NONRELIGION AND SECULARITY RESEARCH NETWORK

3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

EXPLAINING NONRELIGION AND SECULARITY
IN THE U.S. AND BEYOND

19-20 November 2014, Pitzer College, Claremont, CA
Wednesday, November 19th

7:00am – Breakfast and Registration
Location: McConnell

8:30-9:00 - Welcome and Housekeeping
Location: Benson Auditorium
Phil Zuckerman, Pitzer College

9:00-10:00 – Keynote & NSRN Annual Lecture
Location: Benson Auditorium
Lori G. Beaman, University of Ottawa
Title: ‘In the Name of a Draconian Conception of State Neutrality’: Law’s Affirmation that You Can’t be Good without God
Introduction: Lois Lee

10:15-11:45 – Panel Sessions: A
Session A1: Terminology
Location: TBA
Convener: Lois Lee, University College London
Charles Louis Richter, The George Washington University
Title: “I Know It When I See It:” Humanism, Secularism, and Religious Taxonomy
Joseph Blankholm, Columbia University
Title: Navigating the Nonbeliever Constellation: What’s at Stake in Labeling Nonbelievers and Secular Activists?
John R. Shook, University at Buffalo
Title: Polysecularity and Types of Nonbelief: Framing the Field of Secular Studies

Session A2: Politics and the Secular - 1
Location: TBA
Convener: TBA
Mohammad Abdel Haq, California State University, Fullerton
Title: The Collective Consciousness of Atheism
Andrew Fiala, Fresno State University
Title: Nonreligion, Secularism, and Cosmopolitanism
Jeffrey Murico, San Diego State University
Title: The Politics of Secularism and the Paradox of a Christian-American Ethos
11:45-1:00 – Lunch

1:15-2:45 – Panel Sessions: B

Session B1: The “Nones”
Location: TBA
Convener: Christel Manning, Sacred Heart University
Peter A. Huff, Centenary College of Louisiana
Title: The Pope and the “Nones”: Pope Francis and the New Age of Atheism

Kevin Lenehan, Catholic Theological College
Title: Nonreligion and Religious Pluralism in Australia: A New Context for Christian Identity and Dialogue

Joel Thiessen, Ambrose University College
Title: Religious Nones in Canada: A Qualitative Exploration

Session B2: Spirituality and Morality
Location: TBA
Convener: TBA
Lori L. Fazzino, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Title: What Happens in Vegas is... Moral Embattlement: Irreligious Moral Performance as Cultural Resistance in Sin City

Kathy Goodman, Miami University
Title: Secular Students and Spirituality

Catharine Christof, Loyola Marymount University
Title: Michel Foucault, Religion & the Theatrical Work of Jerzy Grotowski

3:00-4:30 – Panel Sessions: C

Session C1: Organized Nonbelievers – 1
Location: TBA
Convener: Ryan T. Cragun, The University of Tampa
Jacqui Frost, University of Minnesota
Title: Atheist Churches: All of the Community with “None” of the Theology

Jesse M. Smith, Western Michigan University
Title: Atheist Churching: New Congregational Activity at the Sunday Assembly

Björn Mastiaux, Heinrich-Heine-Universitat
Title: Organized Atheism in the US and Abroad – A Typology of Members from the Freethought-Secularist Movement
Session C2: Imagining God (in a Lab)
Location: TBA
Convener: TBA
Alex Uzdavines, Case Western University
Title: The Hypothetical God: Asking Nonbelievers to Imagine a Divine Figure

David F. Bradley, Case Western University
Title: Self-Reported Reasons for Nonbelief in God's Existence: A Quantitative Approach

Julie J. Exline, Case Western University
Title: If Given Clear Evidence for the Existence of a God, How Do Atheists and Agnostics Think They Would Respond?

