
SOC 308

SOCIOLOGY of RELIGION

Summer, 2014

Tuesday-Thursday

13.40-16.30

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Course Description

Up until the end of the 1970s most sociologists of religion seemed rather confident about their understanding of religious phenomena. Scholars all more-or-less knew that modern societies were undergoing a process of secularization. Few sociologists expected religion to completely disappear, while many agreed that the secularization process could take different forms in different societies depending on their institutional order or religious culture. But hardly anybody was prepared for the dramatic resurgence of religion that we have witnessed over the last two decades in which religion has re-emerged as a relatively autonomous public force, a marker of ethnic identities, and a shaper of modern subjects and their ways of life. While contemporary sociologists strive to understand the reasons behind religious resurgence, the complex entanglement of the social and political spheres with that of the religious forces us towards a careful historical, theoretical, and empirical survey of the field.

This course is designed to offer such a survey with a focus on the relationship between religion and politics: first three weeks introduce the classical texts and sociological approaches to religion. In the remaining four weeks we will focus on the most popular and contentious debates in the field while not forgetting to ask at which points the current debates are still connected to and how they differ from the perspectives we learned in the first weeks.

Course Objectives

The course is designed in a way to strike a balance between covering classical sociological theories of religious organization and practice with exploring contemporary topics, debates, and studies. There are three main objectives of the course: introduce the classical texts and familiarize the students with the major sociological approaches to the study of religion, carefully lay out the theoretical framework developed in each, and connect these to recent debates in the sociology of religion today.

Readings & Course Requirements

The course brings together an eclectic motley of readings that carefully combines the 'classics' of the field, such as works by Marx, Weber, and Durkheim with selections from more contemporary books and articles. Students do not need to purchase any books. All reading material is easily accessible: all selections from books, kept within limits to avoid copyright violations, are available at the Canon shop located at the University Center and the articles will be posted on SUCourse.

Although this will primarily be a lecture course, students are expected to read the required material each week and come to class prepared. The lectures are intertwined with discussions and student participation to discussions is essential. Since this is a summer school course the amount of readings per week is kept to a minimum (around 50 pages per week- a modest amount for a 300-level sociology course.) However, if you have troubles with the readings or about anything about the course in general, please do not hesitate to contact me before the problem gets any worse.

Grading will be based on the following formula:

Mid-Term	%40
Final Exam	%40
Class presence and participation	%20

Readings And Schedule Of Classes

Week 1

Introduction and Overview

A “Scientific” Study of Religion?

1. Wuthnow, Robert. “Is there a place for ‘scientific’ studies of religion.” *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 49, no. 20 (2003): B10-B11. <http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/wuthnow.html>
2. Smart, Ninian. *The world’s religions*. Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 10–25.
3. Davie, Grace. “The Evolution of the Sociology of Religion.” *Handbook of the sociology of religion* (2003): 61-75.

Week 2

Karl Marx: ‘The ‘Political Economy’ of Religion

1. “Religion and ideology: Karl Marx” in Hamilton, Malcolm B. *The sociology of religion: Theoretical and comparative perspectives*. Psychology Press, 2001. (pp. 91-97)
2. “Introduction” in Raines, John. *Marx on religion*. Temple University Press, 2002, (pp. 1-15)
3. Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” “Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction.” “The German Ideology: Part I” in Robert Tucker (ed.). 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Norton.

Max Weber: Religion as 'Social Action'

1. Religion and rationality: Max Weber, in Hamilton, M. B. (2001), (pp. 155-164)
2. Weber, Max. The sociology of religion. Beacon Press, 1993, (selections)
3. Max, Weber. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Routledge, 1930, (pp. vii-xxxiii, Weber's "Introduction to the Sociology of Religion" and Chapters 1-2)

Week 3

Emile Durkheim: The Sociology of Religious Experience

1. Religion and solidarity: Emile Durkheim, in Hamilton, M. B. (2001), (pp. 109-121)
2. Durkheim, Emile. The elementary forms of religious life. New York: Free Press, 1995. (selections)

Recap & Discussion: A Summary of the First Three Weeks

1. Riesebrodt, Martin, and Mary Ellen Konieczny. "Sociology of religion." The Routledge Companion to Study of Religion. Psychology Press, (2005): 125-143.
2. O'Toole, Roger. "Classics in the sociology of religion: an ambiguous legacy." The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion (2001): 133-160

Week 4 - Geertz vs. Asad: A Debate of Universals vs. Particulars?

1. Geertz, Clifford. The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays. Vol. 5019. Basic books, 1973, ("Religion as a Cultural System," pp. 87-125)
2. Geertz, Clifford. Islam observed: Religious development in Morocco and Indonesia. Vol. 439. University of Chicago Press, 1971, (pp. 1-22)
3. Anjum, Ovamir. "Islam as a discursive tradition: Talal Asad and his interlocutors." Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 27, no. 3 (2007): 656-672.
4. Asad, Talal. Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam. JHU Press, 2009, ("The construction of religion as an anthropological category," pp. 27-54)
5. Asad, Talal. "Anthropological conceptions of religion: reflections on Geertz." Man (1983): 237-259.

Week 5 – Three Fundamentalisms: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic

1. Juergensmeyer, Mark. *Terror in the mind of God: The global rise of religious violence*. Vol. 13. University of California Pr, 2003, (selected chapters)
2. Sprinzak, Ehud. "Three models of religious violence: the case of Jewish fundamentalism in Israel." *Fundamentalism and the State* (1993): 462-490.
3. *Movie Screening: Reluctant Fundamentalist*

Mid-term Exam

Week 6: Fundamentalisms contd.

1. Lincoln, Bruce. *Holy terrors: Thinking about religion after September 11*. University of Chicago Press, 2010, (selections).
2. Harding, Susan Friend. *The book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist language and politics*. Princeton University Press, 2001, (selections).
3. Clark, Victoria. *Allies for Armageddon: the rise of Christian Zionism*. Yale University Press, 2007, (Introduction, and Chapters 9, 10 & 11.)

Week 7: The Secularization Debate

1. Casanova, José. *Public religions in the modern world*. University of Chicago Press, 1994, (Introduction & Chapter 1).
2. Chaves, Mark. "Secularization as declining religious authority." *Social forces* 72, no. 3 (1994): 749-774.
3. Gorski, Philip S. "Historicizing the secularization debate: Church, state, and society in late medieval and early modern Europe, ca. 1300 to 1700." *American Sociological Review* (2000): 138-167.

Final exam