

Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective

Sociology/PS 476, Spring 2012

Dr. Darren E. Sherkat*

11am-12:15, Parkinson 107

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Office Hours: M, TH 9am-11am, or by appointment

Goals

This course will provide students with a theoretical understanding of the social processes connecting religious and political movements---and which foster the continuity and success of these movements and conflicts between them. First, we will review general theories in the sociology of religion, social movements, and political sociology. After reviewing sociological theories we will examine at four sets of comparative social movements: (1) the African American Civil Rights Movement (2) Christian Nationalism in the United States; (3) Movement countermovement dynamics supporting and opposing GLBT rights; and, (4) Religious terrorism in global perspective; (3) Religion and the politics of intolerance:

Course Requirements

There will be one examination following the theory section (with a mix of multiple guess and short answer essay). Students will also be required to write short papers (5-7 typed, double-spaced pages) on two of the four substantive topics of the course. A directed question will be provided for each section and students must complete the paper by the due date for the assignment. Late papers on the first two topics will not be accepted. If you miss a deadline, you must pick a different substantive area. After the completion of the first two substantive areas, late papers will be docked 1 letter grade per day for students who have not handed in a previous paper. In addition, students must write a final paper (12-17 pages, typed, double spaced) discussing sociological aspects of a topic in religion and politics of your choice. **Topics must be cleared with me no later than March 1).** The examination and the two short papers are given equal weight, and will comprise 2/3rds of the grade for the course. The final paper counts for the remaining 1/3rd of the grade. *Late final papers will not be accepted.* There are no incompletes in this course.

CAUTIONARY NOTE: Collaboration on the examination or on any of 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, and will result in failure of the assignment with a grade of 0—which most likely means failure in the course. I prefer the following style of citation at the end of a sentence containing borrowed ideas: (Finke and Stark, 1989:29-30). This reference should then be indicated in a bibliography, for example:

Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 1989. "How the Upstart Sects Won America: 1776-1850." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. 28:27-44.

The following materials will be required and will be covered in order:

Religion, Politics, and Social Movements—Theoretical approaches.

McCarthy, John D. and Mayer Zald. 1977. "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology*. 82:1212-1241.

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.

Snow, David, E. Burke Rochford, Steven Worden, and Robert Benford. 1986. "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." *American Sociological Review*. 51:464-481.

Sherkat, Darren E. and Christopher G. Ellison. 1997. "The Cognitive Structure of a Moral Crusade: Conservative Protestantism and Opposition to Pornography." *Social Forces*. 75:957-982.

Exam: Feb 13

The Civil Rights Movement in the United States

Morris, Aldon, 1984. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, Free Press.

Directed paper due March 8

Christian Nationalism in the United States:

Aho, James. *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism*. University of Washington Press. 1995.

Directed paper due April 3

Movement Countermovement Dynamics: The case of GLBT rights:

Linneman, Thomas. *Weathering Change: Gays and Lesbians, Christian Conservatives, and Everyday Hostilities*. New York University Press. 2003.

Directed Paper Due April 19

Comparative Perspectives on Religion and Politics

Jurgensmeyer, Mark. *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militia to al Qaeda*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Directed Paper due May 3

Final Paper Due Final Exam date: Tuesday, May 8

* Dr. Darren E. Sherkat (B.A. Tulsa, 1987; M.A. Duke, 1989; Ph.D. Duke, 1991), Professor, Department of Sociology, Faner Hall 3422. 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 immigration and religion. My recent articles appear in *Social Science Research*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Sociology of Religion*, and *Sociological Spectrum*, among other places.