Nazarene Theological Seminary
Fall Module 2006
Sociology of Religion
MSS755
Ron Benefiel

Course Description

A sociological analysis of religious practices, beliefs, institutions and trends with special attention given to American evangelicalism.

Purpose

The purpose of this course is to teach the student to:

1) equip the student with analytical sociological tools for the purpose of reflecting on the social dimensions of religion in contemporary American evangelical Christianity;
2) utilize sociological perspectives to better understand the nature of the church as a social organization in its cultural context, and, in turn, to increase missional effectiveness in pastoral ministry.

Course Requirements

The student will be expected to:

1) attend all class sessions and excursions and participate in class discussions;
2) read all assigned readings and submit a 3-4 page synopsis/critique of each of the required texts;
3) present an overview and analysis of a book from the recommended reading list in class; and
4) submit a 15-20 page research paper.

Grading

Grades will be based on the student's satisfactory participation in and completion of course requirements according to the following percentages:

		Due Dates
Text Synopsis/Critique Project	40%	9/8
Research Paper	30%	10/15
Class Presentation	20%	TBA
Class Participation	10%	

Text Synopsis/Critique Project
Each student will submit a 3-4 page synopsis/critique of each of the required texts. The synopsis/critique should give a brief overview of the main ideas of each text and briefly analyze/critique the author's work. Due date is the last day of class.

Research Paper
Each student will submit a 15-20 page research paper. The topic must be approved by the professor. The due date for the paper is October 15, 2006. The project may be focused on any topic related to Sociology of Religion. Possible approaches include:

1) library research project on a course-related topic;
2) sociological analysis of a religious group including library research and on-sight visits and analysis (e.g. Unity, the immigrant church, Community of Christ, Salvation Army); or
4) a research project using social research methods to collect data which test particular hypotheses or measure normative attitudes or patterns of behavior related to religion. (e.g. "normative Religious and Moral Patterns of Behavior among Nazarene College Students", or Attitudes toward Women in Ministry in Evangelical Churches.").

Class Presentation
Each student will have one hour of class time to present an overview and critical analysis of one book from the recommended reading list. The presentation should allow ample time for class discussion.

Class Excursions
The class will visit different religious groups both in regularaly scheduled meeting times and on Sunday, September 3. Participation in class excursions are required and considered in the student's class participation portion of the grade. Alternate arrangements may be made with the professor as necessary.

Required Texts

Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark. *The Churching of America, 1776 – 2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy.* Rutgers University Press. 2005.

Kelley, Dean. *Why Conservative Churches Are Growing: A Study in the Sociology of Religion with a New Preface for the ROSE Edition.* Mercer University Press. 1986.

Marsden, George M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870 – 1925.* Oxford University Press. 2006.

Smith, Christian. *Moral, Believing Animals: Human Personhood and Culture.* Oxford University Press. 2003.

Webber, Robert E. *The Younger Evangelicals: Facing the Challenges of the New World.* Baker Books. 2002.

Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Routledge. 2001.

Recommended Reading

Berger, Peter L. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of Sociological Theory of Religion.* Doubleday. 1967.

Carter, Stephen L. *Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*. Doubleday. 1993.

Conn, Harvey. *The American City and the Evangelical Church*. Baker Books. 1994.

Emerson, Michael O. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical religion and the Problem of Race in America.* Oxford Press. 2000

Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom.* Oxford University Press. 2002.

Kephart, William and William W. Zellner. *Extraordinary Groups.* Sixth Edition. 1998.

Law, Eric H.F. *The Wolf Shall Dwell with the Lamb: A Spirituality for Leadership in a Multicultural Community.* Chalice Press. 1993.

Martin, Karl. *The Evangelical Church and American Popular Culture.* Point Loma Press. Monograph Series, Number One. 2000.

Niebuhr. H. Richard. *Christ and Culture.* Harper and Row. 1975.

Smidt, Corwin E. *Pulpit and Politics: Clergy in American Politics at the Advent of the Millennium.* Baylor University Press. 2004.

Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* Simon and Schuster. 2001.

Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity: A Sociologist Reconsiders History.* Princeton University Press. 1996.

Taylor, Mark Lewis. *Religion, Politics, and the Christian Right: Post-9/11 Powers and American Empire.* Fortress Press. 2005.

Wolfe, Alan. *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith.* Free Press. 2003.

Course Schedule and Required Readings

Tuesday, August 27

Johnstone Section 1 (pp. 1-86) and Chapter 12 (pp. 260-280)
Martin, Karl. *The Evangelical Church and American Popular Culture.*
Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture.*

Wednesday, August 28

Iannacone Articles
Johnstone Chapters 5, 6 (pp. 87-139) and 14 (pp. 311-340)
Religion in America Chapter 1

Thursday, August 29

Johnstone Chapter 8 (pp. 163-189)
Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone.* Chapter on Religion.

Religion in America Chapter 2
Responses to Terrorism Article
Stark, Rodney. *The Rise of Christianity*. Chap. 5.

Friday, August 30 -- Class Excursion

Sunday, September 1 -- Class Excursion

Monday, September 2
Johnstone Chapters 7 (pp.140-162), 9-11 (190-259) and 13 (281-310)
Oliver Phillips paper on Black Nazarenes
Lori Niles paper on Women in Ministry in the Church of the Nazarene
Student Book Review Presentations

Tuesday, September 3
Johnstone Chapter 15 (pp. 341-366)
Religion in America Chapter 3
Student Book Review Presentations

Wednesday, September 4 -- Class Excursion

Thursday, September 5
Fragmentation of Identity paper
Religion in America Chapter 4
Student Book Review Presentations

Friday, September 6 -- Final Examination