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CS 630 Sociology of Religion

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Sociology of Religion
Asbury Theological Seminary

CS 630: 3 hours

Summer III  August 13 - 17, 2001
8:30 am - 5:30 am
(39 contact hours and lunch break; fieldtrips may alter schedule slightly)

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Office Phone: 858-2369
Office Hours: By appointment during summer.

Purpose:
The course in Sociology of Religion is designed to prepare students for ministry by training them to analyze the structure, function, role, experience, and interpretation of religion in society at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Students are introduced to classical and contemporary sociological interpretations of religion, taught the vocabulary of the sociology of religion, and introduced to qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The course should be understood as complementing courses in the psychology of religion, evangelism (church growth), church history, cultural anthropology, folk religion, and social ethics. The primary emphasis throughout the course will be on Christianity, specifically in the North American forms (including various ethnic groups). References to other religions and non-Western expressions of Christianity are included to facilitate integration of the Sociology of Religion material with material from other courses. (Students from non-Western nations or students intending to go to non-Western nations may alter assignments in consultation with the professor.)

Objectives:
As a course that serves to meet the "Understanding the World" requirement for Formation, Mission, and Cultural Context, students in Sociology of Religion prepare for ministry both within and from the church by (the objectives in bold & italicized are particular foci of this course):

- Establishing a life of inward and outward, individual and corporate spiritual disciplines as means for deepening their relationship with Jesus Christ, and nourishing the life of the faith community;
- **Integrating their understanding of God's call to ministry with their vocational development, their personal spiritual formation, and their spiritual and moral identity;**
- Exhibiting basic skill in social analysis and social ministry (including cross-culturally);
- Developing and understanding tools and skills for identifying and assessing individual, congregational, and community spiritual and moral needs;
- Demonstrating commitment to ongoing spiritual formation and reflection, with appropriate expressions in personal integrity and corporate and social holiness;
- **Demonstrating knowledge of how the church is expressed in diverse communities throughout the world.**

Specifically, students who complete the Sociology of Religion course will:
1) be familiar with the basic language sociology of religion;
2) be capable of using the tools of sociology of religion for research and critiquing research of religion;
3) be capable of analyzing the general role of religious communities, at local, regional, national, and international levels;
4) be able to recognize how congregational life is partially shaped by broader social, cultural, and economic factors;
5) be capable of analyzing the form and function of religious organizations;
6) be capable of analyzing the commitment mechanisms, organizational structure, and world-view of religious communities;
7) be better able to adopt specific tools of sociology of religion to their ministry
   (for church growth, evangelism, social service ministries, etc.);
8) by becoming familiar with “a-spiritual” explanations of religious behavior, be better able to explain Christianity and the activity of the church in public forums.

Texts:
McGuire, Meredith B., Religion: The Social Context
Waardenburg, Jacques, Classical Approaches to the Study of Religion
Volker, David H. & Orton, Peter Z., Statistics (Cliff Notes Quick Review)
All additional required readings AND some of the source readings on Closed Reserve.

NOTE: This course is taught as an intensive. Think of it as a one-month course, with the class work taking one week. Students who read all or almost all of the material before class (even if sections are not clearly understood) will get much more from the actual class sessions. Also, the exam and paper are scheduled for after the conclusion of the in-class meetings.

Evaluation:
10% Article analysis paper (≈ 2 1/2 pages)
10% Compare and contrast structure OR Conversion paper (≈ 2 1/2 pages)
10% Seminar presentation (≈ 20 - 30 minutes)
20% Final exam (≈ 40 minutes)
50% Final paper (≈ 20 pages)

Each student will select one particular religious group -- a denomination, congregation, mission organization, immigrant church, parachurch organization, etc. -- to study. All the papers, then, will be written with this specific group in mind. The selection of a religious group for study should be done in consultation with the professor, prior to the course.

1) Analyze two research articles related to your selected religious group (at least one should have some statistics, even if only in the simplest form). Critique the use of statistics and qualitative techniques. Describe the relation between the assumptions (named and unnamed) and the conclusions reached by the author(s). Consider how your selected group is/is not compared to other religious (or social) communities and/or organizations. You DO NOT need to explain the actual mathematics involved, only the research methods used. Though not required, it would make the entire process easier if the student selected the articles prior to beginning classroom meetings; consult professor with any questions. DUE IN CLASS ON TUESDAY.

2) Compare and contrast the religious structures and functions of your selected religious group and one other. Examine formal and informal structures and the function(s) of the religious group in its social setting. Include a brief consideration of how these expressions may “play out” in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. DUE IN CLASS ON FRIDAY.

OR

Compare and contrast the concept of conversion in your selected religious group and one other. In the analysis look at the individual experience and the associated ecclesioligies.
Focusing on your selected religious group, explain how conversion is a social expression in the respective communities and how it may or may not encourage long-term commitment.

DUE IN CLASS ON FRIDAY.

3) Seminar presentation. Provide an over-view of your selected religious group to the rest of the class. This is an informal presentation (about 20 - 25 minutes). Students are encouraged to use "visual aids" if helpful in conveying the values, structure, understanding of conversion, etc. of the studied group. PRESENT IN CLASS ON FRIDAY.

