

## **Sociology 63664: “Modernity, Secularization, Religious Persistence, Spiritual Transformation”**

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Time and Place: TR 3:30 -4:45, Main Building 218

### **Introduction**

This seminar provides an introduction to the long-standing and wide-ranging debates in sociology about secularization. Secularization was, of course, a central concern in the thinking of the founding fathers of sociology—Weber, Durkheim, Marx, and others. It has also long been the core concern of the field of sociology of religion. The key question we will explore is: What happens to religion under conditions of modernity, why, and how? This exploration first requires a more fundamental consideration of the nature of “modernity” and “religion” as concepts and realities themselves. It also involves thinking about what we might mean in saying that religion is, for instance, “strong,” “growing,” “declining,” or “losing authority.” Engaging the secularization debate also necessarily raises questions about human beings and their constitutional needs and tendencies, human societies and their requirements and operations, and basic sociological concerns with historical change, causal attributions, research design, data collection methods, measurement, and analysis. Throughout this seminar I want us to attend closely not only to associations between measured variables but also to the causal mechanisms theorized as promoting or preventing secularization. Working through the specific analytical issue of secularization therefore both grounds us solidly in debates at the heart of the field of sociology of religion specifically, and engages us in a variety of important concerns that are crucial to consider for the doing of any good work in sociology generally.

### **Goals**

It always helps in getting somewhere to know where one wants to go. There is no way to know whether we have succeeded if we do not know what success looks like. For present purposes, students who have *effectively participated* in and completed this seminar should be able to perform at least the following six tasks as specific outcome measures of success:

1. Degree Progress: Solidly pass a doctoral qualifying exam’s questions on secularization and other questions involving answers connected to the secularization literature.
2. Teaching: Prepare and successfully teach a very good undergraduate course in the sociology of religion that involves a significant component on secularization.
3. Original Scholarship: Design and conduct sociological research, perform data analysis, and write up scholarly results in the sociology of religion in ways that are well-informed by the key issues involved in the secularization debate, so that one’s scholarship is well formed by knowledge of the concerns, perspectives, and current findings involved in that debate.
4. Intellectual Insight: To be able to articulate (in whatever setting) how and why different positions in the secularization debate—as one example of what is typical in many scholarly debates—are shaped in part by key underlying presuppositions, situated perspectives, and master framing devices (theoretical, moral, and socially positional) which help to determine scholarly attitudes, thinking, and conclusions.
5. Theoretical Advance: To use what is learned in this seminar as the basis upon which through new, creative work to develop theoretical and scholarly understandings that advance knowledge in accuracy and insight beyond the current state of the art—that is, to

contribute to progress in theory and scholarship in the future.

6. Promoting Public Understanding: Provide a well informed, authoritative voice in public debates and informal conversations about the history of, data about, experiences concerning, causal influences on, and likely future prospects for “religion” in “modernity”—that is, to be a good citizens of both a larger community of scholars (academia) and of a larger culture (our society), able to shed light on and bring insights to a topic that is often characterized by misunderstanding and discord.

## Requirements

Education at the graduate level is all about time and energy invested by, and intellectual and career payoffs for, the graduate students who are seeking to become professional scholars in their disciplines. It is not really about fulfilling certain course requirements, but rather about mastering the knowledge, perspectives, and intellectual and interactive skills needed to become productive, first-rate scholars and teachers. The requirements of this course therefore are designed to serve those ends. They are:

1. Regular attendance at and active participation in seminar discussions.
2. 2-5 page response papers (typed, 1.5-spaced, Times Roman, 1-inch margins) summarizing and engaging/evaluating the assigned readings for *every* class meeting. There is no formula for correctness in this assignment; simply read well, think hard and creatively, and let that show in your response papers. I want to see that you’ve read and what you’re making of it, class meeting by class meeting.
3. One 4-6 page (typed, 1.5-spaced, Times Roman, 1-inch margins) sociological research proposal related in some way to the seminar’s concerns—asking a specific research question, setting the question in the relevant literature, proposing a clear research design and data collection and/or analysis strategy, and explaining how findings might contribute to advances in our theoretical understandings (i.e., answer the “so what?” question). To be clear, the assignment is not to conduct the research but simply to formulate a good research proposal that you could conceivably conduct. Due May 2 by 5PM.
4. A final paper synthesizing the issues and perspectives engaged in this seminar and explaining your own intellectual perspective on secularization. Students are encouraged to draft out their thoughts as they develop over the course of the semester, relying in part on the 2-5 page response papers due at each class meeting, rather than waiting to write the paper until the end of the semester. But final papers cannot simply be cut-and-paste versions of the response papers; they must be clear, coherent, well-written arguments. Due May 7 by 5PM.

