

## *the SOCIOLOGY of RELIGION*

Sociology 480/580 – Winter, 2007

Final Exam – March 15/22

**By the final end of the course you should have completed the following items:**

- (1) The Course Journal      (2) The Final Exam
- (3) Departmental Teaching Evaluation – handed out in class
- (4) My Separate Course Assessment – handed out in class

**Please plan to turn in (1) & (2) above in the box just outside my office to the Sociology Department, CH 217, by 5 pm, Thursday, March 22. (3) Will be collected in class. Please place (4) in my mailbox in the Department.**

### **The Course Journal**

Please plan to present your course journal in separate sections in the following way:

Section 1: eight news media articles together with your one or two paragraph exploration of connections

Section 2: whatever list of questions you may have compiled throughout the course

Section 3: reflective responses to the course, including those directed toward specific prompts (the list of specific prompts will be posted on the web site). These materials should be organized as neatly as possible. They may be handwritten and may take whatever form has been most convenient to you—but please be sure they are legible.

### **The Final Exam**

The purpose of this final is not so much to “test how much you know” but to continue to encourage you to learn more....

Note: The focus of the midterm was on the first four goals of the course. Accordingly, the focus of the final will be primarily on the last two goals, but first two questions that address two major themes of the course.

**Question #1.** Berger makes the case that initially Judeo-Christianity and subsequently Protestantism both sponsored the emergence of secularization in the west. This question has two parts: (a) Briefly outline Berger’s analysis, identifying the stages of this emergence. (b) What additional factor or factors would *you argue* also played a role in the rise of secularism?

**Question #2.** In your own words, name and describe the two strands which have been woven together over our country’s history to form what Bellah calls “American’s civil religion.” From among the various news clippings that you have assembled during the course, identify that one which most speaks to this idea of an American civil religion, then identify which strand you would associate it with and why. How does your response connect with the argument that these two strands now confront one another in the so-called “culture wars?”

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The last two goals of the course were described as:

(•) An appreciation of some of the historical, developmental aspects of the American experience and (•) a greater understanding of socio-religious dynamics and issues in the current world situation. The following questions are intended to address these goals.

**Question #3.** Many events with significant religious dimensions have been in the news media recently – religion in the public square, religion and politics, religion and free expression, religious fundamentalism, secularism, etc. You have kept track of at least some of these developments in your journal via the weekly news articles. Select any **one** of these events (already in your journal) and develop a **two-part** response as follows:

**Part One** is to write a brief description of how you would have responded to and/or assessed this issue (or issues) *prior* to taking this class. This does not require you to have any more information than whatever knowledge you currently just happen to have.

**Part Two** is to write an assessment of the issue(s) from the *perspectives that you have gained* from taking this course, utilizing as much of the vocabulary, insights, concepts, ideas, and/or theories that will bring “the sociology of religion” into your assessment. To do this effectively you will probably want to expand the immediate state of your knowledge about the issue you have selected by reviewing your resources together with some additional reading – in the popular press, on line, in relevant reference materials, or elsewhere. To put this another way, the **first part** of your response will be what your “*naïve-pre-sociology-of-religion-self*” would have written (as you now think back on this earlier self); the **second part** is from your “*now-much-better-grounded-more-nuanced-more-sophisticated and much-better-informed-especially-after-researching-the-issues sociology-of-religion self*” as you articulate your answer to that most fundamental of sociological questions, “What’s going on here, anyway....?”

**Question #4.** The materials presented in class on the last two weeks may be particularly helpful in provoking your thinking. The information in Chapter 9 in the text (CSK), especially pp. 250-269, may be especially pertinent. But you are encouraged to draw on your full set of both resources and synapses in considering and framing your response. The question is this: In what ways do you think religion is playing a significant role in both the domestic affairs of our country and in the larger international scene and what new understandings do you bring to your analysis of these events. You may want to frame your response in terms of what we have called the “Culture Wars” we are and/or are not moving toward what Huntington calls the “Clash of Civilizations”? I have provided a web page with a starting point to add to your knowledge of this debate and I encourage you to go back and read **all** of the material linked to the course web page and listed under Day 20.

**Question #5.** You may think of this as *Question #1, revisited* – how or why did Berger – and his fellow “secularizationists” – get it so wrong? (You may want to re-read David Brooks’ essay “Kicking the Secularist Habit” or my summary of it as a starting point.) What specific pieces of the puzzle would you insist on adding to Brooks’ analysis.

**Extra Credit Question.** What is the single most important learning you have taken from this course? In responding identify as specifically as possible what topics (readings, lectures, visuals, etc.) in the course prompted this learning.

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