

SOC 333: Sociology of Religion
Department of Sociology
Emory University
Spring 2018
Instructor: John Bernau

Class Time: MWF 9:00-9:50am
Location: Tarbutton Hall 105
Office Hours: Wednesday 1-3pm
Tarbutton 223
Email: john.bernau@emory.edu

The Sociology of Religion

*“Every society is engaged in the never completed
enterprise of building a humanly meaningful world.”*
–Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (1967)

This course offers an introduction to the sociological study of religion. As a discipline, sociology blends theory, history, and carefully collected data to better understand social phenomenon. This perspective offers the best chance at understanding the complex phenomenon we know as religion.

We will look at classical theorists like Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber to see if their 150-year-old ideas can help us understand religion today: *Would Karl Marx and MLK get along? Would Durkheim stream church services from home? How would Max Weber understand modern televangelists?*

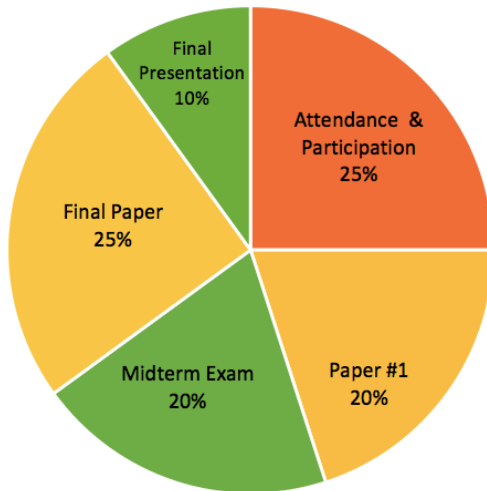
We will look at historical records to better understand religion in a global perspective, from The Protestant Reformation in Western Europe, to the Rastafari movement in Jamaica, and the state-sponsored atheism of the Soviet Union and China.

We will look at the most recently available data to examine changes in American religion, including shrinking congregation sizes, declining confidence in religious leaders, the rise of the “spiritual but not religious”, and the increasing polarization that marks today’s religion and politics.

Course Requirements

Attendance & Participation (25%)

Since this is an upper-level course, attendance is required and you are expected to keep up with reading assignments. In addition to traditional lectures, some days we’ll have an activity, short quiz, or writing assignment that will contribute to your participation grade. **Every week there will be a reading reflection due before class on Friday (9am)** and submitted on Canvas. Think of this as an opportunity to summarize what you have learned over the week: highlight main points, include quotes you found helpful, and especially include any questions or disagreements you have. These will be worth three points each. No credit will be given for late memos.



Paper 1: Worship Observation & Analysis (6-8 pages) Due March 5th (20%)

Before Spring Break you will need to visit and observe a worship service and collect participant-observation data. The field notes from your trip will form the data for a paper applying the work of two theorists to your experience. What was the service like? What kind of rituals stood out? How did your experience support or contradict some of the class concepts we've discussed? Detailed instructions to be distributed in class.

Midterm Exam: March 7th (20%)

A mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions covering the first seven weeks of class material.

Final Paper: Substantive Issue of Choice (8-10 pages)

Due April 30th (25%)

Your final paper will be on a topic of your choice. What interests you about religion today? What did we not cover in the class that you are curious about? What do you think is the most pressing issue to understand about the role of religion in our society? Detailed instructions to be distributed in class.

Grading Scheme

- A = 93-100
- A- = 90-92
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 83-86
- B- = 80-82
- C = 76-79
- C- = 72-75
- D = 61-71

Final Presentation: Due May 8th (10%)

Our final class sessions will be an opportunity for you to share the content of your final paper with the class. Your final product should be a clear, well-organized, and confident oral presentation. This assignment is designed to improve your public speaking skills broadly, but more specifically your ability to curate and communicate information to interested audiences. This skill is essential to most careers you'll encounter after graduation. Detailed instructions to be distributed in class.

Course Policies

Discussion

This class will feature discussion about potentially sensitive topics.

-Please be respectful of your peers and their worldviews.

-Understand that not everyone shares your personal or religious experience.

-“The Ten Commandments of Rational Debate”

Communication

Class information and announcements will be conveyed via Canvas, the course website. I will also send out some communications via email. Additionally, email is the best way to contact me. I try to respond within 24 hours, but I do not promise a response within this time frame. I do not answer emails after 5pm or on weekends. If it has been more than 48 hours, please check in with me after class.

Late/Makeup material

You are responsible for missed material. Please get notes from one of your classmates. After you have read all of the missed material, if you still have questions, please come to my office hours. There will be no credit for late memos. Deadlines will be only be extended for documented and excused absences (doctor-verified illness, family emergency).

