

ECON 2198W**TOPICS IN ECONOMIC HISTORY AND THOUGHT****Fall 2008**

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Hours : 1:15-2 on M and 11-11:50 on W

ABOUT THE COURSE

The subject of this course this semester will be “The Economics of Religion.” This is a very new and fast growing area of research in economics. The reading assignments and course requirements are designed to show you how economics can be useful to understand even such seemingly non-economic subjects as religion and to give you examples of cutting edge research in the field.

TEXTS

1) Required: *The Marketplace of Christianity*, by Robert B. Ekelund Jr., Robert F. Hébert and Robert D. Tollison, MIT Press.

2) Recommended: A good book on writing. If you don't own one, I recommend: McCloskey, Deirdre. 1999. *Economical Writing*, Waveland Press, Inc.

REQUIREMENTS

A. Choose a religion to study: I ask that you choose a major religion other than your own. To study this religion in a specific context, choose also a country where it is dominant or practiced widely. The term “your religion” in the assignments below refers to this choice.

B. Class Structure: Class meetings and the corresponding assignments will be structured as follows:

- 1) **Mondays: Lecture on the economic problem and background economic theory:** Your assignment is to read the assigned material prior to lectures and identify the relevant economic questions and the theory needed to study the topic for that week.
- 2) **Wednesdays: Discussion.** You'll notice that the course outline below includes a discussion question for each topic. We'll use this question to start the class discussion on Wednesdays. Your assignment is to come to class prepared with a tentative answer to this question from the perspective of your religion and to participate in class discussion to improve your answer.
- 3) **Fridays: Writing:** On Fridays (except when there is no class meeting—see “Course Outline” below), we will work on your writing skills through an in-class writing assignment that will be based on the discussion question of the week and Wednesday's discussion. The primary objective of these brief essays is to practice one of the elements of writing (see below) while studying the corresponding topic.

C. Research Paper: You are also asked to write two short research papers (5 pages or less) answering the following questions (due by the date in parentheses). The primary purpose of the research papers (as opposed to in-class writing assignments) is for you to practice more fully all eight elements of writing. These questions have been phrased broadly to make them applicable to all religions and countries. You are encouraged to follow your own interests and be as specific as you can.

1. How does “your religion” affect economic behavior and institutions? (Monday, Nov. 10)
2. Choose one of the behavioral prescriptions or institutions of “your religion” and explain it economically. (Friday, Dec. 5)

D. Exams: Because you will do much of the work for this class in your preparation for the class discussions and writing assignments, we won't have a midterm examination. There will be a comprehensive final exam based on a set of review questions that will be distributed during the last week of classes.

E. Notes on the writing assignments:

The deadlines for the paper are serious. Late submissions for the long paper (first and final drafts) will lose 10% of available points for each class meeting after the due date. The papers will be graded on:

1. **Researching the topic:** Were relevant and good quality reference materials researched and mastered? Make sure to use an adequate number and a balanced mix of printed books, journal articles, and internet resources.
2. **Documentation and Citation:** Were all sources documented and cited appropriately? Under the [Student Code, Part VI on Academic Integrity](#), you are responsible for providing proper citation for all direct quotations, paraphrased ideas, and statistical and other information coming from other sources. Make sure to include at the end of each paper a list of "Works Cited." For further assistance, please refer to [UConn Library's guide on "Citing Sources."](#)
3. **Argument:** Is there a central idea, a thesis that is consistently sustained throughout the paper? How clear, sophisticated, and original is the idea? Does it convey a clear knowledge of the material and a recognition of alternative perspectives?
4. **Support:** How well is your argument supported? Are the contents clearly and consistently relevant to the main topic? Are examples, quotations, statistical and other information skillfully used to support the argument(s)?
5. **Organization:** Is the paper well-organized? Make sure that your objective is clarified at the beginning, each section has a clear role in meeting the objective, and that ideas flow logically from one paragraph or section to the next.
6. **Paragraphs:** Are the paragraphs coherent and well-organized? Is there one clear idea per paragraph, introduced by a clear topic sentence and developed consistently by other well-connected sentences?
7. **Sentences:** Are the sentences efficient and well-constructed? Work on constructing clear, concise sentences by avoiding words and phrases that do not fit well. Use vague pronouns and passive voice only when absolutely necessary.
8. **Mechanics:** Are the mechanical elements of writing (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) free of errors? Using your word processor to check "spelling and grammar" before printing the paper can go a long way. But be careful: your word processor does not know if you meant "there" or "their". You also need to proofread yourself to eliminate all errors.

E. The requirements will have the following weights:

Attendance (5%) and participation (5%)	10
In-Class Writing	30
Research Papers	30
Final Exam	30

G. The grading scale:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>%</u>
A	95+
A-	90+
B+	85+
B	80+
B-	78+
C+	75+
C	70+
C-	68+
D+	65+
D	60+
D-	55+
F	0-54

H. COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK OF: Monday,	TOPIC	READING ASSIGNMENT (“Ch.” Refers to chapters of Ekelund, Hébert, Tollison book)	WRITING FOCUS	QUESTION
		<i>PART I: INTRODUCTION</i>		
August 25	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 	Researching	Can economics help us understand religion?
Sept. 1 (no class on Monday—Labor Day)	Economics of Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2 	Documentation and Citation	How has economics progressed in the analysis of religion?
		<i>PART II: RELIGION AND COMPETITION</i>		
Sept. 8 (no class on Friday, 9/13)	Market for Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3 		What are the characteristics of the market for religion?
Sept. 15	Religion Form Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4 	Argument	What causes key changes in religious form and doctrines?
Sept. 22 (no class on Friday, 9/26)	Protestant Reformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5 		Which factors caused the Protestant Reformation (or major reforms—or their absence—in other religions)?
Sept. 29	Counter Reformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6 	Support	How did Catholicism react to the entry of Protestantism to the market for religion?
Oct. 6	Economic Performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 8 • Cosgel, M. M. (1993). Religious culture and economic performance: Agricultural productivity of the Amish, 1850-80. <i>Journal of Economic History</i>, 53(2), 319-331. • Cosgel, M. M., & Murray, J. E. (1998). Productivity of a commune: The shakers, 1850-1880. <i>Journal of Economic History</i>, 58(2), 494-510. 	Organization	How does religion affect economic performance?
		<i>PART III: EXTENSIONS</i>		
Oct. 13	Sacrifice and Stigma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iannaccone, L. R. (1992). Sacrifice and stigma: Reducing free-riding in cults, communes, and other collectives. <i>Journal of Political Economy</i>, 100(2), 271-291 • 	Paragraphs	What explains the success of religious groups with strange requirements and seemingly inefficient prohibitions?

Oct. 20	Regulation and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iannaccone, L. R., Finke, R., & Stark, R. (1997). Deregulating religion: The economics of church and state. <i>Economic Inquiry</i>, 35(2), 350-364. 	Sentences	How does deregulating the religious market affect participation?
Oct. 27	Rationality and Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iannaccone, L. R., Stark, R., & Finke, R. (1998). Rationality and the 'religious mind.' <i>Economic Inquiry</i>, 36(3), 373-389. Cosgel, M. M., & Minkler, L. (2004). Rationality, integrity, and religious behavior. <i>Journal of Socio-Economics</i>, 33(3), 329-341. 	Mechanics	What does the contemporary evidence show on the relation between religion and rationality??
Nov. 3	Church and State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cosgel, M., & Miceli, T. (2008). <i>Church and state</i> University of Connecticut, Department of Economics, Working papers: 2008-04. 		Why do some states control religion?
Nov. 10	Law, Religion, and State	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cosgel, M., Ahmed, R., & Miceli, T. (2007). <i>Law, state power, and taxation in Islamic history</i> University of Connecticut, Department of Economics, Working papers: 2007-01. 		How does religious law affect the power of rulers?
Nov. 17	Religion and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coşgel, Metin M.; Thomas J. Miceli, and Jared Rubin. 2008. "Guns and Books: The Political Economy of Technological Change in Islamic History" 		How can religion affect a society's reaction to technology?
Dec. 1	Recap: What have We Learned			