

SOCIOLOGY 355
SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION
Spring 2013

176 DuSable Hall
2-3:15 Mondays and Wednesdays

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Office Hours

1-1:45 Mondays and Wednesdays; or by appointment.

Please do not hesitate to come by my office hours. This is your chance to talk to me in person if you are having trouble with some of the material, or if you want to talk about your future educational and career decisions.

Overview

This course covers sociological theory and research on religion. I have developed this course with several goals in mind: 1) to familiarize you with the field of sociology of religion in general, 2) to familiarize you with seminal thinkers in the sociology of religion, 3) to familiarize you with current debates and controversies in the field, 4) to think critically about how theoretical models are constructed and empirical research is done in the field, and 5) to apply the theories and data in this field to everyday religious phenomena that you witness and experience.

Caveat 1: Given time limits, we will not be able to review all the various topics that make up the sociology of religion. I have chosen topics based on the importance of these topics in the sociology of religion and, admittedly, my own predilections. There are many important topics covered that sociologists of religion study (immigrant religions, congregational studies, religion and science, etc.) that are not covered in this course. Also, the material in this course will mostly focus on religion in the United States, given that the vast majority of the sociology of religion that I am familiar with deals with religion in the US. However, sociologists of religion often do important work in countries other than the US.

Caveat 2: This is a course in which we will try to understand religion from a social scientific point of view. Because of this, we might come to conclusions about religion that may not sit well with your religious beliefs, if you have any. This course will not serve to validate religion in general or specific types of religions. Thus, in this course you should try to set your own religious views and beliefs aside and approach the material from an objective point-of-view.

Caveat 3: This is a *reading-intensive* course. It is imperative that you do the readings for this course. Doing the readings for the course will facilitate active discussion during class. You will also need to do the readings to do well on the quizzes and final exam, and to do your response papers. If you do not think that you will be able to do the readings for this course during this semester, it may be in your best interest to drop the course and take it at another time.

Prerequisites

SOCI 170 or SOCI 250 or SOCI 260 or SOCI 270, or consent of department.

Class Format

The class format will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. I will lecture on important points, and I will often ask you questions about the material. We will also discuss together the strengths and weaknesses of particular arguments. Do not feel afraid to express your opinion in this class. If you don't like an argument (or vice versa), say so, but also tell the class why. This is a great way to get discussion going.

Course Requirements

The requirements for the course include responses, a research paper, a final exam, and participation:

Response Papers: 30%

Pop Quizzes: 30%

Final Exam: 30%

Participation: 10%

Response Papers

You are required to do ten, 250-500 word responses to the readings throughout the semester. In the response papers, you should critically engage with at least one of the readings for that week, which means that you should ask questions about the reading(s), point out the merits of the arguments made, point out the deficiencies in the arguments made, and evaluate the evidence the authors give for the claims they make. *These responses should not merely summarize the readings!* A summary of the reading alone will give you no credit.

I will use a check grading system ($\checkmark+$, \checkmark , $\checkmark-$). You can choose whatever weeks you would like to do a response paper, and it is up to you to make sure that you do all ten. *You can only turn in one response per week.* Each response paper is worth 3% of your total grade.

Pop Quizzes

I will give around 12 to 15 pop quizzes throughout the semester. I will count your highest 10 quiz grades for your quiz grade, making each quiz worth 3% of your total grade. *Absolutely no make-ups! Absolutely no exceptions!*

Final Exam

The final exam will be cumulative and will be open-book and open-note. It will consist of short answer and essay questions.

Participation

As for participation, do not think that just showing up will result in a high participation grade; it will not. I expect each of you to ask questions of the material and contribute to the discussion. At the end of the course, I will assign you a participation grade based on my perception of how much you contributed to the discussion. If you asked no questions and expressed no opinions, you will receive a *zero* for participation, even if you showed up for every class. If you find it difficult to speak in class, come see me as soon as possible to discuss your options.

During class discussions, I ask all of you to adhere to the following rules. I have found that these rules help facilitate a meaningful and useful discussion:

1. Be open-minded and remember that you are in a class with people from a variety of backgrounds.
2. Do not interrupt a person while she or he is talking.
3. Have a reasonable justification for any stance you take

Required Texts

There are four required books for this course. They are available at university bookstore:

Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*

Mark Chaves, *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*

Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know—But Doesn't*

Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*

Additional readings for the course will be posted on Blackboard.

I urge you to do the readings for this course. I have spared you from having to read a dry textbook and have assigned readings that are at least somewhat interesting. Thus, you should thank me. Also, we will extensively discuss many of the readings, and you will need to have read them for your required response papers and quizzes.

Blackboard

I will post the Powerpoint slides I use in this class on Blackboard at least 12 hours from the time of lecture. Also, check the website often for announcements and other housekeeping affairs.