Computers

Computers are not allowed in class.

Accommodating Disabilities

If you have or acquire any sort of condition that may require special accommodation(s), please inform me as soon as possible so that we may make the appropriate arrangements. Proper documentation from the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) will be required. They can be reached at <http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/>

Academic Conduct:

Emory College has established an Honor Code outlining an appropriate code of conduct with respect to academic honesty and plagiarism. Information on Emory's Honor code can be accessed at:

<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>.

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures of the university, and violation of these policies will result in referral to the Honor Council. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated.

Reading Schedule

Required Texts:

- Pals, Daniel. 2014. *Nine Theories of Religion*. 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Edmonds, Ennis Barrington. 2008. *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Cultural Bearers*. 1 edition. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Berger, Peter L. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Open Road Media.
- Chaves, Mark. 2017. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Second edition. **[Make sure to get second edition]**

*Each book will be on 3-hour course reserve at Pitts Theological Library. All additional readings will be available online through Canvas.

Week 1: Introduction – What is the “Sociology” of Religion?

January 17 (W)

Introduction & Syllabus

January 19 (F)

Pals, Daniel. 2014. “Introduction.” Pp. 1–14 in *Nine Theories of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wuthnow, Robert. 2003. “Studying Religion, Making It Sociological.” Pp. 16–30 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by M. Dillon. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Week 2: Karl Marx – Opium and Revolution

January 22 (M)

Pals, Daniel. 2014. “Religion as Alienation: Karl Marx.” Pp. 113–42 in *Nine Theories of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

January 24 (W)

Marx, Karl: Critique of Hegel (167-173), Social Principles of Christianity (184-186). (From “Raines, John. 2011. *Marx On Religion*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press”)

King, Martin Luther. 1963. “‘Letter From a Birmingham Jail’ | The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute.” April 16. Retrieved December 5, 2016 (<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/letter-birmingham-jail>).

January 26 (F)

Lofton, Kathryn. 2012. “The Sigh of the Oppressed? Marxism and Religion in America Today.” *New Labor Forum* 21(3):58–65.

Week 3: Emile Durkheim – God, Symbols, and Morality

January 29 (M)

Durkheim, Emile. 1973. “Origin of the Idea of the Totemic Principle or Mana.” Pp. 167–86 in *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society*, edited by R. N. Bellah. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

January 31 (W)

Haidt, Jonathan. 2013. “Religion Is a Team Sport.” Pp. 285–318 in *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*. New York: Vintage.

February 2 (F)

Bellah, Robert N. 2003. "The Ritual Roots of Society and Culture." Pp. 31–44 in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, edited by M. Dillon. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press.

Week 4: Max Weber – Charisma, Televangelists, and “Ideal Types”

February 5 (M)

Pals, Daniel. 2014. "A Source of Social Action: Max Weber." Pp. 143-184 in *Nine Theories of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

February 7 (W)

Weber, Max. 1963. "The Prophet." Pp. 46-59 in *The Sociology of Religion*. Boston: Beacon Press.

In Class: FILM- *Billy Graham: God's Ambassador*

February 9 (F)

Weber, Max. 1958. "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority." Pp. 245-252 in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. edited by H. H. Gerth and C. W. Mills. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 5: Rastafari – Rebellion, Ritual, and Routinization

February 12 (M)

Edmonds, Ennis Barrington. 2008. *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Cultural Bearers*. 1 edition. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
[Foreword, Introduction, and Chapter 1]

February 14 (W)

Edmonds, Ennis Barrington. 2008. *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Cultural Bearers*. 1 edition. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
[Chapter 2 and Chapter 3]

February 16 (F)

Edmonds, Ennis Barrington. 2008. *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Cultural Bearers*. 1 edition. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
[Chapter 4, Chapter 6, and Conclusion]

Week 6: Religion in America – A Story in Three Parts

February 19 (M)

Chaves, Mark. 2017. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Second edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
[Chapters 1-3]

February 21 (W)

Chaves, Mark. 2017. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Second edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

[Chapters 4-6]

February 23 (F)

Chaves, Mark. 2017. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Second edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

[Chapters 7-9]

Week 7: Religion & Politics in a Global Perspective

February 26 (M)

Smith, Christian. 1998. "Evangelicalism Embattled" Pp 120-153 in *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. University of Chicago Press.

