

Sociology 49.17
Religion and Political Economy
12 (MWF 12:50-1:55) (X-hour: T 1:20-2:10)
Office Hours MW 3:00-4:00 and by appointment

S20
Dr. Clark
Location: TBD
Office: Silsby 107

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is religion's role in the wealth and poverty of nations? In the past two centuries or so, historians and social scientists have developed a rich variety of methods of answering this question, a question that is acquiring new attention in the age of globalization.

The present course has three purposes. The first is to survey early treatments of the relationship between religion and prosperity. During the Enlightenment, when political economy first emerged, authors such as Adam Smith and Tocqueville pioneered the attempt to study the economic effects of religious belief and practice. Our aim will be to rediscover their efforts, some of which are informing research agendas today.

Second, we will focus on the Weber thesis and its critics. In responding to Karl Marx's materialist theory of economic development, Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) offered a cultural theory of development rooted in religion; it became a popular cliché as well as a classic in the sociology of religion. What are the strengths and weaknesses of his theory? And how is it regarded today by historians and social scientists trying to understand economic development and its religious dimension, past and present?

Third, we will direct our general question to the contemporary world at large. Is religion giving way to secularization, and if not, why not? Is there a Confucian ethic in East Asia that is comparable to Weber's "Protestant ethic" in its economic impact? Is there a religious dimension to the economic prospects of the Islamic world? What effects has the explosive rise of movements like Pentecostalism had on the economic experience of Africans and Latin Americans? These are among the topics we will address in the third part of the course.

COURSE GOAL: By combining selective study of some classics of modern social theory--Adam Smith, Tocqueville, Marx and especially Max Weber---with a review of current sociological literature, this course will introduce students to some of the biggest but most overlooked questions of our time: What is the relationship between religion and economic development? Are some religious cultures more conducive to economic development than others? If so, what are the options for governments that are seeking the economic modernization of their peoples?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: By the end of this course, students will be better able to analyze the historical roots of the correlation between religion and political economy, examine a range of evidence for and against the most important theory (the Weber thesis) concerning that correlation, and extend its findings beyond its original European focus to include the world at large today.

GRADING:

Midterm Examination:	20%
Final Paper:	25%
Final Examination:	30%
Class Participation:	25%

The midterm examination will consist of essay questions drawn from a pool that will be made available in advance. The final examination will be cumulative and will also be based on a pool of essays posted ahead of time on Canvas.

The final paper will be a research paper of 15 to 18 pages. By no later than Monday, April 10, students must come to my office to discuss their interests and settle on a topic to explore. Then, no later than a week before their paper is due, they must bring or email me a copy of the annotated bibliography of a minimum of twelve sources that they intend to use in composing their paper.

Finally, students must present for class discussion a brief outline of their research that includes close attention to the following elements: framing the research question, articulating a methodology, describing the types of sources used for the study, and offering reasons for the conclusions based on those sources. This presentation will take place during week 9. The oral presentation will be considered part of the final paper assignment (not the class participation assignment), and will count for 3 of the 25 points allotted to that assignment.

The class participation part of the grade will consist of the following elements: coming to class regularly (6.25%), showing evidence of having attentively read the assigned material regularly (6.25%), listening carefully and responding thoughtfully to what is said by the instructor and the other students (6.25%), and offering serious and reflective comments on a regular basis (6.25%).

ATTENDANCE POLICY: Students should be present and accounted for at each class meeting. I will take attendance each day, and for each absence beyond the fourth (4th), I reserve the right to reduce the student's grade under the aforementioned "class participation" rubric.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY: All laptops, cellphones, tablets, and other technology aids must be off and stowed away at all times during class. Violations of this policy will count against the "Class Participation" portion of the final grade.

COURSE SYLLABUS

Week 1: Mar. 30---Introduction and Orientation: What is political economy? What is the role of religion in it?
Apr. 1--- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, bk. 5, pp. 788-814 of Glasgow ed. (Canvas)

Apr. 2—No class, but Maria Paganelli lecture on Adam Smith at 4:30!

