REL/SOC/ANT 651 Classics in the Sociology of Religion and Morals Fall 2014
Wed 6:45-9:30  504 HL

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Office Hours: By appointment

Classics in the Sociology of Religion focuses on the distinctive interpretative
perspectives for the study of religion and morals provided Max Weber and Emile
Durkheim, and some of their contemporary followers. The seminar explores Weber's
leading concepts (e.g., charisma, rationalization, legitimation), hypotheses, Protestant
Ethic thesis, comparative studies of the world religions and sociopolitical/ethical
perspective on modern societies. Emile Durkheim's very different contributions to the
study of religion and morals are examined in depth in his now classical texts: The
Division of Labor, The Rules of the Sociological Method, Suicide, and The Elementary
Forms of the Religious Life. Durkheim's foundational assumptions, leading concepts
(e.g., anomie, sacred, profane, ritual, civil religion, community, individualism, collective
representations), leading hypotheses, and treatment of current sociopolitical/ethical issues
are analyzed. The course concludes with several recent texts by Robert Bellah, Jonathan
Lear and Robert Wuthnow that draw on and grapple with major themes in Weber and
Durkheim.

Course requirements: Two 15 page papers, one due by Oct 28, the other by December 20.
The first should be on one of the concepts, hypotheses or theories studied in the course.
The other may be a topic of your own choosing related to some aspect of the course.
Weekly reflection papers should raise a question or two (1-2 pages) that you would like
to discuss in class.

Course Evaluation: 40% for each paper. 20% for class participation and reflection papers.
More than one absence will require instructor's consent.

WEEK 1  INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

WEEK 2  BASIC CONCEPTS IN WEBER'S COMPARATIVE SOCIOLOGY OF
          RELIGIOUS MORALS


Supplementary Readings: Jeffrey Alexander, Theoretical Logic in
Sociology, III; Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, II,
pp. 179-252; Reinhard Bendix, Max Weber: An Intellectual Protrait; R.
Bendix and G. Roth, Scholarship and Partisanship: Essays on Max Weber;
WEEK 3
WEBER ON THE PROTESTANT ETHIC AND MODERNITY

Weber, Max, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism

or

Walzer, Michael The Revolution of the Saints.


WEEK 4
WEBER’S COMPARATIVE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS MORALS


WEEK 5
DURKHEIM’S METHODOLOGY AND SOCIAL ONTOLOGY


Supplementary Readings: For Durkheim’s background and early thought, see: J. Alexander, Theoretical Logic in Sociology, Vol. II, ch. 4;

**WEEK 6**

**DURKHEIMIAM SOCIOLOGY AND THE INTEGRATION OF MODERN SOCIETIES**

Wallwork, *Durkheim: Morality and Milieu* ch. 4, pp. 75-85.


**WEEK 7**

**DURKHEIM'S THEORY OF SUICIDE AND COMMUNAL MORALITY**


Durkheim, *Emile, Suicide*, Book Two, chs. 2-5, (pp. 152-276), Book Three, ch. 3 (pp. 361-384).

WEEK 8 DURKHEIM ON THE STATE, MEDIATING STRUCTURES AND ETHICS

Wallwork, Durkheim: Morality and Milieu, pp. 85-150. 
Wallwork, Durkheim: Morality and Milieu, ch. 6, pp. 151-181.


WEEK 9 DURKHEIM’S INTERPRETATION OF RELIGION


WEEK 10  CIVIL RELIGION


WEEK 11  CONTEMPORARY AMERICA’S TROUBLED ETHOS

Bellah, Robert, et al., Habits of the Heart.


WEEK 12  THINKING WITH DURKHEIM TODAY

Lear, Jonathan. Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation, chs 1-3


WEEK 14  Student Paper Reports
Books at SU Bookstore:


Walzer, Michael. The Revolution of the Saints

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

Books to be purchased online:


Academic Integrity Statement: The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. For more information and the complete policy, see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu.

Disability Statement: Students who may need academic accommodations due to a disability are encouraged to discuss their needs with the instructor at the beginning of the semester. In order to obtain authorized accommodations, students should be registered with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309 (315) 443-4498 and have an updated accommodation letter for the instructor. Accommodation and related support services such as exam administration are not provided retroactively and must be requested in advance. For more information about services and policy, visit the Office of Disability Services website at http://disabilityservices.syr.edu/ or contact the office at the addresses below:

Syracuse University
Office of Disability Services