

## **SOCIOLOGY 429: RELIGION AND SOCIETY**

**Fall 2011**

**Class Meeting: Tu/Th: 8-9:15**

**Place: Peabody 203**

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### **Course Description**

What does it mean to study religious beliefs, practices and organizations from a sociological perspective? Although most definitions of religion rest on a belief in the supernatural, human practices of religion are also (at least in part) a socially constituted reality. In other words, the way that humans come to know particular religious beliefs and the ways humans practice religious rituals are shaped by their social context, such as language, symbols, groups, norms, interactions, resources, organizations, etc. In this course, will explore processes by which individuals acquire religious beliefs and identities, and the functions religion serves for its adherents and for society. We will also examine changes in the organizational structure of religion, the mutual influence between religion and state, and the dynamics of religious decline and persistence in modern societies.

### **Course Goals**

This course is designed to:

1. *Cultivate in students an understanding of the distinctively sociological approach to studying religion.* There are many approaches to studying religion—historical, psychological, theological, sociological, anthropological, etc. Since in this class we take a distinctively sociological approach, our most basic goal is to develop an understanding of and appreciation for 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 some of the theoretical and substantive content of the sociology of religion, to deepen their sociological knowledge of such things as religious conversion, shifting church attendance rates, religiously inspired political activism, the emergence of new religions, and secularization.
3. *Introduce students to basic skills of field research.* Sociology is an empirical discipline that constructs 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 simple participant-observation through field trips at local religious groups, involving first-hand observation, analysis, and brief written reports.

4. *Improve research and writing skills.* Through library research and in-class writing workshops, students will draft an original research paper, provide feedback to classmates on their writing, and learn how to revise their own writing.

5. *Enhance cognitive & communication skills.* Finally, this course aims generally, through its assignments in-class exercises, to enhance students' abilities to read, analyze, discuss, and write skillfully.

To summarize in *performance-oriented* terms, students who have successfully completed this course ought to be able to: (1) know how to go about analyzing religious beliefs, experiences, practices, and organizations *sociologically* (as distinct from, say, theologically); (2) carry on an informed conversation with others about the religious issues and problems we will study in this class; (3) have a basic idea about how to go about conducting field research on a religious group or institution; (4) enhance skills for writing a sociological research paper; and (4) read, think, discuss, and write more skillfully than when they entered the course.

**Readings** –There is one required book for this course that can be purchased at the UNC student stores. One copy has been placed on reserve in the library. The rest of the readings will be available on Sakai.

- 1) Mark Chaves. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Princeton University Press, 2011. Cloth ISBN: 9780691146850. Ebook ISBN: 9781400839957

### **Course Expectations**

1. *Attendance and Active Participation.* You are expected to attend every class meeting, keep up with the readings, and formulate original and creative responses to class readings. Our class meetings will include lectures, small group discussions and large-group discussions. You are expected to actively participate in all group discussions. Please be aware that other than extreme illness or a family emergency there is no excuse for missing class. Missing more than 6 classes total (for any reason) constitutes grounds for failing this course.

2. *Honor Code.* The University Honor Code – which prohibits giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on graded course work – will be in effect through all exams, quizzes, and written assignments. Please read carefully the provisions of the Honor Code, make certain you understand and adhere to them, and ask me to clarify any questions you have regarding the Code. The Code is a long and valuable tradition at UNC – protect it! Read more about the honor code at: <http://honor.unc.edu/>.

3. *Grading Standards.* Grades assigned in this course will follow the UNC grading standards, which can be found at: <http://regweb.oit.unc.edu/resources/rpm24.php>

### **Course Assignments**

**1. Reading Assignments (5%).** Throughout the semester, I will assign several assignments based on the readings or in-class assignments. You will enter your response into the “assignment” function of Sakai. In order to use these assignments for class discussion, please bring either your computer or a printed copy of your reply to class. The assignments are due at the start of class on the day that the reading is assigned. No exceptions. You are graded on completion: a score of 1 means you completed the assignment as instructed and 0 means unacceptable. We do not grade these assignments for thesis, style, or grammar (but I encourage you to use these entries as a way to practice good writing).

**2. Midterm (20%) and Final Exam (20%).** You will have a midterm and a final exam that will test your comprehensive knowledge of the assigned readings, their theories, contents and facts through multiple choice questions. The midterm exam will be on **Thursday, October 13th** and the final exam will be given on **Tuesday, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 8 a.m.**

**3. Theory and Observational Paper (20%):** Students must choose an unfamiliar religious groups or organizations to visit and observe on a self-guided field trip, and write a 6-page double spaced report about this trip that relates their observation to theories discussed in class, such as Weber and Durkheim and possibly others. Students may not choose to do the religious tradition(s) within which they were raised or with which they are quite familiar. Details are provided in a separate handout. A draft workshop of this paper will be held on **Thursday, September 22** and the final paper is due **Tuesday, October 4.**

