

SOC333

# Sociology of Religion

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Spring 2018. Tarbutton Hall 105.  
MWF 9:00–9:50AM

“Every society is engaged in the never completed  
enterprise of building a humanly meaningful world.”

–Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (1967)

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

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.

**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.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Edmonds, Ennis Barrington. 2008. *Rastafari: From Outcasts to Cultural Bearers*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

## REQUIRED TEXTS (*continued*)

- 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.

## READING SCHEDULE

### 1. INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS THE "SOCIOLOGY" OF RELIGION?

- 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.

### 2. KARL MARX – OPIUM AND REVOLUTION

- Pals, Daniel. 2014. "Religion as Alienation: Karl Marx." Pp. 113–42 in *Nine Theories of Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- 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>).
- Lofton, Kathryn. 2012. "The Sigh of the Oppressed? Marxism and Religion in America Today." *New Labor Forum* 21(3):58–65.

### 3. EMILE DURKHEIM – GOD, SYMBOLS, AND MORALITY

- 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.
- 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.

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.

#### 4. MAX WEBER – CHARISMA, TELEVANGELISTS, AND IDEAL TYPES

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

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

FILM — Billy Graham: God's Ambassador

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.

#### 5. RASTAFARI – REBELLION, RITUAL, AND ROUTINIZATION

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

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

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

#### 6. RELIGION IN AMERICA – A STORY IN THREE PARTS

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

Chaves, Mark. 2017. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Second edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Chapters 4-6]

Chaves, Mark. 2017. *American Religion: Contemporary Trends*. Second edition. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. [Chapters 7-9]

#### 7. RELIGION & POLITICS IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

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

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.

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*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

## 8. REVIEW & MIDTERM EXAM

## 9. SPRING BREAK

## 10. PETER BERGER – SACRED CANOPIES & WORLD-CONSTRUCTION

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.

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.

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.

## 11. NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS – THE SOCIOLOGY OF CULTS

Lewis, James R. 2016. "Brainwashing and 'Cultic Mind Control.'" in *Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements: Volume II*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

(<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com.proxy.library.emory.edu/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190466176.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780190466176-e-12>).

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.

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.

## 12. THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION – CAN RELIGION SURVIVE ON FAITH ALONE?

Marshall, Peter. 2009. “Introduction” Pp. 1-9 in *The Reformation: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. [Full text available through [discovere.emory.edu](http://discovere.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](http://discovere.emory.edu)]

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](http://discovere.emory.edu)]

FILM- PBS Empires: Martin Luther (Part 1)

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/>

FILM — PBS Empires: Martin Luther (Part 2)

## 13. SECULARIZATION THEORY – IS GOD DEAD?

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](http://discovere.emory.edu)]

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](http://discovere.emory.edu)]

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.

## 14. RELIGIOUS ECONOMY THEORY – SEARCHING FOR RATIONAL CONSUMERS

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.

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

## 15. THE RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS "NONES" IN AMERICA

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.