

Religion and Classical Sociology

Max Weber and Religion

Name and date begun:

Time allocation:

4 lessons

Learning objectives:

- Students should understand that Weberian thought offers a direct contrast to much of what they already understand about social theory.
- Students should be able to evaluate Weberian thought with relation to religion and recognise the strengths and the weaknesses of the perspective.
- Students should recognise religion as a source of social change in society with a massive impact on the values and historical development of a culture.
- Students should recognise the significance of the 'powerful individual' theory of history.
- Students should recognise that religion is used to legitimate power and power structures.

Key Concepts and vocabulary

See your lesson notes in addition to the following:

- Protestantism
- Capitalism
- Calvinism
- Charisma
- Ethics
- Social Action
- Individualism

Additional reading and references

Selfe and Starbuck (1998) *Access to Sociology: Religion* – Use the Index also p 32 – 7

Haralambos and Holbourn (1995) *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives* p 459 - 62

Taylor *et al.* (1996) *Sociology in Focus* p 504 - 6

O'Donnell (1997) *Sociology 4th edition* p 531 - 33

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

Personal Development ideas

- Go to the Internet and collect notes on Max Weber (sociologist).
- Find out as much as you can about the historical development of Protestantism by looking up in history texts and CD Rom. You can use *Martin Luther* and *John Calvin* as your key words, or you can use *Protestantism*. You should, if you can, find out something of the doctrines of the *Roman Catholic Church*. Use favoured history teachers as a resource.

Overview of the debate

- Is religion a source of change in society?
- Does religion and religious belief provide a framework in which society operates?
- How does religious belief support the structures of power within a society?

Revision tips

- Make sure that your notes on Weber are very fully developed and that you understand how his analysis of religion fits into the larger theory.
- Consider why society needs religion. What purpose does it serve for society from Weber's perspective?

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 contributions of Weber to the sociology of religion.
- Evidence that you have evaluated Weberian views of religion as a source of social change and you have rough notes of some of your ideas and discussions.
- A set of notes and an essay plan evaluating Weber's contribution to the sociology of religion.
- Samples of other people's work relating to classical sociology and the social change debate.
- An essay that you have written to one of the following titles:
 1. Evaluate the suggestion that religion is a source of social change in society.
 2. Compare and contrast Marxist, Weberian and Functionalist views of religion. Which do you feel offers a better model of the role of religion in our society?
 3. Is religion a source of social cohesion in modern societies?