
Module 2533: CULTURE AND SOCIALISATION
Option A: Religion
Unit Two: The Influence of Religion on the Individual and Society

Sociology Department, Greenhead College, Huddersfield

Learning Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

1. Identify and evaluate arguments for and against the view that religion has lost its significance in modern and post-modern societies
2. Outline the rise and meaning of religious fundamentalism
3. Assess the effectiveness of religion as a source of social control

Key

Skills

The activities in this study guide will give you the opportunity to develop the following key skills:

1. Communication: oral presentation, report-writing, discussion
2. ILT: using the Internet, CD Roms, word-processing software
3. Working With Others: paired work, group research, small group presentations
4. Improving Own Learning: self-evaluation, target-setting

Use this box for important information - personal targets, deadlines, assessment etc

Planning your work

The activities in this guide will help you to cover all the key ideas in this unit. You may not have to do them all. You will discuss activities with your teacher to determine which can be done as a class, in groups, or individually. You will also discuss how your work is to be presented and assessed.



Resources

The following resources are suggestions only. Your teacher may wish to add to or amend the list. You will find that particularly useful resources are indicated in the margin, e.g. R1 means use resource 1.

Books:

- R1 Taylor et al *Sociology In Focus*
- R2 Kirby et al *Sociology in Perspective*
- R3 Haralambos and Holborn *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*
- R4 O'Donnell *A New Introduction to Sociology*
- R5 Bird *Investigating Religion*
- R6 Selfe and Starbuck *Religion*
- R7 Best et al. *Active Sociology*
- R8 Set of notes: The Process of Secularisation

Internet

- R9 Hewett School <http://www.hewett.norfolk.sch.uk/curric/soc/religion/rindex.htm>
- R10 Sociology Site <http://www.hartland64.freemove.co.uk/socindex.htm>
- R11 Sociology Central <http://www.freemove.virgin.net/chris.livesey/home.htm>
- R12 ATSS <http://www.atss.ac.uk>
- R13 Sociosite <http://www.pscw.uva.nl/sociosite/TOPICS/index.html>
- R14 Socioweb <http://www.socioweb.com/~markbl/socioweb/>
- R15 The Guardian <http://www.guardian.co.uk> Click on 'Archive'
- R16 The Source <http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

Extracts

- R17 NRMs and Secularisation
- R18 Religious Revival in the UK ?
- R19 The New Christian Right
- R20 Pray TV: Observations On Mass Media Religion

CD Rom

- R21 The Guardian and Observer
- R22 Social Trends

Video

- R23 Christian Fundamentalism
- R24 The Koran and the Kalashnikov
- R25 The Nation of Islam

Theorists, concepts and issues in this unit

KEY THEORIST	KEY CONCEPTS	KEY ISSUES
Bryan Wilson Larry Shiner	Secularisation Desacrilisation Disengagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The origins of secularisation • The meaning of secularisation • The arguments for and against secularisation • Explanation for secularisation in Britain • The rise of religious fundamentalism
David Martin Will Herberg Rodney Stark	Subterranean theologies Civic Religion Cultural defence	
William Bainbridge Robert Bellah Thomas Luckmann	Cultural transition Individuation Privatisation of religion Invisible religion	
Talcott Parsons Max Weber	Structural differentiation Disenchantment Demystification	
Gracie Davie	Fundamentalism	

ACTIVITY ONE: The Meaning of Secularisation

Margin Notes

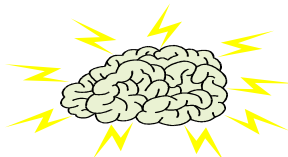
Secularisation is the term given to the idea that the influence of religion in western societies is steadily declining. A secular society would be one in which religion had very little, if any, importance.

Larry Shiner identifies six 'indicators' of secularisation:

- Religious symbols become less important and lose their prestige
- We regard more and more things as 'this-worldly' rather than supernatural
- Religion disengages from society and has less to say about how society should operate
- Ideas about the sacred and magical decline in significance
- Rational ways of doing things take over from religious ways
- Religious beliefs take on non-religious or quasi-religious forms, for example NRMs and NAMs.

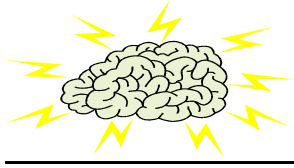
Task One

In pairs brainstorm one example of each of these indicators of secularisation.



ACTIVITY TWO: Measuring Secularisation

Margin Notes



Task Two

In pairs, brainstorm

- the possible ways in which secularisation could be measured
- possible problems of these methods of measurement in terms of validity and reliability.

Task Three

Look at tables 7.2 to 7.20 in the fifth edition of R3.

Briefly note down any problems which might occur with attempts to measure secularisation statistically. What conclusions do you draw about measuring secularisation



Use this space for planning and ideas

ACTIVITY THREE: The Process of Secularisation

The debate about secularisation occurs on two key levels:

1. The secularisation of institutional religion, i.e. the degree to which the church has lost social, economic and political power
2. The secularisation of wider society, i.e. the extent to which religion retains an ideological and ritual importance, and whether or not this has been

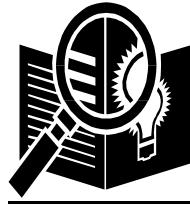
A: The Secularisation of Institutional Religion

Task Four

Read through the paragraph on Bryan Wilson's views on **disengagement** on page 1 of R8, and highlight the main points as you go.