Apr. 3--- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, ch. 9, sects. 4-6, pp. 467-88 (Nolla ed.) (Canvas)

Week 2: Apr. 6--- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, pt. 2, chs. 8-15, pp. 202-216 (Canvas) Christakis lecture at 4:30!

Apr. 8--- Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, ch. 1, sect. 4, toward the end

(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf> [paragraph at p. 51 bottom to 52 top] and <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm> first 4 paragraphs) (Canvas) and Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Author's Introduction and ch. 1

Apr. 10 --- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ch. 2

Week 3: Apr. 13 --- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ch. 3 plus Calvin (pp. 39-66)

Apr. 15 --- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ch. 4 (pp. 66-97)

Apr. 17 --- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ch. 5

Week 4: Apr. 20 --- Critics of the Weber Thesis (Norton critical ed.) and Pfaff et al, "Causes and Consequences of the Protestant Reformation," *Explorations in Economic History*, 62 (2016):1-22 (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0014498316301085>)

Apr. 22--- MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Apr. 24--- The “Economics of Religion”: Alternative to the Weber Thesis?
Witham, *Marketplace of the gods*, ch. 1

Week 5: Apr. 27 --- Witham, *Marketplace of the gods*, chs. 4-5
Apr. 29 --- Witham, *Marketplace of the gods*, chs. 7-8
May 1--- Witham, *Marketplace of the gods*, chs. 9-10

Week 6: May 4 --- Latin America: Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*, ch. 1
May 6 --- Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*, chs. 2-3
May 8 --- Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*, chs. 4-5

Week 7: May 11--- Chesnut, *Competitive Spirits*, chs. 6-7
May 13--- Africa: Attanasi and Yong, *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*,
“Pentecostal Paradigms of National Economic Prosperity in Africa,” ch. 2, and “Under the Radar:
Pentecostalism in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role,” ch. 3 (Baker reserve)
May 15 --- Asia: Attanasi and Yong, *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, “Urban
Property as Spiritual Resource: The Prosperity Gospel Phenomenon in Coastal China,” ch. 7, and
“The Prosperity Gospel among Filipino Catholic Charismatics,” ch. 8 (Baker reserve)

Week 8: May 18 --- The Middle East: Jared Rubin, *Rulers, Religion, and Riches*, chs.
5-6, “Restrictions on the Printing Press” and “Printing and the Reformation”
May 20 --- The Middle East: Jared Rubin, *Rulers, Religion, and Riches*, chs.
7-8, “Success: England and the Dutch Republic” and “Stagnation: Spain and the Ottoman Empire”
May 22--- Joseph Henrich, *The “WEIRDEST” People in the World* (excerpts
on Canvas)

Week 9: May 25 --- NO CLASSES (MEMORIAL DAY)
May 27--- CLASS PRESENTATIONS
May 29 --- CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Week 10: June 1 --- CLASS PRESENTATIONS (PAPERS DUE)
June 3 --- Final Exam Review (optional)

FINAL EXAMINATION: Sunday, June 7, 3:00 pm

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Chesnut, Andrew, *Competitive Spirits: Latin America’s New Religious Economy* (2007)
http://www.amazon.com/dp/0195314867/ref=rdr_ext_tmb

Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, ed. Richard Swedberg
(Norton Critical Edition, 2008) (http://www.amazon.com/Protestant-Spirit-Capitalism-Critical-Editions/dp/0393930688/ref=sr_1_4?ie=UTF8&qid=1422644665&sr=8-4&keywords=weber+protestant+ethic)

Witham, Larry, *Marketplace of the Gods: How Economics Explains Religion* (2010)
http://www.amazon.com/Marketplace-Gods-Economics-Explains-Religion/dp/0195394755/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1422644978&sr=8-1&keywords=witham+religion)