Economics 553: The Economics of Religion (26159)

Deirdre McCloskey, Economics, History, English, and Communication

Wednesdays, 6:00-8:30

331 2BSB until we find a nicer place to meet, perhaps my home at 720 S. Dearborn, 312-435-1479

It's a new course, reflecting the great interest in the economics of religion in the Department of Economics (see the bibliography below: the Chiswicks, Lehrer, McCloskey, and others). It involves the reading of numerous books and articles, since it is an advanced graduate course---our faculty here at UIC will be read, and Rodney Stark the sociologist of religion will be read, and many of the pioneering works of Laurence Iannaccone.  Iannaccone’s is one sort of direction: how religious institutions and loyalties reflect economic matters, such as incomes and prices (of attending church, say). It's an application of Beckerian ideas.  But there's another direction I want to take seriously, because I think economic research should.  That is: the implications that religious life has for the economy.  Here the old classic is Weber's 1905 *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, but that's just a beginning; Stark is a second step.

The uses of such a course for your purposes are (1. ) if you want an academic career you will be able to give an undergraduate course in the economics of religion, especially handy in getting hired at the very many denominational colleges in the United States; (2. ) you can try out dissertation topics, or at least a chapter; and (3. ) you will have something to say when non-economists challenge the Rational Model, wherever it is applied: the economics of religion is one of the liveliest and most profound discussions of differences in approaches among economists, historians, sociologists, theologians.

You'll be expected to lead serious, scholarly discussions of the readings, *a reaction paper to be read out at every class session,* and to write by the end a piece of (we all hope) publishable research, perhaps as I said a tryout for a PhD thesis or a chapter in one.  Serious science.  No passive participants. But I expect we'll have fun too, if wrestling with ideas is your idea of fun!

Obviously such a course does not advocate this or that religion. We are studying religion, not trying to convert each other. I should declare at the outset, though, just so you know, that I am a (progressive) Episcopalian, that is, an Anglican Christian (some people doubt that progressive Anglicans *are* Christians!! [🡨 joke, joke] So I will frequently exhibit an interest in the details of Christianity. I personally will need more guidance on Judaism and especially on Islam and Buddhism and others. One point we will examine a little in the course is precisely what constitutes for economic purposes a “religion.” Is Science, for example, a religion? Democracy? Citizenship?

To give you an idea of the scope of our inquiry, look at the list of topics from the (relatively new) Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture (google it):

* Religious markets, competition, monopoly, and regulation
* Economic growth, development, poverty, and inequality
* Social networks, and social/spiritual/religious capital
* Beliefs, attitudes, doctrines, norms, and values
* Institutions, organizations, congregations, and denominations
* Collective action, club goods, and social movements
* Extremism, conflict, and religious persecution
* Religious or social trends, growth, and decline
* Conversion, switching, proselytizing, and the marketing of religion
* Religious participation, attendance, and commitment
* Religious giving, philanthropy, and church finances
* *Demography*, fertility, family, marriage, and gender
* Education, human capital, health, and happiness
* Race, ethnicity, and discrimination
* Politics, public choice/finance, church-state issues, and the law
* Economic theory, game theory, and statistical methods
* Experimental methods, simulation studies, and computational methods
* Neuroscience and evolutionary theory
* Sects, cults, New Religious Movements, and Non-western religions

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**Second meeting**: We will adjust later readings after the first few weeks to suit the interests of the class. For next week, the second meeting, you are to read with a certain intensity Laurence Iannaconne’s 1998 long survey article on the subject, "Introduction to the Economics of Religion," *Journal of Economic Literature*, 36: 3, pp. 1465-1495 and Gary S. Becker, "The Economic Approach to Human Behavior. " (Chapter 1, pages 3-14, in Becker's book of the same title, U. Chicago Press, 1976). (You may get these in the library, but of course also on line: all finding and acquisition of books and articles is your responsibility, so get to it right away: amazon.com delivers in Chicago in two days, commonly, so I don’t want people saying “I couldn’t get the book”! Every economist should *own* a copy of Becker’s book.) You are to write, *as for every session we have*, a short paper, typed (of course: we are professional scholars!), well written (you will want to acquire my little pamphlet, *Economical Writing*, available on amazon.com) that in two or three pages reacts to the essays, critically---that is, extending what you think is good in them, attacking something you think is bad, *not merely summarizing* (that’s for undergraduates). You are to get into the readings, in other words, deeply enough to not merely *under*stand (that is, being able to reproduce the gist of the argument, say) but in graduate-school fashion to “*over*stand,” that is, to react critically, as a necessary preface to creativity in your own thinking. We stand on the shoulders of giants, as Newton (and others) famously said. But to improve on the giants we need to see what they did right *and wrong*, the better to advance.

**Third meeting:** Speaking of doing things wrong, and overstanding, now we read some foundational essays *attacking* the “economic” (i.e. max U s.t. constraints) approach to behavior, religious and otherwise. **George A. Akerlof** and **Rachel E. Kranton**, 2000. "[Economics and Identity](http://ideas.repec.org/a/tpr/qjecon/v115y2000i3p715-753.html)," [*Quarterly Journal of Economics*](http://ideas.repec.org/s/tpr/qjecon.html), vol. 115(3), pages 715-753, August. **Amartya Sen**, “Goals, Commitment, and Identity*,* [*Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*](http://ideas.repec.org/s/oup/jleorg.html). 1 (1985, Fall); 341-55, reprinted in his *Rationality and Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. **Robert H. Frank**. 1993. “The Strategic Role of the Emotions: Reconciling Over-And Undersocialized Accounts of Behavior.” *Rationality and Society*, April 1, 1993; 5(2): 160-184. Having acquired the paperback of **McCloskey,** *The Bourgeois Virtues* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 2006), which we will read later in other connections, read Chapters 6, 7, 10, 30, 40, 41.

**Later meetings:** As I said, we’ll adjust these to fit the interests of the group. Say tuned.

For the later readings we will use and improve a bibliography below resulting from merging Iannaconne’s recent course materials a George Mason University and the 1997 bibliography Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture. The ones with initial dates after the author are from Iannaccone. The [ ] classifications after an entry are versions of Iannaconne’s. The \* after an item = Iannaccone assigns these in his courses on the economics of religion.

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Akerlof, George A. "Procrastination and Obedience. " *American Economic Review* 81 (Papers and Proceedings 1991): 1-19.

Akerlof, George A. On identity.

Allen, Douglas W. 1995. "Order in the Church: A Property Rights Approach," *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 27: 1, pp. 97-117 [club theory and collective action]

Anderson, Gary M. "Invest Now for Your (Eternal) Retirement: The Economics of the Medieval Afterlife. " Paper presented at the meetings of the Western Economic Association in Lake Tahoe, Nevada, Year.

Anderson, Gary M. "Mr. Smith and the Preachers: The Economics of Religion in the Wealth of Nations. " *Journal of Political Economy* 96 (5 1988): 1066-1088.

Anderson, Gary M. and Robert D. Tollison. "Morality and Monopoly: The Constitutional Political Economy of Religious Rules. " *Cato Journal* 12 (2 1992): 373-392.

Anderson, Gary M. , Robert B. Ekelund Jr. , Robert F. Hebert, and Robert D. Tollison. 1992. "An Economic Interpretation of the Medieval Crusades. " The Journal of European Economic History, 21:2, pp. 339-363 [how religion affects attitudes towards economic policy] \*

Ayal, Eliezer B. , and Barry R. Chiswick. "The Economics of the Diaspora Revisited. " *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 31 (4 1983): 861-875.

Azzi, Corry and Ronald Ehrenberg. 1975. "Household Allocation of Time and Church Attendance," The *Journal of Political Economy*, 83: 1, pp. 27-56 [club theory and collective action] \*

Bainbridge, William Sims. "Explaining the Church Member Rate. " Social Forces 68(4 1990): 1287-1296.

Bainbridge, William Sims. "The Religious Ecology of Deviance. " *American Sociological Review* 54(April 1989): 288-295.

Barrett, David B. *World Christian Encyclopedia*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1982.

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Behdad, Sohrab. 1989. "Property Rights in Contemporary Islamic Economic Thought: A Critical Perspective," *Review of Social Economy*, 47:2, pp. 185-211 [how religion affects attitudes towards economic policy] \*

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Block, Walter and Irving Hexam, ed. *Religion, Economics and Social Thought*. Vancouver, BC: Fraser Institute, 1986.

Block, Walter, Geoffrey Brennan, and Kenneth Elzinga (eds). 1985. *The Morality of the Market: Religious and Economic Perspectives*, The Fraser Institute: Vancouver, British Columbia. [religion and individual economic behavior]

Boulding, Kenneth E. , 1970. *Beyond Economics: Essays on Society, Religion, and Ethics*, Ann Arbor Paperbacks: Ann Arbor, MI. [economic approaches in general]

Bradley, Martin B. , Norman M. Green, Jr. , Dale E. Jones, Mac Lynn, and Lou McNeil. 1992. *Churches and Church Membership in the United States 1990: An Enumeration by Region, State and County. Based on Data Reported for 133 Religious Groupings*. Atlanta, GA: Glenmary Research Center, 1992.

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Bruce, Steve, 1993. "Religion and Rational Choice: A Critique of Economic Explanations of Religious Behavior," *Sociology of Religion*, 54: 2, pp. 193-205 [do you believe “rationally”?] \*

Carr, Jack L. and Janet T. Landa. "The Economics of Symbols, Clan Names, and Religion. " *Journal of Legal Studies* 12 (1 1983): 135-156.

Cassone, Alberto and Marchese, Carla. 1995. "The Economics of Religious Indulgences," Working Paper, Department of Economics, University of Torino: Torino, Italy. [economic competition among faiths] \*

Chaves M. 1994. "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority," *Social Forces*, March, pp. 749-774 [how religion affects attitudes towards economic policy]

Chaves, M. and D. E. Cann. 1992. "Regulation, Pluralism, and Religious Market Structure," *Rationality and Society* July, pp. 272-290 [economic competition among faiths]

Chaves, Mark, 1995. "On the Rational Choice Approach to Religion. " *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34: 1, pp. 98-104 [do you believe “rationally”?] \*

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Chiswick, Barry. "American Jewry: An Economic Perspective and Research Agenda." *Contemporary Jewry*, 23, 2002, pp. 156-182. Revised and updated in Carmel U. Chiswick, Tikva Lecker and Nava Kahana, eds., *Jewish Society and Culture: An Economic Perspective*, Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2007, pp. 177-206. Paper Prepared for the Conference on Establishing a Research Agenda for the Jewish Community, United Jewish Communities and North American Jewish Data Bank, New York, October 12-13, 1999. Presented at the Conference on the Economics of Judaism and Jewish Human Capital, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, June 2000.

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Chiswick, Barry. "Differences in Education and Earnings Across Racial and Ethnic Groups: Tastes, Discrimination and Investments in Child Quality" *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, August 1988, pp. 571-597.  Summarized in *Business Economics* January 1989, p. 58.  Presented at the Population Association of American Annual Meeting, Chicago, April 1987.

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