, and anticipate technological and creative development;

- possess skills such as entrepreneurship, demandingness, adaptability and intellectual flexibility, independence and responsibility, which are acquired during the course of training and the implementation of the tasks set in the master's program.

Professional competencies

- Masters collect, process and interpret specialized information necessary to solve complex problems in the field of study; integrate a wide range of knowledge and sources of information in a new and relatively unfamiliar context; make informed judgments and find solutions in a complex environment of diverse interactions.

- They are able to solve problems by integrating complex sources of knowledge, in conditions of insufficient available information, in a new unfamiliar environment, they are able to initiate changes and manage development processes in complex conditions, they engage with important scientific, social and moral problems arising in the process of work or training. Graduates of the Master's program can pursue careers as:

- Mediators in the interaction between religious and civil institutions and organizations.

- Sociologists – researchers, participants in projects, working with foundations and non-governmental organizations, including informal and religious organizations.

- Consultants in areas such as management, education, and social activities, within educational programs, as well as in the development of teaching materials for secondary schools.

- Experts in non-governmental organizations.

STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

First year			
First semester	ECTS credits	Second semester	ECTS credits
Major World Religions	8.5	Psychology of Religion	6
Qualitative Methods and the Study of Religions	8.5	Religious Denominations in Bulgaria	6
Demography	8.5	Elective Course	3
Elective Course	4.5	State Examination or Thesis Defense	15
	Total 30		Total 30
Electives /first semester/	ECTS credits	Electives /second semester/	ECTS credits
Students choose one discipline		Students choose one discipline	
Religion and Politics	4.5	Non-traditional religious communities	3
Methodology of Sociological Research	4.5	Religion and modernity	3
TOTAL FOR 1 ACADEMIC YEAR: 60 CREDITS			

ANNOTATIONS OF COURSES

COMPULSORY COURSES

MAJOR WORLD RELIGIONS

ECTS credits: 8.5

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mario Marinov, Department of Sociology

E-mail: mario_marinov@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 3 l + 1 s

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The lectures introduce and critically examine key categories, concepts, and principles that aid in navigating the so-called religious dilemmas of modernity. The course adopts a dynamic rather than fixed definition of the religious. It explores actual trends in the religiosity of modern society—religious pluralism, religious mobilization, secularization, civil religions, lay and secular religions. The course also presents findings from the European Social Survey (ESS) as well as from the application of qualitative research methods.

Content of the course:

The course presents key categories, concepts, and principles that assist in understanding the so-called religious dilemmas of modernity. It examines the changes and transformations in

the sphere of religion, with a focus on the precise delineation of sociologically relevant issues. The course highlights which sociological frameworks and systems are of particular importance in shaping the discipline.

Teaching and Assessment Method:

The assessment for the course “Major World Religions” is conducted at the end of the semester. It is based on students’ written responses to exam questions.

QUALITATIVE METHODS AND THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

ECTS credits: 8.5

Weekly hours: 2 l + 2 s

Assessment: exam

Type of Exam: Written

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mario Marinov, Department of Sociology

E-mail: mario_marinov@swu.bg

Annotation:

The course aims to develop in students a theoretical *understanding* of the foundations and traditions of qualitative research in the study of religions, as well as its relevance to contemporary Bulgarian society, while simultaneously combining this with practical *know-how* and hands-on experience in conducting such research. Students are introduced to the debate between proponents of quantitative and qualitative methods in the study of religions and the arguments of each side.

Qualitative research was a deliberately underdeveloped field of sociology, which is why the achievements of classical and contemporary Western authors are used to familiarize students with the heuristic potential of qualitative methods. The few examples from the pre-war traditions in Central and Eastern Europe are also traced, as well as new trends and the reasons for their revival.

Content of the course:

The course traces the main traditions in qualitative research: the Chicago School, anthropology, Max Weber, phenomenological sociology, symbolic interactionism, the "naturalistic" method, the humanistic method, and ethnomethodology. Students are introduced to specific methodologies such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, life histories, content analysis, discourse analysis, focus groups, analysis of advertisements and photographs, and the use of computers in qualitative research on religion. The course discusses the advantages and limitations of each method. It aims to develop in students a theoretical understanding of the foundations and traditions of qualitative research in the study of religions. Students apply specific methods in practice to gather empirical data that may support their future master's theses.

Teaching and assessment method:

The assessment of the course "Qualitative Methods and the Study of Religions" is formed at the end of the semester course of study by evaluating the students' answers to written questions.

DEMOGRAPHY

ECTS credits: 8.5

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Prof. DSc. Valentina Milenkova, Department of Sociology

E-mail: vmilenkova@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 l + 2 s

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The demography course includes theoretical knowledge about the main concepts and categories of the population, as well as the approaches and methods for measuring and analyzing data in socio-demographic research. It covers the methodology, practical organization, and implementation of statistical studies on phenomena and processes (natural and mechanical movement) that shape the main structures of the population and its development, the economic activity of the population (employment and unemployment), income, expenditure, and consumption structures (household budgets), and the educational and health status of the population. The main sources of statistical information are indicated, and statistical data from surveys conducted by the national statistics office are presented. The course also discusses the applications of international regulations (Eurostat, UN, ILO, etc.) and the practices in other countries in the field of demographic and social research.

Content of the course:

Through the lecture course and the acquired practical knowledge, students gain an understanding of the basic concepts and categories related to population in the field of demographic and social statistics. Key sources of information are used, various methods are applied, and fundamental indicators characterizing the size and structure of populations are calculated and analyzed. The level and intensity of the development of demographic processes are also examined.

Teaching and assessment method:

The final grade in the course "Demography" is determined at the end of the semester based on the results of a written test, continuous assessment, and a term paper developed using real statistical data.

PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION

ECTS credits: 6

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Chief Assist. Prof., PhD Dilyana Keranova, Department of Sociology

E-mail: dkeranova@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 l + 2 s

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

Religion manifests in various forms within every human society, necessitating its scholarly examination. The proposed course addresses merely one facet of this complex issue, reflecting an expression of its inherent anthropological dimension. This facet holds significant value for the study of religion; however, a comprehensive understanding can only be achieved when it is integrated with insights from all religious disciplines.

As an academic discipline, the Psychology of Religion is an empirical science that grounds its conclusions on data derived from the systematic investigation, analysis, and interpretation of

diverse established theories. This scholarly endeavor inherently addresses the foundational question: What, fundamentally, is religion?

Religion, in all its manifestations, grounded in underlying psychological processes, reveals humanity's quest for meaning in life. This exploration necessitates engagement with both ancient classical sources and Christian patristic, as well as hagiographic literature, spanning from the earliest periods to contemporary times.

Content of the course:

The course "Psychology of Religion" is aimed at clarifying the fundamental concepts, categories, and theories within the field. Through the learning process, students develop a clear understanding of the nature and specific characteristics of this unique symbiosis between religion and psychology.

Teaching and assessment method:

The final assessment for the course "Psychology of Religion" is determined at the end of the semester based on students' responses to written exam questions.

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN BULGARIA

ECTS credits: 6

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Chief Assist. Prof., PhD Vladislava Lendzhova, Department of Sociology

E-mail: vlendzhova@swu.bg

Weekly hours: 2 l + 2 s

Type of Exam: Written

Annotation:

The lecture course for this discipline emphasizes theoretical knowledge related to the traditional religious denominations in Bulgaria. It examines the transformations in the religious sphere, the de-monopolization of religious traditions, and the profound changes in systems of belief and values. Students are introduced to the pluralistic context of modern societies. Both individual and collective existence are analyzed through the lens of the modernity dilemma within so-called secularized societies. The legitimacy of this existence is not based solely on religious affiliation with the major religious systems.

Content of the course:

The course is focused on the measurement of religious attitudes. It traces the historical development of religious denominations and presents the principles governing the functioning of various denominations in relation to the family environment and the interpersonal dynamics within the community in which the individual develops.

Teaching and assessment method:

The final grade for the course is determined at the end of the semester based on the evaluation of a written term paper.

ELECTIVE COURSES

RELIGION AND POLITICS

ECTS credits: 4.5

Assessment: exam

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Weekly hours: 2 l

Type of Exam: Written

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Prof. DSc. Valentina Milenkova, Department of Sociology

E-mail: vmilenkova@swu.bg

Annotation:

The lecture course examines the changes and transformations within the religious sphere through the precise delineation of key thematic areas. It outlines sociological frameworks that hold particular significance for the construction of the discipline. The evolution of the major world religions is explored from a sociological perspective. Students are introduced to actual trends in modern society—such as religious pluralism, secularization, and religious mobilization.

By presenting data from the European Social Survey (ESS) and employing in-depth qualitative methods, the course enables sociological analysis and comparison. Students engage with recent translated literature, which contributes to the development of a nuanced perspective and sensitivity toward the subject matter, as well as with key categories, concepts, and principles that support orientation within the so-called religious dilemmas of modernity.

The course adopts a dynamic rather than a fixed definition of religiosity in contemporary societies. It traces concrete trends in modern religious life—including religious pluralism, religious mobilization, secularization, civil religions, and secular or non-theistic forms of religiosity. Empirical results from ESS and qualitative research methods are used to support this exploration.

Content of the course:

The course includes the study of fundamental categories, concepts, and principles that assist in navigating the so-called religious dilemmas of modernity. It presents the changes and transformations within the religious sphere, focusing on the precise delineation of sociologically relevant thematic areas. The course also examines which sociological frameworks hold specific significance for the conceptual construction of the discipline.

Teaching and assessment method:

The final assessment is based on a test, which serves to provide feedback on how students have understood and engaged with the presented material, as well as to evaluate their terminological competence. Students are also required to prepare a written report (paper), and class participation is taken into account as part of the overall evaluation.

METHODOLOGY OF SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH

ECTS credits: 4.5

Weekly hours: 2 l.

Assessment: exam

Type of Exam: Written

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mario Marinov, Department of Sociology

E-mail: mario_marinov@swu.bg

Annotation:

The course aims to develop skills for designing research projects and to guide students toward preparation for their professional careers. Students are placed in an interactive simulated market environment where they independently formulate individual and group projects, prepare all written components of a real research project, and defend its necessity. Full freedom is given in choosing the topics and formats of the projects.

For consultations on specific topics related to their projects, students are directed to instructors and experts in the relevant fields. Interactive scenarios include the creation of group research projects, debate and consensus-building processes, public presentations of competing projects, and expert panel sessions for project evaluation.

Content of the course:

The course is designed to develop skills in the analysis and interpretation of data from sociological research, as well as to master the conceptual frameworks necessary for their professional application.

Teaching and assessment method:

The final grade for the course is determined at the end of the semester based on the evaluation of the projects developed by the students and their written research reports.

NON-TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

ECTS credits: 3

Weekly hours: 2 l.

Assessment: exam

Type of Exam: Written

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mario Marinov, Department of Sociology

E-mail: mario_marinov@swu.bg

Annotation:

The course introduces students to the issues surrounding non-traditional spiritual communities, their main representatives, and their distribution in Bulgaria. The aim is to develop students' sociological sensitivity to the relationships between the individual and the social group: how various non-traditional religious communities, as social formations with distinct cultures, interact internally, with each other, and with the broader society.

The goal is for students to "experience" the relationship between empirical observation, data analysis, and sociological theory. It is expected that once students have adopted this perspective and "understanding" of non-traditional religious communities, they will be able to apply the same approach of observation, analysis, and theorizing to other aspects of life, while gaining a broader comprehension of religious communities and their role in contemporary society.

Examples of key representatives of new religious movements are provided, along with discussions of their social aspects, family issues within these movements, and the contradictions and conflicts related to non-traditional religious communities. Attention is given to research methods specific to their study.

The course also covers the social constructions of reality regarding new religious movements and the particular sociological viewpoint toward them.

Content of the course:

The course develops students' sociological sensitivity to the relationships between the individual and the social group. It is aimed at cultivating an understanding of the relationship between empirical observation, data analysis, and sociological theory. Students learn to apply the same approach of observation, analysis, and theorizing to other aspects of life.

Teaching and assessment method:

The final grade for the course "Non-Traditional Religious Communities" is determined at the end of the semester based on students' responses to written essay questions.

RELIGION AND MODERNITY

ECTS credits: 3

Weekly hours: 2 l

Assessment: exam

Type of Exam: Written

Methodical Guide:

Department of Sociology

Faculty of Philosophy

Lecturer: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Antoaneta Nikolova-Georgieva, Department of Philosophy and Political Science

E-mail: anikolova@swu.bg

Annotation:

The course aims to develop knowledge and skills for the sociological analysis of issues related to the role of religion, religious institutions, religious beliefs, values, rituals, and traditions in modern societies. Students are introduced to the fundamental principles, structural dependencies, and trends of the modernization process and the role of the religious factor within it.

Emphasis is placed on current issues concerning cross-cultural and interfaith relations in post-industrial and information societies, as well as the impact of globalization on the behavior of religious communities.

Content of the course:

Definition of the concept of modernity. Fundamental concepts. Unveiling the essence of rationalism as an ideal type and life strategy. The genesis and evolution of the modern. The place of religious consciousness, religious institutions, and communities within the modern project. Clarification of the role of religious culture in enabling the sociocultural change of modernity. Defining the religious factors that contribute to radical transformations in society.

Teaching and assessment method:

The final grade for the course "Religion and Modernity" is determined at the end of the semester based on students' responses to written essay questions.