

SOC 357
Sociology of Religion
Autumn 2012

Instructor: Katie Corcoran

Class Meeting: Tues. & Thur: 7:00pm-9:20pm DEN 309

Office: Savery Hall 270

Office hours: Thursdays 5:30-6:30pm and by appointment (appointments are made through email), I'll hold extra offices hours before exams.

Email:

Course website:

Course Description:

Have you ever wondered what makes someone more likely to join a particular religion or why certain religious traditions have more members than others? Ever wonder why someone would join a highly strict religion or cult? In this course we will investigate these questions from a sociological perspective. We will examine the factors that lead to conversion, apostasy, and religious commitment and explore what makes certain religious traditions more effective at gaining and retaining members. By the conclusion of this course you will have gained knowledge of classical and contemporary sociological theories of religion that will provide you with a framework for understanding past, present, and future religious phenomena.

Required Text:

Stark, Rodney and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

This book is also on reserve in Odegaard Library (BL60 .S675 2000).

Wellman, James K. 2008. *Evangelical vs. Liberal: The Clash of Christian Cultures in the Pacific Northwest*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

This book is also on reserve in Odegaard Library (BR550 .W45 2008).

All other readings for this course will be in a coursepack available at Professional Copy 'n' Print, 4200 University Way NE, Seattle, Washington 98105. These readings are also available through electronic reserve. There is a link to the electronic reserve on our course website.

<https://eres.lib.washington.edu/eres/coursepass.aspx?cid=5681>

Course Requirements:

Students must complete the course readings before the assigned date and come to class ready to participate. Class participation will consist of credit/no credit pop quizzes, short written assignments, and active involvement in discussions and in-class activities. Late assignments will be penalized 5% for every day they are late. There will be two exams and a comprehensive final. There will be no make-up quizzes or exams without **adequate documentation**. However, *you may miss one quiz without penalty*.

Grades:

Grade Breakdown:

Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	25%
Final Exam	40%
Class Participation	15%

4.0 Scale	Letter Grade	Percent Scale
3.9-4.0	A	94-100%
3.5-3.8	A-	90-93%
3.2-3.4	B+	88-89%
2.9-3.1	B	84-87%
2.5-2.8	B-	80-83%
2.2-2.4	C+	78-79%
1.9-2.1	C	74-77%
1.5-1.8	C-	70-73%
1.2-1.4	D+	68-69%
0.9-1.1	D	64-67%
0.7-0.8	D-	60-63%
0.0	F	Below 60%

Academic Integrity:

Students will be subject to the University of Washington Student Conduct code. Students may not copy, paraphrase, or quote any text without appropriate citation. The exams and quizzes will be closed note and book; consequently you may not consult any notes, books, or students during them. I take plagiarism and cheating very seriously, anyone caught doing either will receive a zero for the exam/assignment.

Students with Disabilities:

If you require certain accommodations to make class accessible, please contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) and I will work with them to accommodate your needs: they can be reached by phone or email (206-543-8925; uwdss@u.washington.edu). If you have a letter indicating what accommodations you will need, please give it to me as soon as possible so I will be able to make the necessary accommodations.

Course Schedule:

1. *The Sociological Study of Religion*

Tuesday, September 25

Introduction

Different approaches to studying religion

How to study religion sociologically

Thursday, September 27

No Class.

2. Classical Theories

Tuesday, October 2

Religion as Social fact

Pals, Daniel L. "Society as Sacred: Emile Durkheim." In *Seven Theories of Religion*. Pp. 88-118. New York: Oxford University Press.

Thursday, October 4

Religion as the opiate of the people

Pals, Daniel L. "Religion as Alienation: Karl Marx." In *Eight Theories of Religion*. Pp. 118-148. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marx, Karl. Short excerpt (pg 41-42) from *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.

Tuesday, October 9

Religion ideology and social change

Greely, Andrew M. 1995. "A Reply to Marx—Max Weber." *Sociology and Religion: A collection of Readings*. Pp. 32-39. New York: Harper Collins College Publishers.

Giddens, Anthony. "Max Weber: Protestantism and capitalism." *Capitalism & Modern Social Theory: An analysis of the writings of Marx, Durkheim, and Max Weber*. Pp. 119-132. New York: Cambridge University.

3. The Secularization Debate

Thursday, October 11

Religion declining or thriving?

Berger, Peter. 1967. "Secularization and the Problem of Plausibility." *Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Pp. 126-153. New York: Doubleday & Company.

Stark and Finke. 2000. Chapter 3

Tuesday, October 16

**Exam 1 Review
Bring questions.**

Thursday, October 18

Exam 1

Bring a scantron and two pencils.

Know your student ID number.

4. *The New Paradigm/Rational Choice Theory of Religion*

Tuesday, October 23

Rational Choice Theory of Religion (RCTR)

Stark and Finke. 2000. Chapters 1 and 2

Thursday, October 25

The religious individual

Stark and Finke. 2000. Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 (**only pages 114-125**).

Abel, Michael K. 2005. "Retention Strategies and Religious Success: A Regional Comparison of American Jews." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1:1-21.

Tuesday, October 30

The religious group

Stark and Finke. 2000. Chapters 6 and 7.

Thursday, November 1

The religious economy

Stark and Finke. 2000. Chapters 8 and 9.

Lang, Graeme and Selina Ching Chan. 2005. "Folk Temples and the Chinese Religious Economy." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 1:1-29.

5. *Critique of RCTR*

Tuesday, November 6

Critique of RCTR

Sherkat, Darren E. 1997. "Embedding Religious Choices: Integrating Preferences and Social Constraints into Rational Choice Theories of Religious Behavior." In Lawrence A. Young (Ed.), *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment* (pp. 65-85). New York: Routledge.

Exam 2 Review
Bring questions.

Thursday, November 8
Exam 2

Bring a scantron and two pencils.
Know your student ID number.

6. Subcultural Identity Theory of Religion and Moral Cosmology Theory

Tuesday, November 13

Religion as providing moral worldviews and group solidarity
Smith, Christian. 1998. Excerpt from *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*.

Peek, Lori. 2005. "Becoming Muslim: The Development of a Religious Identity." *Sociology of Religion* 66(3):215-242.

Wellman, James K. 2008. Chapter 4. (pgs 31-37).

Thursday, November 15

Religious moral worldviews and their effects
Wellman, James K. 2008. Chapters 7 and 10 (**only pages 217-234**)

Tuesday, November 20

Religious moral worldviews and their effects continued
Wellman, James K. 2008 Chapters 9 and 12.

Thursday, November 22

No Class

7. Sects and New Religious Movements (NRMs)

Tuesday, November 27

Brainwashing controversy and recruitment
Stark and Finke. 2000. Rest of Chapter 5 (pages 125-138)

Stark and Bainbridge. 1980. "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects." *American Journal of Sociology* 85: 1376-1395.

Thursday, November 29

Recruitment continued

Snow, Louis, and Eklund-Olson. 1980. "Social Networks and Social Movements: A Microstructural Approach to Differential Recruitment." *American Sociological Review*. 45:787-801.

Rochford, Burke E. 1982. "Recruitment Strategies, Ideology, and Organization in the Hare Krishna Movement." *Social Problems* 29(4).

Tuesday, December 4

Final exam review.

Bring Questions

Thursday, December 6

Final exam

Bring a scantron and two pencils.

Know your student id number.