

The following exam lists 4 sets of essay questions. You are responsible to comprehensively answer 1 of the questions listed in each set. We will only grade four answers; do not waste time trying to answer a fifth. Usually, 1-2 pages of single-spaced writing is enough to cover an answer, but we won't be grading answer based on length. Please put all of your answers in one document (make sure it has your name) and then email it to Dr. Pitt as an attachment. Put the letters of the questions you answered in the text or subject line of your email. These are due and will be accepted NO LATER THAN 11:59 pm on Tuesday 10/12. Good luck!!

1. DURKHEIM:

a) We all have seen it. A new Star Wars movie comes out and all the members of the Star Wars “cult” are being interviewed on Entertainment Tonight and laughed at on the Tonight Show. What are the parallels between the development of a religion and a Star Wars “cult”? Discuss the functions of a totem for indigenous religions and Star Wars. Can you make a case for why Durkheim might describe the Star Wars “cult” as a religion (beliefs, symbols, rituals, mana, negative rites, positive rites, the sacred, the profane)?.

b) Durkheim claimed that religion is derived from society. Assume the religions developed in other countries (e.g., Christianity, Islam) had not made it to the shores of the United States. Speculate on what religion would be developed here. Show your understanding of the key concepts in Durkheim's theory (of religion) in your answer.

2. COMPARISONS:

a) Durkheim, Marx, Weber, and DuBois all believed that religion served different functions for society. Describe the different functions each theorist felt religion served and provide their corresponding unit of analysis. Then pick the two that best explain the differing impact religion might have on workers and employers (remember, all workers aren't paid!) and explain those differences.

b) Durkheim, Weber, and DuBois each had different ideas about secularization. Describe what each felt was an inevitability for the church. In both the readings and class lectures, we learned that Mark Chaves redefines secularization to refer to the loss of religious authority along three different dimensions. What were they? You should, list, describe them, and provide an explanation for the level of society that corresponds to each type of secularization. Finally, we also discussed in class the percentages of people who believe in phenomena like heaven, hell, the divinity of Jesus, the power of prayer, and so forth. Which type of secularization do these items relate to? Explain how it does or does not support this type of secularization.

3. THEORETICAL POTPOURRI

a) Jehovah's Witness groups demand a lot from their members. For example, they are often made fun of and most individuals they witness to as they go from house to house, often in dangerous neighborhoods, slam their doors in their faces. And yet the number of its members has steadily grown practically since its inception as a popular religion. How would a rational choice theorist (e.g., Iannaccone) account for this growth? In your response, explain the tension between Jehovah's Witnesses and society at large and how the group's members resolve that tension.

b) Marx and Weber both look at the impact of religion on capitalism. Describe, for each theorist, what impact religion might have (or did have) on American culture. Is that impact good for both, bad for both, or would they split on the benefits of religion for culture and economics? Does religion distract or prevent human beings from attaining true social and economic progress? A complete answer will, obviously (?), mention the protestant ethic discussing Weber.

4. APPLICATION:

a) Dr. Pitt characterized the early African American church as a meta-institution. First, explain what is meant by that term and why DuBois thought that it had to take on this function. Then, imagine that you are preacher who wants to start a new church across the street from Vanderbilt's campus. Come up with 3 ministries that you would start that would attract Vanderbilt students in this meta-institutional way that DuBois describes. One of your ministries **MUST** meet a function not described in the slide in class. Be clear about the institutions (e.g., media) you're tackling.

b) Imagine you are a consultant to the leader of the Presbyterian Church, USA, a mainline protestant denomination, and one that is rapidly losing members. Based on your readings, explain where these members are going when they leave and provide three pieces of advice to help slow the loss of members (again, according to your readings and the lectures). Then, go to the webpage for Saddleback Church (<http://www.saddleback.com>) and find two examples of how they might be following your advice.