

Rosemont College
Sociology 315: Sociology and Religion
Spring 2010

Tuesday 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Location: MAIN L 204

Professor: Carol Ann MacGregor,

Phone: (609) 240-7127 Email: camacgre@princeton.edu

Meetings by Appointment

Course Description

“The idea of society is the soul of religion”
Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*

Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber, the founding fathers of modern sociology, each devoted some time to writing about religion and society. Today members of the American Sociological Association and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion continue to examine religious belief and practice. What do people believe? How do people talk about religion? How is religion organized? How does religious belief impact other aspects of social life? These are just some of the basic (and big!) questions we will examine in this class. Although these questions can be asked of all societies, our primary focus will be on the contemporary United States.

Course Goals

1. Cultivate in students an understanding of the distinctively SOCIOLOGICAL approach to studying religion

There are many approaches to studying religion—historical, psychological, theological, anthropological etc. In this class we take a distinctively sociological approach and consider the kinds of questions sociologists ask and the kind of explanations they offer when they analyze religion.

2. Familiarize students with some of the major issues, problems, and findings in the sociology of religion

Students will have the opportunity to learn about both the classical theoretical tradition and the most interesting new work in the sociology of religion. Students will deepen their sociological knowledge of the linkages between religion and family life, gender, politics, and race.

3. Introduce students to basic skills of field research or quantitative analysis

Sociology is an empirical discipline that builds theories and draws conclusions based on evidence that can be observed. Students in this class will go beyond merely reading about religion to actually doing either participant observation in local religious groups or a simple exploratory quantitative analysis using survey data about religion.

4. Improve cognitive and communication skills

Through a mix of written and oral assignments, this course aims to enhance students' abilities to read, analyze, discuss and write skillfully.

After completing the course students should be able to:

- Discuss the social dynamics of religion with a degree of objectivity
- Distinguish among the major classical and contemporary theoretical approaches employed by sociologists of religion in studying religion
- Appreciate the multidimensional nature of religiosity
- Assess the impact of religion on the daily life of individuals and groups
- Assess the impact of society on religion

Course Requirements

Attendance and Participation in Class Discussion-10%

Analytic Pre-Discussion Papers-25%

Book Review and Presentation-25%

Field Research Report or Preliminary Quantitative Analysis Report-25%

Final In-class Examination-15%

Required Reading

1. Pals, Daniel L. (2009) *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists* New York: Oxford University Press
2. Dillon, Michele (2003) *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* New York: Cambridge University Press
3. One book, selected from the list of recommended reading or chosen after consultation with the instructor, to be used as the subject of your book review and presentation
4. All other journal articles and book chapters noted below will be distributed by the instructor via email

Part I: Perspectives and Methods

January 12th, 2010

- What is the Sociology of Religion?

Readings:

- ❖ Wuthnow, Robert. "Studying Religion, Making it Sociological" pp.16-30 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*
- ❖ Davie, Grace. "The Evolution of Sociology of Religion: Themes and Variations" pp.61-75 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*

- How Do You Study Religion Sociologically?

Readings:

- ❖ Hout, Michael. "Demographic Methods for the Sociology of Religion" pp.79-84 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*
- ❖ Nelson, Timothy. 1996. "Sacrifice of Praise: Emotion and Collective Participation in an African American Worship Service" *Sociology of Religion* 57(4):379-96

Part II: Classical Theories of Religion

January 19th, 2010

1. Emile Durkheim: Society as Sacred

Reading:

- ❖ Durkheim, Emile. "The Social as Sacred" pp.99-143 in Pals *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*

January 26th, 2010

2. Karl Marx: Religion as Alienation

Reading:

- ❖ Marx, Karl. "Religion as an Agent of Economic Oppression" pp.143-170 in Pals *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*

February 2nd, 2010

3. Max Weber: Religion as A Source of Social Action

Reading:

- ❖ Weber, Max. "Religion and Culture Interwoven" pp.237-270" in Pals *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*

February 9th, 2010

4. Geertz, Clifford: Religion as a Cultural System

Reading:

- ❖ Geertz, Clifford "Religion as Worldview and Ethic" pp.341-372 in Pals *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*

Part III: Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Religion

February 16th, 2010

1. Secularization and Religious Decline?

Readings:

- ❖ Chaves, Mark and Laura Stephens. "Church Attendance in the United States" pp.85-95 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*

- ❖ Gorski, Phillip S. "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: An Agenda for Research" pp.110-122 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*
- ❖ Chaves, Mark. 1994. "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority" *Social Forces* 72(3):749-775
- ❖ Wuthnow, Robert.1998. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s* Berkeley: University of California Press.
 - Ch.1 "From Dwelling to Seeking", Ch. 5 "Angel Awakenings", Ch.6 "Spirituality of the Inner Self" [65pp total]

February 23rd, 2010

Presentation of Book Reports

SPRING BREAK

March 9th, 2010

2. Explaining Religious Vitality: Strictness and Identity

Readings:

- ❖ Iannaccone, Laurence. 1994. "Why Strict Churches Are Strong" *American Journal of Sociology* 99(5):1180-1211
- ❖ Smith, Christian. 1998. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* Chicago: University of Chicago Press
 - Chapters 1-5 [150pp]

March 16th, 2010

3. Religion and Family Life

Readings:

- ❖ Edgell, Penny "In Rhetoric and Practice: Defining the Good Family in Local Congregations" pp.164-178 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*
- ❖ Orsi, Robert. 1985. *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880-1950* New Haven: Yale University Press
 - Ch. 4 "The Domus Centered Society" (pp.75-106)
- ❖ Wilcox, W. Bradford and Nicholas Wolfinger. 2007. "Then Comes Marriage? Religion, Race, and Marriage in Urban America" *Social Science Research* 36:569-589

March 23rd, 2010

4. Religion and Gender

Readings:

- ❖ Neitz, Mary Jo. "Dis/location: Engaging Feminist Inquiry in the Sociology of Religion" pp.276-98 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*

- ❖ Bartkowski, John P. and Jen'nan G. Read. 2003. "Veiled Submission: Gender, Power, and Identity among Evangelical and Muslim Women in the U.S." *Qualitative Sociology* 26:71-92.
- ❖ Sullins, D. Paul. 2006. "Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity." *American Journal of Sociology* 112:838-80.

March 30th, 2010

5. Religion and Race

Readings:

- ❖ Emerson, Michael O. and Christian Smith. 2000. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* New York: Oxford University Press
 - Selections

April 6th, 2010

6. Religion and Immigration

Readings:

- ❖ Ebaugh, Helen Rose "Religion and the New Immigrants" pp225-39 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*
- ❖ Mooney, Margarita. 2009. *Faith Makes Us Live: Surviving and Thriving in the Haitian Diaspora* Berkeley: University of California Press
 - Selections

April 13th, 2010

7. Religion and Public Life: Politics, Social Movements and Civic Life

Readings:

- ❖ Manza, Jeff and Nathan Wright. "Religion and Political Behavior" pp297-314 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*
- ❖ Williams, Rhys H. "Religious Social Movements in the Public Sphere: Organization, Ideology and Activism" pp.315-330 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*
- ❖ Wood, Richard. "Religion, Faith-Based Community Organizing and the Struggle for Justice" pp.385-399 in Dillon *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*
- ❖ With permission selections from Robert Putnam and David Campbell's *American Grace*

April 20th, 2010

8. Religion and Terrorism

Reading:

- ❖ Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2003. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 3rd Edition Berkeley: University of California Press
 - Selections

April 27th, 2010

In class Final Exam