5:00-7:30 – Dinner

7:30-8:30 – Keynote
Location: Benson Auditorium
Darren Sherkat, Southern Illinois University-Carbondale
Title: Believing and Belonging – or not?: Trends and Predictors of Religious Belief and Belonging in the United States
Introduction: Ryan T. Cragun

8:45-9:45 – NYU Sponsored Reception
Location: TBA
Thursday, November 20th

7:00am – Breakfast
Location: McConnell

8:30-10:00 – Panel Sessions: D

Session D1: Secularity and the Middle East
Location: TBA
Convener: Christel Manning, Sacred Heart University
Catherine Caldwell-Harris, Boston University
Title: Examining Low Religiousness Among University Students in Istanbul
Jeffery T. Kenney, DePauw University
Title: Transformations of Self and Society in Modern Egypt
Jeremiah Bowden, Claremont Graduate University
Title: The Desacralization of the Middle-East: A Hybrid Theory of Secularization Exploring Levels of Religiosity in Post-Khomeini Iran

Session D2: Cognitive Science of Religion
Location: TBA
Convener: Thomas Coleman, The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
Jonathan A. Lanman, Queen's University Belfast
Title: Religious Actions Speak Louder than Words: Exposure to Credibility Enhancing Displays (CREDs) Predicts Theism and Non-theism
Mikko Sillfors, University of Helsinki
Title: On the Origin and Rise of Atheism

10:15-11:45 – Panel Sessions: E

Session E1: Prejudice Toward Nonbelievers
Location: TBA
Convener: TBA
Penny Edgell, University of Minnesota
Title: Atheists Still Others? A 10-year Followup on the Findings of the American Mosaic Project
Evan M. Stewart, University of Minnesota
Title: Looking for a ‘God-Shaped Hole’: The Political Dimensions of Religiosity and Anti-
Atheist Attitudes

Kyle Thompson, Claremont Graduate University
Title: How Christian Atheists Can Shed Light on Anti-Atheist Prejudice in America

Session E2: Relationships and Meaning-Making
Location: TBA
Convener: Lois Lee, University College London
Nicholas J. Mac Murray, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Title: Irreligious Death: Making Meaning without the Theist Crutch

Robin Allen, Boise State University
Title: What’s Love Got to Do With It? An Exploratory Study of Religious Nones Experiences With Dating, Relationships and Marriage

Dusty Hoesly, University of California, Santa Barbara
Title: Your Wedding, Your Way: Personalized, Non-Religious Weddings through the Universal Life Church

11:45-1:00 – Lunch

1:15-2:45 – Panel Sessions: F

Session F1: Toward the Secular
Location: TBA
Convener: TBA
Isabella Kasselstrand, Colorado Mesa University
Title: Belonging without Believing: Secular Functions of Churches in Northern Europe

Lois Lee, University College London
Title: Secular or Nonreligious? Profiling and Theorising European and US ‘Religious Landscapes’

Volkan Ertit, Radboud University
Universalized, Classical, Secularization Theory

Session F2: Organized Nonbelievers – 2
Location: TBA
Convener: TBA
Aislinn Addington, University of Kansas
Title: Building Bridges in the Shadows of Steeples: Active Atheists and the Negotiation of Community and Identity in a Theistic Culture

Amanda Schutz, University of Arizona
Title: Organizational Variation in the Nonreligious Community

Joseph Langston, Independent
Title: Atheism Looking In: Attitudes of Nonbeliever Group Affiliates and Nonaffiliates on the Goals and Strategies of Organized Unbelief

3:00-4:30 – Panel Sessions: G

Session G1: History of the Secular
Location: TBA
Convener: TBA
Ryan T. Cragun, The University of Tampa
Title: “Splitters!”: Lessons from Monty Python for Nontheist/Freethought Organizations in the US

J. Gordon Melton, Baylor University
Title: The Nones Shall Always Be with Us: Toward an Historical Perspective on Unbelief in America

Michael Rectenwald, New York University
Title: Secular Cooperation in England and the Americas

Session G2: Politics and the Secular - 2
Location: TBA
Convener: TBA
Ted G. Jelen, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Linda Lockett, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Title: Religious Markets, Regimes, and Secularity: A Comparative Study

Matthew Brake, George Mason University
Title: The Rise of the Nones: Politics, Spirituality, and Neo-Secularization

Ethan G. Quillen, University of Edinburgh
Title: Atheist Exceptionalism: The Definition and Legality of Atheism under the First Amendment