## Books to Purchase

All of the readings for this course are, for anyone interested in a career of scholarship in the sociology of religion, essential to own, and are therefore worth buying now, if one does not already own them. Books we will read in part or in their entirety include:

- Bellah, Robert et al. 1985. *Habits of the Heart*. California.  
Berger, Peter. 1969. *The Sacred Canopy*. Anchor.  
Bruce, Steve. 2002. *God is Dead*. Blackwell.  
Davidman, Lynn. 1991. *Tradition in a Rootless World*. California.  
Eckstrom, Mats et al., 2002, *Explaining Society*, Routledge.

Hunter, James. 1983. *American Evangelicalism*. Rutgers.  
 Jenkins, Philip. 2002. *The Next Christendom*. Oxford.  
 Norris, Pippa and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular*. Cambridge.  
 Roof, Wade Clark. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace*. Princeton.  
 Smith, Christian. 2005. *Soul Searching*. Oxford.  
 Smith, Christian (ed.). 2003. *The Secular Revolution*. California.  
 Smith, Christian et al. 1998. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. Chicago.  
 Stark, Rodney & Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith*. California.  
 Wolfe, Alan. 2003. *The Transformation of American Religion*. Free Press.  
 Wuthnow, Robert. 1998. *After Heaven*. California.

We will also read journal articles, book chapters, and copied book excerpts as listed below (downloadable for printing from the course website)

(“→ REC” below means recommended but not required)

### **Meeting and Reading Schedule**

#### **WEEK 1 – SECULARIZATION THEORY**

TUE JAN 15

Berger, Peter. 1969. *The Sacred Canopy*. Anchor. Chs. 1-4.

THURS JAN 17

Berger, Peter. 1969. *The Sacred Canopy*. Anchor. Chs. 5-7.

#### **WEEK 2 – PHILOSOPHICAL EXCURSUS: POSITIVISM, HERMENEUTICS, CRITICAL REALISM**

TUE JAN 22

Andrew Sayer, 2000, “Introduction” and “Chapter 1: Key Features of Critical Realism in Practice: A Brief Outline,” in Sayer, *Realism and Social Science*, London: Sage, pp. 2-28.

Eckstrom, Mats et al., 2002, “Introduction,” in Eckstrom et al., *Explaining Society: Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, New York: Routledge, pp. 1-12.

THURS JAN 24

Eckstrom, Mats et al., 2002, “Science, Reality, and Concepts” and “Conceptual Abstraction and Causality,” in Eckstrom et al., *Explaining Society: Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, New York: Routledge, pp. 15-70.

#### **WEEK 3 – MORE SECULARIZATION THEORY**

TUE JAN 29

Wilson, Bryan. 1979. *Contemporary Transformations of Religion*. Oxford. Ch 1.

Chaves, Mark. 1994. “Secularization as Declining Religious Authority.” *Social Forces*. March. 72(3): 749-775 (read 749-759, 769-771; skim 760-769).

Hadaway, Kirk, Penny Long Marler, and Mark Chaves. 1993. “What the Polls Don’t Show: A Closer Look at U.S. Church Attendance.” *ASR*. 58: 741-52. (Also see follow-up symposium in *ASR*, 63(1), Feb 1998).

THURS JAN 31

Bruce, Steve. 2002. *God is Dead*. New York: Blackwell. Pp. 1-74.

#### WEEK 4 – DOUBTS AND RECONSIDERATIONS

TUE FEB 5

Berger, Peter L. 1996. "Secularism in Retreat." *The National Interest*. (Winter).

Greeley, Andrew. 1972. *Unsecular Man*. Dell Publishing. Pp. 17-83.

Bell, Daniel. 1980. "The Return of the Sacred?" *The Winding Passage*. Basic Books. Ch. 17.

→ REC: Smith, Christian. 2003. *Moral Believing Animals*. Oxford.

THURS FEB 7 (*Chris in Utah*)

Davies, Grace. 1990. "Believing Without Belonging." *Social Compass*. 37: 456-69.

Hunter, James. 1983. "The New Religions: Demoderization and the Protest Against Modernity." In Bryan Wilson (ed.). *The Social Impact of New Religious Movements*. Rose of Sharon Press. Pp. 1-19.

→ REC: Jose Casanova, 1994, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago.

#### WEEK 5 – RELIGIOUS PERSISTENCE THROUGH PRACTICAL PROBLEM SOLVING

TUE FEB 12

Davidman, Lynn. 1991. *Tradition in a Rootless World*. California. Pp. 1-107.

THURS FEB 14



Davidman, Lynn. 1991. *Tradition in a Rootless World*. California. Pp. 108-206.

