Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective

Sociology 476, Fall, 2011
Dr. Darren E. Sherkat
9:00-9:50, Quigley 306
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Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 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) Christian Nationalism in the United States; (2) Religious terrorism in global perspective; (3) Religion and the politics of intolerance: (3) Religion and politics in the Middle East.

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 Halloween. 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:

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

**Religion, Politics, and Social Movements—Theoretical approaches.**


**Exam: Sept 16**

**The Civil Rights Movement in the United States**


Directed paper due Oct 2

**Christian Nationalism in the United States:**


Directed paper due Oct 23

**Movement Countermovement Dynamics: The case of GLBT rights:**


Directed Paper Due Nov 15

**Comparative Perspectives on Religion and Politics**

Jurgensmeyer, Mark. *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from*

Directed Paper due December 9.

* 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, Research on Aging,* and *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* among other places.