

# Religion and Classical Sociology

## Marxist and neo-Marxist views of Religion

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Name and date begun:

### **Time allocation:**

4 lessons

### **Learning objectives:**

- Students should understand that conflict sociologists view religion as a form of social control.
- Students should be able to evaluate conflict sociology with relation to religion and recognise the strengths and the weaknesses of the perspective.
- Students should recognise religion as a source of conservatism and resistance to change in society.

### **Key Concepts and vocabulary**

See your lesson notes in addition to the following:

- Marxism
- Bourgeois Hegemony
- Proletarian
- Capitalism
- Doctrine
- Ideology
- Creed
- Liberation theology

### **Additional reading and references**

Selfe and Starbuck (1998) *Access to Sociology: Religion* p 22 – 5, 46 - 8

Haralambos and Holbourn (1995) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* p 450 - 54

Taylor *et al.* (1996) *Sociology in Focus* p 500 - 3

O'Donnell (1997) *Sociology* 4<sup>th</sup> edition p 531

**Make a note of any additional sources that you have used below**

## **Personal Development ideas**

- Go to the Internet and collect notes on Marx and Engels.
- Listen to a traditional Christian church service on Radio 4 on a Sunday or watch one on TV. Make notes about the ideology expressed.
- Ask older people who are not religious what they remember are the main ideas of their religion. How many of them refer to prohibitions – they mention ideas relating to how they behave rather than other religious ideas.
- Look at the Communist Manifesto. It is held in the LRC.

## **Overview of the debate**

- Is religion a tool of the powerful people in society?
- Does religion and religious belief encourage conformity?
- Does religious belief shield people from the reality of their powerless and unfulfilled lives?
- Is formal religious practice part of the organisation of our society so that it tends to represent forces of domination and control?
- Could Marxism apply to cultures other than those of Western Capitalism?

## **Revision tips**

- Make sure that your notes on Marxism are very fully developed and that you understand how his analysis of religion fits into the larger theory.
- Make sure that you have clear notes on the following: Marx and Engels, Althusser, Maduro, Turner.
- Consider why society needs religion. What purpose does it serve for society?

## **What you should have in your folder when this work has been completed correctly:**

- A clear explanation of each of the glossary terms
- Acceptable lesson notes.
- Evidence that you have looked at least two textbooks and made notes on the main Marxist and neo- Marxist theorists.
- Evidence that you have evaluated Marxist views of religion and you have rough notes of some of your ideas and discussions.