

Sociology of Religion

Sociology 551
Fall 2011, Southern Illinois University
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Faner Hall, 3422
Office hours: MW 9am-11am.

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 and Weber. 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: religious demography, religion and family, religion and sexuality, religion and politics, and religion and social control. More generally, my goal is to provide you with a detailed understanding of religion from a sociological perspective.

Course Requirements

You will be required to demonstrate your mastery of the theoretical and substantive areas in writing. There will be one take-home examination following the theory section of the course. Students will also be required to write a short paper (7-9 typed, double-spaced pages) on two of the six substantive topics of the course (your choice). In order to receive credit for a particular paper, these papers are due two class periods after we complete the substantive section. ***If a paper is not received by that time, I will assume that you are skipping that paper and will write on the other substantive topics. Late papers will not be accepted. If you skip 4 topics and are late with a paper, that paper will be docked one letter grade for every day that it is late.*** In addition, students are required to write a final paper discussing a specific topic in the sociology of religion. Students need to meet with me about their final paper topics shortly after the theory examination. Final papers must be typed, 15-20 pages. The examination and the short papers are given equal weight, and count for two thirds of the final grade for the course. The final paper counts for the remaining 1/3th of the grade. Class attendance and participation is expected.

Cautionary Note: Collaboration on the examination or on any of the papers will be considered cheating. Cheating will result in the failure of the assignment with a grade of 0. 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 required and 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. Sept. 7-9

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.

Chaves, Mark. 1994. Secularization as Declining Religious Authority. *Social Forces*.

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.

Take home exam:

Religious Dynamics in the United States:

Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark. 1992. *The Churching of America*. Rutgers University Press.

Sherkat, Darren E. 2010. "The Religious Demography of the United States" in Robert Hummer and Christopher G. Ellison (eds) *Religion, Families, and Health: Population-based Research in the United States*. Rutgers University Press.

Hout, Michael, & Fischer, Claude. S. 2002. Why more Americans have no religious preference: Politics and generations. *American Sociological Review*. 67: 165-190.

Sherkat, Darren E. and John Wilson. 1995. "Preferences, Constraints, and Choices in Religious Markets: An Examination of Religious Switching and Apostasy." *Social Forces*. 73:993-1026.

New Religious Movements:

Rochford, E. Burke. **Hare Krishna in America**. Rutgers University Press. 1988.

Religion and Development:

Kuran, Timur. 2011. *The Great Divergence: How Islamic Law Held Back the Middle East*. Princeton University Press.

Religion and Stratification:

Keister, Lisa. [Faith and Money: How Religion Contributes to Wealth and Poverty](#). Oxford University Press. 2011.

Darnell, Alfred and Darren E. Sherkat. 1997. "The Impact of Protestant Fundamentalism on Educational Attainment." *American Sociological Review*. 62:306-316.

Glass, Jennifer and Jerry Jacobs. 2005. "Childhood Religious Conservatism and Adult Attainment among Black and White Women." *Social Forces*. 84:555-579.

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.

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

Final papers due on Final Exam date:

* Dr. Darren E. Sherkat (B.A. Tulsa, 1987; M.A. Duke, 1989; Ph.D. Duke, 1991), Professor, Department of Sociology. 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 educational attainment, 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*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Social Science Quarterly*, and *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, among other places.