4) Final exam. The final is an objective exam on terms and general concepts. The exam will take 30 to 45 minutes. GIVEN MONDAY AUGUST 20 AT 10 am (3 days after conclusion of class; students from out-of-town can negotiate a "take-home" exam.).

5) Final paper. A 20 - 25 page paper on the sociology of the selected religious group. The paper should include consideration of internal structure, ritual and ethics, and the relationship of the group with the broader community (if a Christian or marginal Christian group, remember to distinguish relations with other Christian groups and non-Christians). DUE MONDAY AUGUST 27 AT 10 am (10 days after conclusion of class).

The paper may be structured (to use this word in another sense) as the student wishes. It is important, however, that the paper be a paper on the sociology of religion. So, for instance, if one studies Jehovah's Witnesses, then a brief discussion of the heretical, Arian-like theology is appropriate, but the paper should not dwell on this. Rather, there should be a discussion of the evangelism, the meeting participation, the social classes that seem most attracted, etc. and how the theology relates to these. Likewise, if discussing a group like Scientology, though there should be some discussion of the psychological needs of persons joining, the entire paper should not be on the need for counseling those who leave the group. The paper should include discussion of doctrine, but it is not to be a theology paper; references to doctrine should be connected to structure, ethics, etc.

Participation: Students are required to complete all assigned readings on time. The readings should be read by the day noted on the syllabus, but students would be well-served by reading all the material prior to the beginning of class sessions (remember, this is a one-month course with sessions for one week). Failure to participate in class will result in a lowering of the final grade. As required by ATS, attendance will be taken. The deduction for low participation and/or late or incomplete reading of assigned material will be up to 10% against the final grade (a full letter grade reduction).

A few notes on submitted work:

Proofread, proofread, proofread --- and have someone else proofread (if English is not your first language, you may want to have a native speaker proofread for grammar and flow). Look for clarity in the structure and precision in statements. Do not misspell words. Do use resources (those provided and additional ones for theory; your own for your selected religious group).

Do not plagiarize. If you take a quote or even an idea that is new to you from a source, then give credit in a footnote or endnote.

All written work must be typed with 12-point type, one inch margins on all four sides, and true double-spacing.

All written work must use inclusive language when reference is made to human beings (male and female). This provides for both greater inclusion and greater precision.

There will be a penalty for late papers commensurate with the degree of lateness and the adequacy of the excuse.

A = Exceptional work: surpassing, markedly outstanding achievement of course objective

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A- = Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
B+ = Good work: strong, significant achievement of course objectives
B = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
B- = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
C+ = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
C = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
C- = Acceptable work: basic, essential achievement of course objectives
D+ = Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
D = Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
D- = Marginal work: inadequate, minimal achievement of course objectives
F = Unacceptable work: failure to achieve course objectives

COURSE SCHEDULE

BEFORE THE FIRST CLASS SESSION (some time during the month before class; preferably within two weeks of sessions beginning) -- Attend a worship service that is distinctly different than your own tradition (e.g. a different ethnic group, a very different worship style, a very different economic class or geographic location; for instance, this might be a Pentecostal church, a highly liturgical Catholic service, a Jewish service, a Unitarian meeting, a Mormon service, etc.). Take notes during (discreetly) or after (if more appropriate) so the experience can be described. Include your "feelings," things that were similar or very dissimilar to your own tradition, how people participated, how the leader led, etc. No paper will be turned in on this, but it will be very helpful for our discussion on the first day. See McGuire, 321 - 327 "A Guide for Beginning Ethnographies of Local Religious Groups."

READINGS & SESSION THEMES (Note: [1] there are readings for morning and afternoon, [2] required readings must be read before the session, [3] "SOURCE Readings" include some classic pieces on the sociology of religion and some that would be helpful in understanding the topics discussed; they are not required for M. Div. students.)

READ ALL OF McGuire
READ PAGES 1 - 84 VOELKER & ORTON; SCAN REMAINDER
OTHER READINGS ON CLOSED RESERVE IN ATS LIBRARY.
READ WAARDENBURG AS NOTED

The anthology book originally selected for class cannot be imported from Great Britain, so a text on the theory of the study of religion has been substituted. It is good, but very difficult.

Readings from Waardenburg do not fit sequentially into the course, so make sure it is read before the class begins.
1) Read the Introduction carefully.
3) Scan -- meaning you can glance over ancient examples and disagreements with other academics, but look at the arguments -- Spencer, Tylor, Lang, Frazer, Marett, Schmidt, Levy-Bruhl, van Leew, W. Otto
4) Other readings may be omitted (some may be of interest for Biblical scholars)

Day 1 8/13
Morning Overview of course/ The Origins of Religion, Culture & Society
Introduction to course
Introduction to sociological language
Discussion on "visits" to various religious groups made prior to class
REQUIRED
McGuire, 1-48 & 313-316 (glossary)
Wesley, John, selections on the relationship of Christians and the ‘world’

