

Sociology of Religion

Dr. Darren E. Sherkat*
Sociology 351
1222 Faner Hall, 10am-1050am
Southern Illinois University

Goals

This course provides students with a theoretical background for understanding religious organizations, beliefs, and behaviors, and the impact religion has on other areas of social life. First, we cover classical theories of religious organization and practice, to give students an appreciation of early works by Durkheim, Weber, and Marxist perspectives. Next, we will examine contemporary sociological theories of religion, including secularization, rational choice, and structuration perspectives on religious behavior. After our forays into classical and contemporary theory, we will examine a number of substantive issues, including: religion and family/sexuality, religion and crime and deviance, religion and politics. We will finish with an interesting book on women in new religious movements. My goal is to provide you with a detailed understanding of religion from a sociological perspective. Having received this, you will be prepared to pursue advanced study in sociology, religious studies, political science, or economics with a concentration in the study of religion.

Course Requirements

There will be two examinations and a short final paper directed towards the final book. Each of these assignments will be of equal weight comprising 30% of your grade in the course. The remaining 10% of your grade will be comprised of random short in-class assignments. These assignments will be ungraded, but must be completed in class. The final paper will be a 5-7 page typed, double-spaced paper, and it is due on the final examination date for this course (May 14th). Class attendance and participation is expected. The Mid Term examination is scheduled for March 3rd, and the Second Examination will be on April 21.

Cautionary Note: Collaboration on the examinations or on the papers will be considered cheating. All borrowed ideas should be cited appropriately, and direct quotations should be clearly demarcated with quotation marks. Failure to cite and use quotation marks is plagiarism. I prefer the following style of citation at the end of a sentence containing borrowed ideas: (Finke and Stark, 1992:29-30). This reference should then be indicated in a bibliography, for example:

Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 1992. *The Churching of America: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick. Rutgers University Press.

The following materials will be covered in order:

Early Attempts and Later Applications

Durkheim:

Durkheim, Emile. (1915) 1965. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. New York: Free Press. Pp. 13-63.

Pescosolido, Bernice A. and Sharon Georgianna. 1989. "Durkheim, Suicide, and Religion: Toward a Network Theory of Suicide." *American Sociological Review*. 54:33-48.

Weberian perspectives:

Weber, Max. 1922. *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston. Beacon. pp 1-45. 95-117.

Stark, Rodney and William Sims Bainbridge. 1979. "Of Churches, Sects, and Cults." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 18: 117-133.

Marx?

Billings, Dwight. 1990. "Religion as Opposition: A Gramscian Perspective." *American Journal of Sociology*. 96: 1-31.

Secularization:

Hadden, Jeffrey K. 1987. "Toward Desacralizing Secularization Theory." *Social Forces*. 65: 587-611.

Rational Choice:

Iannaccone, Laurence R. 1991. "The Consequences of Religious Market Structure: Adam Smith and the Economics of Religion." *Rationality and Society*. 3:2:156-177.

1994. "Why Strict Churches are Strong." *American Journal of Sociology*.

1990. "Religious Practice: A Human Capital Approach." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 29:297-314.

Structuration Theory:

Sherkat, Darren E. 1998. "Counterculture or Continuity? Examining Competing Influences on Baby Boomers' Religious Orientations and Participation." *Social Forces*. 76:1087-1115.

Religion and Family and Sexuality:

Ellison, Christopher G. and Darren E. Sherkat. 1993. "Conservative Protestantism and Support for Corporal Punishment." *American Sociological Review*. 58:131-144.

Bearman, Peter S. and Bruckner, Heidi. 2001. "Virginity pledges as they affect the transition to first intercourse." *American Journal of Sociology*, 2001

Sherkat, Darren E., Kylan de Vries, and Stacia Creek. 2010. "Race, Religion, and Support for Same Sex Marriage." *Social Science Quarterly*.

Religion and Stratification:

- Darnell, Alfred and Darren E. Sherkat. 1997. "The Impact of Protestant Fundamentalism on Educational Attainment." *American Sociological Review*. 62:306-316.
- Keister, Lisa A. 2003. "Religion and Wealth: The Role of Religious Affiliation and Participation in Early Adult Asset Attainment." *Social Forces*. 82:175-207.
- Sherkat, Darren E. 2010. "Religion and Verbal Ability." *Social Science Research*.

Religion and Politics:

- Sherkat, Darren E. "Religion, Social Movements, and Politics" *Handbook on Sociology of Religion and Social Institutions*, Helen Rose Ebaugh, editor. Kluwer Press. Pp. 1-20.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. 1996. [The worldwide rise of religious nationalism](#). *Journal of International Affairs*. 50 Issue 1, p1, 20p.

Religion and Crime, and Social Control:

- Grasmick, Harold. E Davenport, MB Chamlin, RJ Bursik. 1992. Protestant fundamentalism and the retributive doctrine of punishment. *Criminology*.
- Regnerus, Mark. 2003. "Moral Communities and Adolescent Delinquency: Religious Contexts and Community Social Control." *The Sociological Quarterly*.
- Jensen, Gary F. 2006. "Religious Cosmologies and Homicide Rates among Nations." *The Journal of Religion and Society* 8: 1-13.

New Religious Movements

- Palmer, Susan. 1994. *Moon Sisters, Krishna Mothers, and Rashneesh Lovers: Women's Roles in New Religions*. Syracuse University Press.

* Dr. Darren E. Sherkat (B.A. Tulsa, 1987; M.A. Duke, 1989; Ph.D. Duke, 1991), Professor, Department of Sociology. 3422 Faner Hall. Office Hours: Tu-Th 9am-11am. Sherkat@siu.edu. Much of my work has focused on the sociology of religion, with special emphasis on individual level changes in participation, Christian fundamentalism, African American religion, and rational choice and structuration theories of religious behavior. My studies include investigations of: the political and individual bases of religious change in the Black Church, the influences of religious fundamentalism on childrearing attitudes and stratification outcomes, rational choice theories of collective action, and the short and long-term consequences of participation in the student and environmental movements of the 1960s. My recent articles appear in *Social Science Research*, *Social Science Quarterly*, and *Sociological Spectrum*, among other places.