**4. Research Paper (35%):** Students will answer an important research question in the sociology of religion in an 8-page research paper. A draft of this paper will be due on **Thursday, November 17<sup>th</sup>** and the final research paper will be due the last day of class, **Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>.**

## **Class Schedule and Readings**

### Week 1 (August 23/25): Introduction to the Sociological Study of Religion

- Chaves, Introduction and “Belief”
- Mills, C. Wright. *The Sociological Imagination*. (pp. 1-6)
- Karen Fields introduction to *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Pp. xvii-lxi.
- Pals, Daniel L. 2006. *Introduction Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. Selections on Durkheim, pp. 110-120.
- Take the Pew Forum test on religious knowledge.  
<http://features.pewforum.org/quiz/us-religious-knowledge/>
- Read report of Pew Forum test on religious knowledge  
<http://pewforum.org/Other-Beliefs-and-Practices/U-S-Religious-Knowledge-Survey.aspx>

### Week 2 (August 30/September 1): Durkheim (cont.) & Megachurches

- Chaves, Chapter 5, Congregations.
- Ellingson, Stephen. 2008. "Rise of the Megachurches and Changes in Religious Culture: Review Article." *Sociology Compass* 2:1-15.
- Mark Chaves, “All Creatures Great and Small: Megachurches in Context.” Chapter 30 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), edited by Susanne C. Monahan, William A. Mirola and Michael O. Emerson.
- Research on Religion Podcast with Marc Von der Ruhr:  
<http://www.researchonreligion.org/church-organization/marc-von-der-ruhr-on-megachurch-recruitment-and-retention>
- Video. Randall Balmer. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*. Selections on Willow Creek Church.

### Week 3 (September 6/8): Marx: Religion, Race and Class

- Pals, Daniel L. 2006. *Eight theories of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter on Marx.
- Pals, Daniel L. 2009. *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*. New York: Oxford University Press. Selections from Karl Marx: The Communist Manifesto, Historical Materialism and Socialism and Religion.
- Nelson, Timothy J. 1996. "Sacrifice of Praise: Emotion and Collective Participation in an African-American Worship Service." *Sociology of Religion* 57:379-396.
- Griffith, R. Marie. 1997. "God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission." Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 6: “Submissive Wives, Wounded Daughters and Female Soldiers.” Pp. 169-199.
- Video. Randall Balmer. *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*. Selections on African-American Pentecostalism.

- Karl Marx: Manifestoon from You Tube.

#### Week 4 (September 13/15): Max Weber

- Pals, Daniel L. 2006. *Eight theories of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter on Weber.
- Pals, Daniel L. 2009. *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*. New York: Oxford University Press. Selections from Weber's the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, pp. 240-255.
- Chaves, Chapter 4 "Involvement" and Chapter 6 "Leaders."

#### Week 5 (September 20/22): Theory Review and First Paper Workshop

Review of readings:

- Pals, Daniel L. 2006. *Eight theories of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter on Weber.
- Pals, Daniel L. 2009. *Introducing Religion: Readings from the Classic Theorists*. New York: Oxford University Press. Selections from Weber's the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, pp. 240-255.
- Karen Fields introduction to *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Pp. xvii-lxi.
- Pals, Daniel L. 2006. *Eight theories of religion*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter on Durkheim, pp. 85-95.
- Tuesday, Sept. 20: thesis statement for theory and observation paper.
- Thursday, Sept. 22, draft workshop of theory & observational paper.

#### Week 6 (September 27/29): Youth and Religion

- Lisa Pearce and Melinda Lundquist Denton. "*Meaningful Mosaics: The Authentification of Religiosity in Adolescence*." Chapter 1 "Introduction" and Chapter 6 "Religious Profiles in Adolescence."
- Video: *Soul Searching*, Research Based on the National Survey of Youth and Religion.

#### Week 7 (October 4/6): Racial Dynamics in American Religion

- Chaves, Chapter 2 "Diversity"
- Emerson, Chapter 10: "The (Not so Great) Color Wall of the United States."
- Gerardo Marti. "Affinity, Identity, and Transcendence: The Experience of Religious Racial Integration in Diverse Congregations." Chapter 30 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), edited by Susanne C. Monahan, William A. Mirola and Michael O. Emerson.
- Emerson, Michael Oluf and Christian Smith. 2001. *Divided by faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. New York Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 4 "Color Blind: Evangelicals Speak on the Race"

- Problem” and pp. 69-91.
- PBS Video on Inter-racial churches.  
<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/episodes/december-19-2008/interracial-churches/1734/>
  - Merisa Davis on Bill Cosby and African-American Churches:  
<http://www.researchonreligion.org/practioneers/merisa-davis-on-bill-cosby-and-african-american-churches>