SOURCE READINGS
Weber, Max "The Rise of Religions" The Sociology of Religion
Malinowski, Bronislaw, Magic, Science & Religion
Durkheim, Emile, The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life
Bellah, Robert “Religious Evolution” Beyond Belief
Berger, Peter, Sacred Canopy
Geertz, Clifford "Religion as a Cultural System" The Interpretation of Cultures
Habermas, Jurgen, Theory of Communicative Action
Douglas, Mary “Abominations of Leviticus” Purity & Danger

Afternoon  Research in Religion
Introduction to sociological research language & tools
Introduction to quantitative & qualitative analyses

REQUIRED
Voelker & Orton, read pp. 1-84, scan remainder (the math need not be completely understood; look for key concepts & words)
Aldridge, Alan "Studying Religion Sociologically" Religion in the Contemporary World: A Sociological Introduction

SOURCE READINGS
Glossary on Reserve

Day 2  Sociology of Religion, Politics, and Economics
8/14 Paper #1 due in class
Morning  REQUIRED
McGuire, 229-272
Wesley, John, selections on stewardship and economic success

SOURCE READINGS
Weber, Max, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
Parsons, Talcott “The Religious Legitimation of Secular Societies”
   The Evolution of Societies
Tawney, R.H., Religion and the Rise of Capitalism
Marx, Karl “Estranged Labor” Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, 1844
Engels, Frederick, Socialism: Utopian & Scientific
Pope, Liston, Millhands & Preachers
Sennett, Richard, The Fall of Public Man

Afternoon  Sociology of Leadership & Community Identity
REQUIRED
McGuire, 95-158
Wesley, John, selections on the ‘Church within the Church’

SOURCE READINGS
Bellah, Robert “Civil Religion” Beyond Belief
Troeltsch, Ernst, The Social Teachings of the Christian Church
Niebuhr, H. Richard, Social Sources of Denominationalism

Day 3
Sociology of Distinct Religious Communities
8/15
FIELD TRIP TO SHAKER VILLAGE; ARRIVE BEFORE 8:15.
Morning
REQUIRED
McGuire, 82-93
Kanter, selections from Commitment and Community
Wesley, John, selections on accountability groups
Shaker selected readings

SOURCE READINGS
Tipton, Steven “The Moral Logic of Alternative Religions”
Murray, John E. "Determinants of Membership Levels and Duration in
A Shaker Commune, 1780-1880" Journal for the Scientific Study of
Religion (34:1, 35-48)
Nordhoff, Charles, "The Shakers" (pp. 117-256) & "The Perfectionists of
Oneida and Wallingford" (pp 259-301) The Communistic Societies of
the United States

Afternoon
Religious Evolution & "Catch Up"
SOURCE READINGS
Weber, Max "The Rise of Religions" The Sociology of Religion
Bellah, Robert “Religious Evolution” Beyond Belief

Day 4
Sociology of Individual Religious Belief
8/16
FIELD TRIP TO CANE RIDGE
Morning
REQUIRED
McGuire, 51-81, 158-184
Edwards, Jonathan, selections from A Faithful Narrative of the
Surprising Work of God
Wesley, John, selections on conversion/the New Birth
Selected reports on the Cane Ridge Revival

SOURCE READINGS
Freud, Sigmund, The Future of an Illusion
Weber, Max “Priests and Prophets” Sociology of Religion
James, William, Varieties of Religious Experience
Fowler, James, Stages of Faith
Conversion literature by Lofland & Skonovd
Conversion literature by Bainbridge & Stark

Afternoon
Sociology of Religion and End of Modernity
REQUIRED
McGuire, 273-311

SOURCE READINGS
"Secularization" material
Augustine of Hippo, The City of God
Simons, Menno & other Anabaptists, selections on religion and
state relations
Calvin, John, selections on religion and state relations
**Day 5**  
8/17  
**Morning**  
**Student Presentations**  
**Afternoon**  
**Conclusion(s):** Sociology of the Restructuring of Religion & Implications for Ministry

**REQUIRED**  
McGuire, 186-227  
Thobaben, James R. "Ecclesiology & Covenant: Christian Social Institutions in a Pluralistic Setting"  
Asbury, Francis, Selections on American forms of Methodism

**SOURCE READINGS**  
Ammermann, Nancy, Bible Believers  
Wuthnow, Robert, The Restructuring of American Religion  
Hunter, John Davison, American Evangelicalism  
Rieff, Philip, The Triumph of the Therapeutic  
Warner, R. Steven, New Wine in Old Wineskins  
Douglas, Mary & Tipton, Steven, Religion and America in a Secular Age  
Jacobson, Heaton & Dennis, “Black-White Differences in Religiosity: Item Analysis and a Formal Structural Test” Sociological Analysis (51:3, Fall 1990)  
Warren, Rick, The Purpose Driven Church  
Niebuhr, H. Richard, The Church and Its Ministry  
Gaede, S.D., Belonging  
Mouw, Richard, Consulting the Faithful  
Moberg, David, Sociology of the Church  
Martin, David, Tongues of Fire [Charismatic]  
Gutierrez, Gustavo, A Theology of Liberation (revised) [Liberationist]  
Schaller, Lyle, "Have You Felt the Earthquake?" Tattered Trust