4:30-5:00 – Conclusion
Location: TBA
Phil Zuckerman, Pitzer College

5:00-7:00 – Dinner
Abdel Haq, Mohammad
California State University, Fullerton
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Title: The Collective Consciousness of Atheism
Abstract: Despite a doctrine of separation of church and state, religion continues to play a significant role in American politics. Churches facilitate political participation through shared interests, resources, and motivation and religion plays a substantial role in shaping morality, as well as political views and attitudes. Weber argues that the “Protestant Ethic” dominates what is normative in the social and political sphere in the United States. In this study, we examine whether religion is in fact necessary for the creation of a collective moral and political framework or whether secular individuals such as atheists are also capable of sharing a collective consciousness. We do so by asking two questions; first, does a collective political framework exist among atheists? Second, if so, how do the political attitudes of atheists differ from the Protestant majority in regards to party affiliation? We explore these questions using a multinomial logistic regression approach, utilizing data from the 2008 Pew Research Center’s U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, a nationally representative sample of 35,556 adults. Our results suggest that atheists are very different demographically from Protestants in terms of region, gender, education level, and generation. However, after controlling for these differences, there are still substantial differences in political views and moral attitudes between Protestants and Atheists. We argue that these differences represent differing sets of shared beliefs and moral attitudes, or collective consciousness, between Protestants and Atheist, and are not simply the result of differences in other characteristics.

Addington, Aislinn
University of Kansas
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Title: Building Bridges in the Shadows of Steeples: Active Atheists and the Negotiation of Community and Identity in a Theistic Culture
Abstract: Atheists are an ideological minority in the United States. Atheists who actively seek out likeminded others are even fewer and farther between. Based on 30 in-depth interviews with active atheists (atheists who participate in some type of secularly oriented club or organization), this paper explores the ways in which secular individuals construct and maintain community within an overwhelmingly theistic society. Findings suggest that boundary work in face-to-face community settings helps to crystalize individual and group identity as they navigate through a social world that, for the most part, disagrees with them. Like any ideological camp, the atheist movement, and the small organizations investigated in this study, encounter plenty of diverging opinions from inside their organizations as well. Additionally, this group utilizes new media and social networking online as a component of community as well as a platform for building and broadcasting identity. This paper begins the work of
assessing if and how atheist use of online social networking affects their “real life” interactions with one another as well as with those who oppose their views. This paper not only contributes to an area of sociology that has long been neglected, it does so with data sourced directly from the population involved. In this piece atheists are asked to speak for themselves and the findings discuss the above issues in the words of those involved.

Allen, Robin
Boise State University
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Title: What's Love Got to Do With It? An Exploratory Study of Religious Nones Experiences With Dating, Relationships and Marriage

Abstract: A few years ago the first author was completing a qualitative project with in-depth interviews of religious nones. A theme that emerged during the study was the difficulty that participants had finding compatible partners for romantic relationships. This study proposes to explore this issue in more depth. Slowly but surely a body of scientific knowledge is being built about people who are not affiliated with organized religion. However, there is still little empirical research addressing the day-to-day lived experiences of religious nones and what impact, if any, their lack of religious affiliation has on their lives. There are a couple of articles that address nones and parenting. However, no research was found that directly addresses how nones experience dating, relationships and marriage, and how these impact their well-being. This study surveys nones online to gather data about their romantic relationships. This availability sample collects, in addition to demographics, information on how nones find romantic partners, the demographics of whom nones get involved with romantically, and the quality and duration of relationships. The impact on well-being of not being affiliated with a religion on romantic relationships will also be presented, using both quantitative and qualitative data. This study will add to the knowledge base about the nature of day-to-day lives of nones, as well as, contribute a better understanding of the social and psychological well-being of nones.

Beaman, Lori L.
University of Ottawa
lbeaman@uOttawa.ca
Title: 'In the Name of a Draconian Conception of State Neutrality': Law’s Affirmation that You Can’t be Good without God

Abstract: The legal regulation of religion extends beyond categories of religion to the emerging category of nones. Most famously, the Lautsi decision in Italy highlighted the tensions that emerge between historically dominant religious hegemonies and those whose lives are not informed by religious worldviews. And yet, the European Court of Human Rights entertained the notion that dominant religion is not necessarily religion per se, but represents universal and cultural values which inform and indeed benefit all of society. Contrary to the argument of atheists that one can be good without god, legal discourse is shaping a new rhetoric of the foundational nature of religion to the common good, an idea that presses even those who do not ‘believe’ to believe, or to at least accept the inherent value of god in the creation of a good society. The universal truth of religion becomes, then, inescapable and impossible to opt out of. This new
legal rhetoric has increasing traction in a number of western democracies whose majoritarian religion would seem to be in decline. Law is coming to the rescue, carving out a new place for religion as fundamental to societal well-being and religious practices and symbols in state institutions are therefore an acceptable and even welcome presence. This talk will explore these issues in light of the Saguenay case that is now before the Supreme Court of Canada.

