Contemporary Theorizing about Religion: Secularization

Objective:
1) Introduce the secularization perspective
2) Compare and contrast a.) various secularization theories, b.) their associated concepts and measures, c.) and their relationship to classical theories
3) Familiarize students with online research tools

Activity:

Secularization has a number of related concepts including Irreligion, Pluralism, Religiosity, Religious Behavior, Religious Belief, Unchurched, and Religious Regulation. Note the use of similar concepts and measures for the Rational Choice/Religious Economies perspective and how each theory uses those concepts and measures to support its claim.

Under “QuickLists” and “Compare Regions,” choose “Atheists (2005)”. Work with students to compare and contrast those regions with the highest percentage of atheists with those regions with the lowest percentage of atheists and how secularization theorists would explain these differences.

Assessment:
Ask students (in small groups or individually) to build a case for whether the United States shows signs of secularization or not. Students should utilize the National Profile for the United States. The Public Opinion tab located on the National Profile page may be particularly useful for this exercise. Students can also compare the United States with other countries.

Suggested readings:
Berger, Peter L. 1967. The Sacred Canopy. Anchor Books. Ch. 2-3, 5-6, Appendix 2


“Secularization” in “Religion Dictionary” in the Teaching Tools on The ARDA