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
- **R10** Sociology Site [http://www.hartland64.freeserve.co.uk/socindex.htm](http://www.hartland64.freeserve.co.uk/socindex.htm)
- **R11** Sociology Central [http://www.freespace.virgin.net/chris.livesey/home.htm](http://www.freespace.virgin.net/chris.livesey/home.htm)
- **R12** ATSS [http://www.atss.ac.uk](http://www.atss.ac.uk)
- **R15** The Guardian [http://www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk) Click on 'Archive'

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
### 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
Module 2533: Culture and Socialisation
Option A: Religion

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 replaced by more scientific and rational ideas about the world.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previously provided by the church</th>
<th>Now provided by...</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Care for the poor and disabled</td>
<td>1. Welfare state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

### 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.

| 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**
Sociology Department
Greenhead College
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.
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 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence of secularisation</th>
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1. Generalisation

Use this space for ideas
### ACTIVITY FIVE: Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I feel confident in the following areas of this unit</th>
<th>I need to improve my understanding of the following areas of this unit</th>
<th>I am going to improve my understanding of these areas by doing the following</th>
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### KEY SKILLS DEVELOPMENT
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Skill</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>Information Technology</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving own learning</td>
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