Blankholm, Joseph
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Title: Navigating the Nonbeliever Constellation: What's at Stake in Labeling Nonbelievers and Secular Activists?
Abstract: Recent articles from J.M. Smith (2011, 2013), LeDrew (2013), Cimino and Smith (2007, 2011, 2012), and Guenther et al. (2013) point both directly and indirectly to the need for a dialogue on how to describe America's "nonbelievers." Cragun and Hammer (2011) have provided sage advice for avoiding tacit pro-religiosity, though much discussion remains. Namely, should scholars treat humanists, atheists, agnostics, freethinkers, naturalists, and non-theists as a single group, and how carefully should they attend to the particularities ascribed to these terms by those who adopt them? This paper relies on 65 in-depth interviews with the leaders and members of America's major nonbeliever organizations in order to provide concrete examples of how leaders from various types of groups understand their own labels and those of others. Because there is no consensus among these leaders, I couch my analysis within their inter-organizational politics, and I observe the ways in which they both emphasize and minimize differences among the terms depending on the context. I then look at how scholars in our burgeoning field have chosen to describe these various groups, with the aim of offering some tentative suggestions on how to attend to the differences between them while still making use of efficacious umbrella categories. My hope is to spur a dialogue among those in attendance that I believe would be as helpful for others' research and writing as I am certain it would be for my own.

Bowden, Jeremiah
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Title: The Desacralization of the Middle-East: A Hybrid Theory of Secularization Exploring Levels of Religiosity in Post-Khomeini Iran
Abstract: The theory of secularization, as it has been inherited in the West, adheres to a narrative of history as progress. Sociologists from Max Weber and Emile Durkheim to modern theorists such as Steve Bruce and Bryan Wilson have argued that as societies modernize there is a dramatic decline in religious adherence, authority, and influence. Alternative models, which stress the centrality of free-markets and the inverse correlation between existential security and religiosity, are posited to explain the exceptional position of modern societies that remain highly religious. The pages that follow apply the theories above in order to elucidate the process of secularization in the Iranian context. Two questions are germane to this task: 1.) How has Khomeini's Islamic Revolution, the quintessential example of political Islam, led to the demise of Islamist tendencies in Iran and 2.) Why does Iran, although modern in many regards,
continue to be highly religious.

Bradley, David F.
Case Western University
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Title: Self-Reported Reasons for Nonbelief in God's Existence: A Quantitative Approach
Abstract: Previous research exploring why some individuals do not believe in the existence of a god or gods has largely been theory-driven, drawing from psychoanalytical, cognitive, or evolutionary theories. This has left a fundamental gap in our understanding: What reasons do nonbelievers themselves give for their nonbelief? Drawing on previous studies, this project aimed to develop and provide initial validity testing of a measure to capture these reasons: the Reasons of Atheists/Agnostics for Nonbelief in God's Existence Scale (RANGES). Participants (N = 520) were adults drawn from Amazon's Mechanical Turk worker database. An initial item pool was developed based on a review of relevant literature and responses to open-ended questions in prior studies. The item pool was refined based on feedback from several academic researchers and non-academics who write about nonbelief. Responses to the measure were subjected to exploratory factor analysis. Factor analysis revealed a nine-factor solution: Socialization-Past, Socialization-Current, Bad Experiences with Religion, Societal Concerns, Intellectual, God Relational, Emotional, Intuitive, and Agnostic. The obtained factors were subjected to initial validity testing across a number of variables, including attitudes toward God or religion and previous measures of nonreligious identity and doubt. Correlation and multiple regression generally supported the construct validity of the measure’s subscales. Nonbelievers endorsed Intellectual reasons most strongly, followed by Agnostic, