

ECONOMICS/RELIGIOUS STUDIES 17: AN ECONOMIC APPROACH TO RELIGION

University of California-Irvine

Instructor: Prof. Michael McBride
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Course web page: <http://thereligiousmarketplace.blogspot.com/>

TA Information: TBA

Course prerequisites: None

Required text: Stark and Finke, *Acts of Faith*, other selected online readings (see web page)

Required book club book: Micklethwait and Woolridge, *God is Back*

Recommended (but not required) text: Heyne et al, *The Economic Way of Thinking*

Preliminary course grade criteria:

Homework assignments (8 HW assignments, 5 points each)	40 points
Midterm exam 1	30 points
Midterm exam 2	30 points
Final exam	50 points
Section attendance and participation (required, no section in Week 1)	30 points
Lecture participation extra credit	max 1 per lecture

Grade scale: 180 points max; 174 points for A+; 168 for A; 162 for A-; 156 for B+; 150 for B; 144 for B-; 138 for C+; 132 for C; 126 for C-; 120 for D+; 114 for D; 108 for D-; 107 or less results in Fail.

The purpose of this course is to teach how basic principles from economics yield a greater understanding of religious behavior. We will learn economic concepts step-by-step, use them to develop theories and predictions about various aspects of religion, and then review evidence in support of these theories. Simple ideas and clear examples will bring to light very interesting aspects of religious phenomena.

Turn in all homework in class on the due date. Emailed homework is not accepted. Homework solutions will be posted immediately after class, so no late homework will be accepted. All exams will consist of multiple choice questions with one point per question. Some questions will be based on material in the required readings and blog posts that is not covered in lectures or homework, so do ALL readings. All exams will be closed book, notes, neighbor, cell phone, etc. Cheating results in an automatic Fail. No make-up exams will be offered. If a midterm exam is missed with an approved excuse, the other midterm score will be used as a replacement score; if the midterm is missed without approved excuse, the score is 0. There is no replacement for a final exam, and the final exam will not be offered on any date other than the one scheduled. Make your travel arrangements for dates after the final. If you cannot make the date of the final, then drop the course now.

You may use an earlier edition of Heyne et al, but the chapter numbers may differ. Chapter 2 in the later editions is located later in the text than in earlier editions. So if you have an earlier edition, the appropriate chapter number will be one less than that listed on the schedule, except for chapter 1.



Week	Topic	Reading	God is Back	HW due
0	NO CLASS	SF Intro*, Ch. 1*		
1	Part I: Introduction 1 – An Economic Approach to Religion	SF 2* H Ch. 1		
	Part II: Religious Demand and Supply 2 – The Micro-foundations of Religious Goods	SF Ch. 4*		
2	3 – Substitutes, Opportunity Cost, and the Concept of Demand	H Ch. 3, 4		1
	4 – The Demand for Church Attendance		Intro.*	
3	5 – Credence Goods and Religious Belief			2
	6 – Capital and Investment		Ch. 1-4*	
4	7 – Religious Capital and Religious Choices	SF Ch. 5*		3
	8 – The Economics of Clubs		Ch. 5-7*	
5	9 – Religious Strictness and Stigma-screening	SF Ch. 6*		4
	MIDTERM 1 (covers Lectures 1-8)		Ch. 8-9*	
6	10 – Religious Strictness and Monitoring			
	Part III: Religious Markets 11 – Entrepreneurs and Competition	H Ch. 2, 7	Ch. 10-12*	5
7	12 – Religious Market Competition	SF Ch. 8*		
	13 – Rents, Monopoly Power, and Government Regulations	H Ch. 9, 11	Conc.*	6
8	14 – Religious Regulations and Regulated Competition	SF Ch. 9*		
	THANKSGIVING BREAK			
9	MIDTERM 2 (covers Lectures 1-14, emphasis on Lectures 9-14)			
	15 – Optimal Tension	SF Ch. 10*		7
10	16 – Secularization	SF Ch. 3*		
	TBA			8
11	FINAL EXAM, Tuesday, 10:30am-12:30pm (covers all Lectures)			