#### WEEK 6 – RELIGIOUS PERSISTENCE THROUGH RATIONAL REWARD SEEKING

TUE FEB 19

Warner, Stephen. 1993. "Work in Progress Toward a New Paradigm for the Sociological Study of Religion in the United States." *AJS*. 98:5 (March): 1044-1093.

Stark, Rodney & Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith*. California. Pp. 1-79.

THURS FEB 21

Stark, Rodney & Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith*. California. Pp. 83-138, 193-258.

→ REC: Chaves, Mark and Phil Gorski. 2001. "Religious Pluralism and Religious Participation." *Annual Review of Sociology*. 27: 261-281.

→ REC: Gorski, Phillip. 2000. "Historicizing the Secularization Debate." *ASR*. 65:1 (February): 138-167.

#### WEEK 7 – RELIGIOUS PERSISTENCE THROUGH SUBCULTURAL IDENTITY

TUE FEB 26

Smith, Christian et al. 1998. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. Chicago. Chs. 1-5.

THURS FEB 28

Smith, Christian et al. 1998. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. Chicago. Chs. 6-7 + Conclusion.

## **SPRING BREAK**

### WEEK 8 – SECULARIZATION THROUGH MATERIAL WELLBEING

TUE MARCH 11

Norris, Pippa and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular*. Cambridge: Cambridge. Pp. 3-110.

THURS MARCH 13

Norris, Pippa and Ronald Inglehart. 2004. *Sacred and Secular*. Cambridge: Cambridge. Pp. 111-155, 215-241.

### WEEK 9 – SECULARIZATION THEORY AGAIN DEFENDED

TUE MARCH 18

Bruce, Steve. 2002. *God is Dead*. New York: Blackwell. Pp. 106-116, 140-166.

THURS MARCH 20 (Easter after)

Bruce, Steve. 2002. *God is Dead*. New York: Blackwell. Pp. 186-228.

### WEEK 9 – SECULARIZATION AS INTERESTED POLITICS

TUE MARCH 18

Smith, Christian (ed.). 2003. *The Secular Revolution*. California. Preface & Introduction.

THURS MARCH 20

Smith, Christian (ed.). 2003. *The Secular Revolution*. California. Ch. 2, 3, 4, and 9.

### WEEK 10 – RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY, CIVIL RELIGION, & MTD

TUE MARCH 25

Smith, Christian. 2005. *Soul Searching*. New York: Oxford. Introduction, Chs. 1-3.

THUR MARCH 27

Bellah, Robert. 1967. "Civil Religion in America." *Daedalus*. 96 (Winter). Pp. 1-21.

Smith, Christian. 2005. *Soul Searching*. New York: Oxford. Ch. 4-5.

### WEEK 11 – "INTERNAL" SECULARIZATION

TUE APRIL 1

McNamara, Patrick. 1992. *Conscience First, Tradition Second*. SUNY. Pp. 1-47.

Ammerman, Nancy. 1997. "Golden Rule Christianity," pp. 196-216 in David Hall (ed.), *Lived Religion in America*. Princeton.

→ REC: Bellah, Robert et al. 1985. *Habits of the Heart*. California. Chs. 1-6, 9-10.

THURS APRIL 3

Hunter, James. 1983. *American Evangelicalism*. Rutgers (pp. 3-19, 49-101).

Gallagher, Sally K. and Christian Smith. 1999. "Symbolic Traditionalism and Pragmatic Egalitarianism." *Gender and Society*. 13(2): 211-233.

→ REC: Hunter, James. 1987. *Evangelicalism—the Coming Generation*. Chicago.

WEEK 12 – SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS

TUE APRIL 8

Wuthnow, Robert. 1998. *After Heaven: Spirituality in America Since the 1950s*. Berkeley: California. Pp. 1-84.

THURS APRIL 10

Wolfe, Alan. 2003. *The Transformation of American Religion*. New York: Free Press. (read/skim entire)

WEEK 13 – SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATIONS

TUE APRIL 15

Roof, Wade Clark. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace*. Princeton. Pp. 3-144, 315-323.

THURS APRIL 17

Roof, Wade Clark. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace*. Princeton. Pp. 145-216.

WEEK 14 – GLOBAL SOUTH RELIGION

TUE APRIL 22

Jenkins, Philip. 2002. *The Next Christendom*. Oxford. Pp. 1-139.

THURS APRIL 24

Jenkins, Philip. 2002. *The Next Christendom*. Oxford. Pp. 141-220.

WEEK 15 – MULTIPLE MODERNITIES

TUE APRIL 29

Eisenstadt, S.E. 2000. "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus*. Winter, 129(1): 1-29.  
- More TBA

→ **Research Proposal Papers Due May 2 by 5PM.**

→ **Final Papers Due May 7 by 5PM.**