Course Description

Up until the end of the 1970s most sociologists of religion seemed rather con-
fident about their understanding of religious phenomena. Scholars all more-
or-less knew that modern societies were undergoing a process of seculariza-
tion. Few sociologists expected religion to completely disappear, while many
agreed that the secularization process could take different forms in different
societies depending on their institutional order or religious culture. But hardly
anybody was prepared for the dramatic resurgence of religion that we have
witnessed over the last two decades in which religion has re-emerged as a
relatively autonomous public force, a marker of ethnic identities, and a shaper
of modern subjects and their ways of life. While contemporary sociologists
strive to understand the reasons behind religious resurgence, the complex en-
tanglement of the social and political spheres with that of the religious forces
us towards a careful historical, theoretical, and empirical survey of the field.

This course is designed to offer such a survey with a focus on
the relationship between religion and politics: first three weeks
introduce the classical texts and sociological approaches to religion. In the
remaining four weeks we will focus on the most popular and contentious
debates in the field while not forgetting to ask at which points the current
debates are still connected to and how they differ from the perspectives we
learned in the first weeks.

Course Objectives

The course is designed in a way to strike a balance between covering classi-
cal sociological theories of religious organization and practice with exploring
contemporary topics, debates, and studies. There are three main objectives of
the course: introduce the classical texts and familiarize the students with the
major sociological approaches to the study of religion, carefully lay out the
theoretical framework developed in each, and connect these to recent debates
in the sociology of religion today.

Readings & Course Requirements

The course brings together an eclectic motley of readings that carefully
combines the ‘classics’ of the field, such as works by Marx, Weber, and Durk-
heim with selections from more contemporary books and articles. Students
do not need to purchase any books. All reading material is easily accessible:
all selections from books, kept within limits to avoid copyright violations, are
available at the Canon shop located at the University Center and the articles
will be posted on SUCourse.
Although this will primarily be a lecture course, students are expected to read the required material each week and come to class prepared. The lectures are intertwined with discussions and student participation to discussions is essential. Since this is a summer school course the amount of readings per week is kept to a minimum (around 50 pages per week - a modest amount for a 300-level sociology course.) However, if you have troubles with the readings or about anything about the course in general, please do not hesitate to contact me before the problem gets any worse.

Grading will be based on the following formula:
Mid-Term %40
Final Exam %40
Class presence and participation %20

Readings And Schedule Of Classes

Week 1

Introduction and Overview

A “Scientific” Study of Religion?

Week 2

Karl Marx: ‘The ‘Political Economy’ of Religion
Max Weber: Religion as ‘Social Action’

Week 3

Emile Durkheim: The Sociology of Religious Experience
1. Religion and solidarity: Emile Durkheim, in Hamilton, M. B. (2001), (pp. 109-121)

Recap & Discussion: A Summary of the First Three Weeks

Week 4 – Geertz vs. Asad: A Debate of Universals vs. Particulars?
**Week 5 – Three Fundamentalisms: Jewish, Christian, and Islamic**

3. *Movie Screening: Reluctant Fundamentalist*

**Mid-term Exam**

**Week 6: Fundamentalisms contd.**


**Week 7: The Secularization Debate**


**Final exam**