Syllabus

The Sociology of Religious Fundamentalism
SOCI 4957/5957
Fall 2010

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION
Instructor: Paul Kamolnick, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology
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Office hours: M,W,F: 10:30-11:15; T,R: 10:30-11:00; and, by appt.

COURSE MEETING
Room 125 Rogers-Stout Hall
Tuesday, Thursday: 12:45 – 2:05 pm

COURSE OUTCOMES
- Convey the intrinsic theoretical-practical relationship among four key variables:
  (1) Nature of Religion ➔ (2) Nature and processes of secularization ➔ (3) Processes of religious fundamentalization ➔ (4) the variable consequences for persons and societies of religious fundamentalization.
- Identify and classify alternative theoretical explanations for the origins and nature of human religion(s).
- Identify the key premises of alternative theories of religious origins.
- Understand what is meant by the concept and process of secularization at the subjective (psychological) and objective (social-institutional) levels.
- Ascertain differences in secularization among and within various world religions and geographic regions
- Define, characterize, and distinguish the central features of religious fundamentalism as a generic phenomenon.
- Describe various dimensions of religious fundamentalism and fundamentalization particularly in relation to social, cultural, and political life.
- Describe how religious fundamentalism is manifest in Islam as both a non-violent separatist journey and a call for violent jihad against the existing sociopolitical world.

COURSE ORGANIZATION
This course combines lecture-discussion with smaller seminar-type formats. The instructor is primarily responsible for the educational task, but prepared students involved in a more dialogical relation with the instructor, and each other, greatly assists educational outcomes (and makes the class more lively, and enjoyable!).
REQUIRED TEXTS
The following texts are required, available in paperback in the university bookstore, and should be purchased as soon as practicable:


COURSE EVALUATION
Take-home mid-term: 40%
Take-home final exam: 40%
10-page term paper: 20%

Subject matter of term paper: “Provide a reasoned argument in favor of a specific theoretical understanding of global religious fundamentalization. (Use resources provided in classroom readings, discussions, and lectures; you may supplement these materials, but that is neither expected nor required)” Due date: last day of class.

COURSE ITINERARY

INTRODUCTION TO COURSE

31 Aug. 2010  Course introduction; syllabus, expectations, organization.

Q. WHAT IS RELIGION? Alternative theories of the origin and nature of human religion and human religiosity.

*The primitive quest for this-worldly and after-this-worldly blessings? This-worldly proto-scientific propitiation/expiation theories*

Tues., 7 Sept.  Contd.
Thurs., 9 Sept.  *Eight Theories*, ch.5; Pals, *IntroRelig*, ch.8 (Weber)
Tues., 14 Sept.  Cont’d.

*The rational choice paradigm applied to the religious and spiritual marketplace?*

Thurs., 16 Sept.  Rodney Stark's Theoretical Approach
R. Stark and R. Finke, “A Theoretical Model of Religious Economies.” (Stark2)
**The human quest for meaningful being? A sacred canopy? Symbolic culturalist theories**
Tues., 21 Sept.  *Eight Theories*, ch. 8; *IntroRelig*, ch. 11 (Geertz)

**The opiate of the masses, heart in heartless world, sigh of the oppressed creature? The social control of the human masses? Compensatory and/or Social control theories**
Thurs., 23 Sept.  *Eight Theories*, ch. 4; *Pals*, *IntroRelig*, ch. 5 (Marx)
Tues., 28 Sept.  *Eight Theories*, ch. 2; *Pals*, *IntroRelig*, ch. 3 (Freud)
Thurs., 30 Sept.  *Eight Theories*, ch. 3; *Pals*, *IntroRelig*, ch. 4 (Durkheim)

**Adaptationist theories**
Tues., 5 Oct.  Scott Atran, “Conclusion” to *In Gods We Trust: the evolutionary landscape of religion*. (pdf on D2L as “Adaptationism 1”)

Pascal Boyer, chapter 9, “Why Belief?,” in *Religion Explained: the evolutionary origins of religious thought*. (pdf on D2L as “Adaptationism 2”)

Brief Summation of Theories of Religion; Discussion.

**Q. WHAT IS SECULARIZATION?** Alternative theoretical accounts, empirical evidence, and implications for the world religions.


Thurs., 14 Oct.  *Secularization and the World Religions*, chs. 1-2 (Catholicism, Protestantism)

**MID-TERM HANDED OUT OCT. 14; DUE OCT 21.**
**SUBJECT: THEORIES OF RELIGION**

Tues., 19 Oct.  OFF; FALL BREAK

Thurs., 21 Oct.  *Secularization and the World Religions*, ch. 3-4 (Judaism, Islam)

Tues., 26 Oct.  *Secularization and the World Religions*, ch. 5-6 (Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism)

Thurs., 28 Oct.  *Secularization and the World Religions*, chs. 9-11 (Europe, USA, E. Asia)
Tues., 2 Nov.  \textit{Secularization and the World Religions}, chs. 12-13 (Latin America, Africa Middle East)

\textbf{WHAT IS RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM?} Alternative theoretical accounts, empirical evidence, and potential relation to secularization.

Thurs., 4 Nov.  \textit{Strong Religion}, Introduction, ch. 1

Tues., 9 Nov.  \textit{Strong Religion}, chs. 2-3

Thurs., 11 Nov. \textit{Strong Religion}, ch. 4

\textbf{WHAT ARE THE VARIABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR CONTEMPORARY PERSONS AND SOCIETIES OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM?} Focus on contemporary Islamist fundamentalizations

Tues., 16 Nov.  \textit{The Islamist}, chs. 1-5

Thurs., 18 Nov.  \textit{The Islamist}, chs. 6-9

Tues., 23 Nov.  \textit{The Islamist}, chs. 10-13

Thurs., 25 Nov. OFF; THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY.

Tues., 30 Nov.  \textit{The Islamist}, chs. 14-15, Afterword


Tues., 7 Dec.  \textit{Journey of the Jihadist}, chs. 3-4

Thurs., 9 Dec.  \textit{Journey of the Jihadist}, chs. 5-6, Afterword

Last day of class: Final papers due; Take-home exams handed out: Due: Thurs. 16\textsuperscript{th}, 1:20 pm.

Final Exam Topic: “What, if any, relationship may exist between religious fundamentalism and violence committed in the name of religion?”