In pairs, brainstorm as many aspects of human

Margin Notes



Previously provided by the church	Now provided by...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Care for the poor and disabled 2. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Welfare state



Task Five

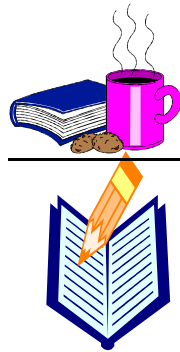
Now read through the remainder of this section on disengagement, down to and including the work of Jose Casanova

Use any of the resources listed opposite to complete the table below, which gives some examples of recent religious conflicts. You will need to provide some brief information about each conflict.

R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7
R21

Jews and Muslim Arabs in the Middle East	Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland	Muslims, Serbs and Croats in Bosnia
---	--	--

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe	The 'Moral Majority' in the USA	The declaration of a fatwa on Salman Rushdie



Task Six

Read through 'Area Two: Religious Pluralism' on page 2-3 of R8, down to and including the section on Steve Bruce's interpretation of the New Age.

In pairs read through the items in R17. Use the items to assess the evidence for and against the view that NRMs do little to halt the tide of secularisation.

Use this space for ideas

Margin Notes

Task Seven

Read through the remainder of the section on religious pluralism on pages 3-4 of R8.

Then, make a copy of the table below and briefly summarise how evidence of religious pluralism can be used to both support and refute the secularisation thesis.



Arguments that religious pluralism represents evidence for the secularisation thesis	Arguments that religious pluralism represents evidence against the secularisation thesis

Task Eight

Look at R18. Do you regard the apparent growth of witchcraft as evidence for or against the secularisation thesis. Explain your answer with reference to the item and sociological arguments.



Task Nine

Read through the final section on the internal secularisation of religious institutions on pages 4-5 of R8.

In pairs, research the main features of Christian and Islamic fundamentalism. For each identify:

- The main ideas and practices
- The appeal of fundamentalism to followers
- The main areas of fundamentalism in the world
- The significance of fundamentalism for arguments for and against the secularisation thesis.



R2, R9, R15, R19, R20, R21
R23, R24, R25

Use this space for ideas

ACTIVITY FOUR: The Secularisation of Wider Society

The second level of the secularisation debate concerns the secularisation of wider society. In other words, **has religion retained an ideological and ritual importance or has it been replaced with by more scientific and rational ideas about the world?**

Four key concepts are involved here:

- Generalisation
- Individuation
- Transformation
- Desacrilisation

Task Ten

Make a copy of the table below on a sheet of A3 paper. In the left hand cells you will need to summarise the main evidence and ideas, and in the right hand cells you will need to offer an evaluation of the idea.

Evidence of secularisation



1. Generalisation	
-------------------	--

2. Individuation	
3. Transformation	
1. Desacrilisation and the growth of rationality	

ACTIVITY FIVE: Evaluation

I feel confident in the following areas of this unit	I need to improve my understanding of the following areas of this unit	I am going to improve my understanding of these areas by doing the following

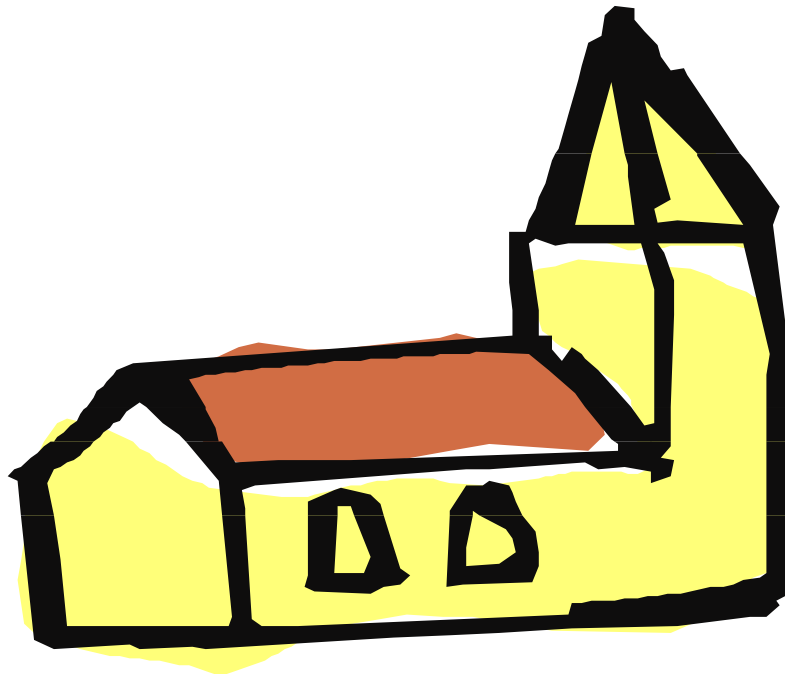
KEY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Key Skill	Evidence
Communication	
Working with others	
Information Technology	
Improving own learning	

Sociology Department Greenhead College

OCR Sociology AS Module 2533 Culture and Socialisation

Option A: RELIGION



Unit Two: THE SECULARISATION DEBATE