February 28 (W)

Froese, Paul. 2008. "The Great Secularization Experiment." Pp. 1–21 in *The Plot to Kill God: Findings from the Soviet Experiment in Secularization*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

March 2 (F)

Marsh, Christopher. 2011. "China's Third Opium War: The CCP's Struggle With Religion." Pp 148-182 in *Religion and the State in Russia and China: Suppression, Survival, and Revival*. 1 edition. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Week 8: Review & Midterm Exam

March 5 (M)

In Class: Review Session

***PAPER 1 DUE at 5pm**

March 7 (W)

MIDTERM EXAM

March 9 (F)

[No Class]

----- **Week 9: SPRING BREAK** -----

Week 10: Peter Berger – Sacred Canopies and World-Construction

March 19 (M)

Berger, Peter. 1967. "Chapter 1: Religion and World-Construction" Pp. 3-28 in *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Open Road Media.

March 21 (W)

Berger, Peter. 1967. "Chapter 2: Religion and World-Maintenance" Pp. 29-52 in *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Open Road Media. 1967.

March 23 (F)

Dawson, Lorne L. 2006. "What Are New Religious Movements?" Pp. 14–38 in *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*. Don Mills, Ont.; New York: Oxford University Press.

Week 11: "New Religious Movements" – The Sociology of Cults

March 26 (M)

Lewis, James R. 2016. "Brainwashing and 'Cultic Mind Control.'" in *Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements: Volume II*. Oxford University Press. (<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190466176.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190466176-e-12>).

Optional Reading:

Dawson, Lorne L. 2006. "Are Converts to New Religious Movements 'Brainwashed'?" Pp. 95–124 in *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*. Don Mills, Ont.; New York: Oxford University Press.

March 28 (W)

Dawson, Lorne L. 2006. "Why Did New Religious Movements Emerge?" Pp. 39–70 in *Comprehending Cults: The Sociology of New Religious Movements*. Don Mills, Ont.; New York: Oxford University Press.

In Class: Group Research on NRM [*Bring computers*]

March 30 (F)

In Class: Group Presentations on NRM [*Bring computers*]

Week 12: The Protestant Reformation – Can Religion Survive on "Faith Alone"?

April 2 (M)

Marshall, Peter. 2009. "Introduction" Pp. 1-9 in *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. [Full text available through discover.emory.edu]

Marshall, Peter. 2009. "Society" Pp. 76-92 in *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. [Full text available through discovere.emory.edu]

April 4 (W)

Marshall, Peter. 2009. "Legacy" Pp. 129-136 in *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. [Full text available through discovere.emory.edu]

In Class: FILM- *PBS Empires: Martin Luther* (Part 1)

April 6 (F)

Pew Research Center. 2017. "U.S. Protestants Not Divided Over Reformation-Era Controversies 500 Years Later". Pew Research Center: Religion & Public Life. <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/08/31/u-s-protestants-are-not-defined-by-reformation-era-controversies-500-years-later/>

In Class: FILM- *PBS Empires: Martin Luther* (Part 2)

Week 13: Secularization Theory – Is God Dead?

April 9 (M)

Bruce, Steve. 2011. "Describing Secularization." Pp. 1–23 in *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. [Full text available through discovere.emory.edu]

April 11 (W)

Bruce, Steve. 2011. "Explaining Secularization." Pp. 24–56 in *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. [Full text available through discovere.emory.edu]

April 13 (F)

[Finish Bruce chapter]

Optional Reading:

Berger, Peter. 1967. "Chapter 6: Secularization and the Problem of Plausibility" Pp. 127-154 in *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Open Road Media.

Week 14: Religious Economy Theory – Searching for Rational Consumers

April 16 (M)

Stark, Rodney and Roger Finke. 2000. "A Theoretical Model of Religious Economies." Pp. 193–217 in *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Paper Topics Due

April 18 (W)

[Finish Stark & Finke chapter]

April 20 (F)

Gorski, Philip S. and Ateş Altinordu. 2008. "After Secularization?" *Annual Review of Sociology* 34:55–85.

Week 15: The Rise of the Religious "Nones" in America

April 23 (M)

Baker, Joseph O. and Buster G. Smith. 2015. "The Great Abdicating." Pp. 66–88 in *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems*. New York: NYU Press.

April 25 (W)

Baker, Joseph O. and Buster G. Smith. 2015. "Marriage, Family, and Social Networks." Pp. 151–66 in *American Secularism: Cultural Contours of Nonreligious Belief Systems*. New York: NYU Press.

April 27 (F)

Smith, Jesse M. 2013. "Creating a Godless Community: The Collective Identity Work of Contemporary American Atheists." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52(1):80–99.

Week 16

April 30 (M)

Course Summary / Overview

FINAL PRESENTATIONS: May 8th 11:30-2:00pm