Week 8 (October 11/13): Review and Midterm

- **Review for test**
- **Thursday, Multiple Choice Test**

Week 9 (October 18/Fall Break October 20): American Evangelicalism

- Wheaton College Center for the Study of American Evangelicalism. “Defining Evangelicals” [http://www.wheaton.edu/isae/defining\\_evangelicalism.html](http://www.wheaton.edu/isae/defining_evangelicalism.html)
- Smith, Christian. “Resurrecting Engaged Orthodoxy” (pp. 1-20)
- Smith, Christian. “Explaining Religious Vitality in America” and “Toward a ‘Subcultural Identity’ Theory of Religious Strength” (pp. 67-119)
- Balmer video, segment on Evangelicals.
- Chaves, Chapter 7 “Liberal Protestant Decline”
- Research on Religion, Darin Mather on Evangelicals and Racial Attitudes  
<http://www.researchonreligion.org/social-issues/darin-mather-on-evangelicals-and-racial-attitudes>

Week 10 (October 25/27): Secularization

*\*visit from UNC Sociology library liason, Michèle Hayslett; research paper brainstorming session n Tuesday.*

- Emerson, Chapter 5: “News Flash: Go’s Not Dead”
- Mark Chaves “Secularization and Declining Religious Authority.” Chapter 26 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), edited by Susanne C. Monahan, William A. Mirola and Michael O. Emerson.
- Berger, Peter L., Grace Davie, and Effie Fokas. 2008. *Religious America, Secular Europe? A Theme and Variation*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate. Chapter 1 and 2.
- Visit <http://www.thearda.com/whoisyourgod/> And take the “God Test” and “Four Images of God” and read report
- Research on Religion Podcast, Paul Froese on America’s Four Gods:  
<http://www.researchonreligion.org/?s=froese>

Week 11 (November 1/3): Religion and Science

*\*paper topics/references due*

- Elaine Howard Ecklund. *Science Vs. Religion: What Scientists Really Think*. Chapter 1 “The Real Religious Lives of Scientists,” Chapter 2 “The Voice of Science,” Chapter 3 “The Voice of Faith.”
- “The Evidence for Belief” Interview with Francis Collins:  
<http://pewresearch.org/pubs/805/the-evidence-for-belief-an-interview-with-francis-collins>
- Richard Dawkins on Religion and Science:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KqebPkh6qo>

#### Week 12 (November 8/10): Religion and Politics

- Emerson, Chapter 8: “Religion and the State”
- Campbell and Putnam, Chapter 11 “Religion in American Politics” and Chapter 12 “Echo Chambers: Politics within Congregations.” Pp. 419-442.
- Chaves, Chapter 8 “Polarization.”
- Bellah, Robert. “Civil Religion in America.” (pp. 1-14)

#### Week 13 (November 15/17) Religious Violence and Restrictions on Religion

\*First Draft of Research Papers due and In-class Draft Workshop Nov. 17.

- Emerson, Chapter 6: “ Our God Rules (Yours Doesn’t)”
- Mark Jurgensmeyer. “Is Religion the Problem?” Chapter 41 in *Sociology of Religion: A Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), edited by Susanne C. Monahan, William A. Mirola and Michael O. Emerson.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2008. *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al Qaeda*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 1.
- Pew Forum, Global Restrictions on Religion Report. December 17, 2009.  
<http://pewforum.org/Government/Global-Restrictions-on-Religion.aspx>
- Research on Religion Podcast. Eli Berman on Religious Terrorism.  
<http://www.researchonreligion.org/religion-politics/eli-berman-on-religious-terrorism>

#### Week 14 (November 22/Thanksgiving is November 24): Faith Makes Us Live: Religion and Immigration

- Emerson, Chapter 11: “Who Brought the Enchiladas to My Bar Mitzvah?”
- Margarita A. Mooney. *Faith Makes Us Live: Surviving and Thriving in the Haitian Diaspora* (University of California Press, 2009). Chapters 1 & 3.
- Research on Religion Podcast. Margarita Mooney on Haitian Immigrants’ in Miami, Montreal and Paris:  
<http://www.researchonreligion.org/uncategorized/margarita-mooney-on-religion-haitian-immigrants>

#### Week 15 (November 29/December 1):

- Emerson, Chapter 7: “Does Religion Block or Encourage Social Change?”
- Wood, Richard. “Faith-Based Organizing in Action: The Local Organizing Committee at Saint Elizabeth Catholic Church” (pp. 23-54)
- McRoberts, Omar. Selections from *Streets of Glory: Church and Community in a Black Urban Neighborhood*. “The Street: Clergy Confront the Immediate Environment” (pp. 81-99), “Changing the World: Church-Based Activism” (p. 100-121).
- Video of Eugene Rivers at Calvin College:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yc5esYX6lc>
- Research on Religion Podcast: Jay Hein on His tenure as Head of the President’s Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives:  
<http://www.researchonreligion.org/social-issues/jay-hein-on-the-faith-based-community-initiative>

Week 16: (December 6): Research Papers and Review for Final

- Final papers due. Class presentation of papers.
- Review for final

**Final exam date: Tuesday, December 13th, at 8 am.**