Attendance Policy

I will not take official attendance in this course. You're all paying to take this course, and you're all adults, so I don't feel that it is my duty to make sure you're here. However, it is in your best interest to come to every class because you cannot participate if you are not here.

Late Assignment Policy

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the scheduled due date. *Late assignments will not be accepted*, except in an emergency. Please contact me before the assignment is due if you have an emergency that prevents you from handing the assignment in on time. You must hand in paper copies of all assignments. Emailed assignments are not acceptable unless an arrangement is made with me prior to the due date.

Re-grading Policy

I generally do not like to re-grade assignments, and even if I do 99% of the time the grade does not change. I take great care when grading an assignment and I will also provide you with grading criteria before each assignment is due. When I return an assignment to you and you are unsatisfied with the grade, please read the comments and review the grading criteria before you see me about re-grading. I *will not* review papers until *24 hours after* I have returned the assignment. I feel that this gives you a chance to cool down and read the comments that I wrote. If you still are unsatisfied, you can set up an appointment with me and we can discuss your assignment. If you come the appointment unprepared (i.e., you did not review the grading criteria and/or you did not read the comments I made) I will not re-grade your assignment. In other words, come to the meeting with a good argument why I should re-grade your paper. You have within one week to adequately contest a grade after the 24 hour period discussed above. However, if I do re-grade an assignment, I reserve the right to *lower* the initial grade.

Class Etiquette

When class begins, I ask you to please put all newspapers, games, and all other distractions away. Please turn your cell phones off, and please do not text message during class. Please try to show up on time to class to minimize disruptions.

Email Etiquette

I will happily and promptly reply to all student email. However, you must follow a few simple rules. First, you must put “Soci 355” in the subject line. If you do not, then I have no way of knowing whether an email message from wiscgrrl@aoh.com is a Sociology 355 student with an important inquiry, or a spam mail message from a Viagra vendor. I will delete all email messages from unfamiliar addresses unless “Soci 355” is in the subject line. Second, you should include your name somewhere in the body of the message. Your email addresses often do not tell me who you are.

Religious Observances

If you anticipate missing any important class sessions this semester because of a religious observance, please inform me within the first two weeks of class. Please be aware that I have the right to set reasonable limits on the total number of days claimed by any one student.

Athletes, Band Members, Etc.

Please give me the letters indicating when you will be absent as soon as possible.

Special Accommodations

A student who believes that reasonable accommodations with respect to course work or other academic requirements may be appropriate in consideration of a disability must (1) provide the required verification of the disability to the Disabilities Resource Center, (2) meet with the Disabilities Resource Center to determine appropriate accommodations, and (3) inform the faculty in charge of the academic activity of the need for accommodation. Students are encouraged to inform the faculty of their requests for accommodations as early as possible in the semester, but must make the requests in a timely enough manner for accommodations to be appropriately considered and reviewed by the university. If contacted by the faculty member, the staff of the Disabilities Resource Center will provide advice about accommodations that may be indicated in the particular case. Students who make requests for reasonable accommodations are

expected to follow the policies and procedures of the Disabilities Resource Center in this process, including but not limited to the Student Handbook.

A wide range of services can be obtained by students with disabilities, including housing, transportation, adaptation of printed materials, and advocacy with faculty and staff. Students with disabilities who need such services or want more information should contact Disabilities Resource Center at 815-753-1303.

Also, feel free to discuss with me any issues that may affect how well you do in the course. While I cannot guarantee any special accommodations for issues that are not technically disabilities, I will try my best to come up with a way in which you can get the most out of this course.

Academic Misconduct

Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are responsible for plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students responsible for, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.

A faculty member has original jurisdiction over any instances of academic misconduct that occur in a course which the faculty member is teaching. The student shall be given the opportunity to resolve the matter in meetings with the faculty member and the department chair. If the facts of the incident are not disputed by the student, the faculty member may elect to resolve the matter at that level by levying a sanction no greater than an F for that course. The faculty member shall notify the student in writing whenever such action is taken, and the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct shall receive a copy of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report indicating final disposition of the case, which will be placed in the student's judicial file. In all matters where the charge of academic misconduct is disputed by the student or if the faculty member feels a sanction greater than an F in the course is appropriate (such as repeated offenses or flagrant violations), the faculty member shall refer the matter to the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct making use of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report. Additional sanctions greater than an F in a course can be levied only through the University Judicial System. With regards to finding the student either responsible or not responsible for his or her action, the ruling of the Judicial Hearing Board shall be binding. In cases where there is either a finding of responsibility or an admission of responsibility by the student, any recommendations by the hearing board regarding the course grade are non-binding on the instructor, who remains solely responsible for assigning a course grade, consistent with the policies set forth in the course syllabus.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to Change at Discretion of Instructor or for Unforeseen Circumstances)

INTRODUCTION

I. Course Overview, Introductions, etc. [January 14th]

STUDYING RELIGION SOCIOLOGICALLY

I. The Measurement and Typologies of Religion [January 16th]

Readings

Prothero, *Religious Literacy*: Chapter Six (pp. 185-249)

II. A Very Brief History of Religion in the US [January 23rd]

Readings

Prothero, *Religious Literacy*: Chapters Two and Six (pp. 249-292)

III. General Trends in Religion in the US [January 28th]

Readings

Chaves, *American Religion*: Chapters 1-5

IV. (How) Does Religion Influence Behavior? [January 30th]

Readings

Smith, "Theorizing Religious Effects among American Adolescents"

Chaves, "Rain Dances in the Dry Season"

SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC THEORIES OF RELIGION

I. Emile Durkheim: The Societal Origins of Religious Belief [February 4th]

Readings

Durkheim, "Egoistic Suicide"

Durkheim, "The Human Meaning of Religion"

II. Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud: Critical Theories of Religion [February 6th]

Readings

Marx, various selections (read what is underlined)

Freud, “Obsessive Actions and Religious Practice”

III. Max Weber: Religion and Social Change [February 11th]

Readings

Weber, “The Spirit of Capitalism”

Weber, “The Sociology of Charismatic Domination”

IV. Anthropological and Evolutionary Theories of Religion [February 13th]

Readings

Malinowski, selections from *Magic, Science, and Religion*

Barrett, selections from *Why Would Anyone Believe in God?*

V. Rational Choice Theory of Religion [February 18th]

Reading

Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*: Chapter 4

VI. Symbolic Interactionist Theory of Religion [February 20th]

Readings

Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*: Chapters 1-3

THE SECULARIZATION DEBATE

I. Defining and Classical Explanations of Secularization [February 25th]

Readings

Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*: Chapter 5

Chaves, “Secularization as Declining Religious Authority”

II. The Religious Economies Model of Secularization [March 4th]

Readings

Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*: Chapters 8 and 9

III. Critiques of and Alternatives to the Religious Economies Model of Secularization [March 6th]

Readings

Bruce, selections from *God is Dead*

Norris and Inghart, selections from *Sacred and Secular*

RELIGIOUS “STAYING,” SWITCHING, CONVERSION, and “DROPPING OUT”

I. Religious Capital, Social Capital, and the Vicissitudes of Religious Affiliation [March 18th]

Readings

Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*: Chapter 5

II. The Rise of Conservative Protestants and Religious “Nones,” and the Decline of Liberal Protestants [March 20th]

Readings

Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*: Chapter 6

Baker and Smith, “The Nones”

Chaves, *American Religion*: Chapter 7

III. Converting to New Religious Movements [March 25th]

Readings

Enroth, “The Seduction Syndrome”

Richardson, “A Critique of ‘Brainwashing’ Claims about New Religious Movements”

Glock, “The Role of Deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of New Religious Movements”

Lofland and Stark, “Becoming a World-Saver”

GENDER, FAMILY, SEXUALITY, AND RELIGION

I. (Why) Are Women More Religious than Men? [April 1st]

Readings

Stark, “Physiology and Faith”

II. The Curious Problem of Women’s Ordination in Religious Organizations [April 3rd]

Readings

Chaves, selections from *Ordaining Women*

III. Religion and the Family [April 8th]

Readings

Gallagher and Smith, “Symbolic Traditionalism and Pragmatic Egalitarianism”

Ellison and Anderson, “Religious Involvement and Domestic Violence among U.S. Couples”

IV. Religion and Sexual Behavior [April 10th]

Readings

Barkan, “Religiosity and Premarital Sex in Adulthood”

Wolkomir, “Wrestling with the Angels of Meaning”

RELIGION, HEALTH, AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING

I. Does Religion Lead to Better Physical and Emotional Health? [April 15th]

Readings

Idler, “Religion, Health, and Nonphysical Senses of Self”

II. Why Are Religious People Happier than the Nonreligious, and Are They Really Better Off For It? [April 17th]

Readings

Wilkins, “Happier than Non-Christians”

Zuckerman, selections from *Society without God*

POLITICS, ACTIVISM, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, AND RELIGION

I. Religion and Social/Political Attitudes: Culture War, or Much Ado About Nothing?

[April 22nd]

Readings

Hunter, selections from *Culture Wars*

Chaves, *American Religion*: Chapter 8

Edgell et al., "Atheists as 'Other'"

III. Religion and Political Activism: Religion as Opiate or Amphetamine of the People?

[April 24th]

Readings

Morris, "The Black Church in the Civil Rights Movement"

Patillo-McCoy, "Church Culture as a Strategy of Action in the Black Community"

V. Religion and Civic Engagement/Civil Religion [April 29th]

Readings

Putnam and Campbell, "Religion and Good Neighborliness"

Bellah, "Civil Religion in America"

V. The Rise of Religious Terrorism [May 1st]

Readings

Hoffman, "Holy Terror"

Juergensmeyer, "Religious Terror and Global War"

*****FINAL EXAM: TBA*****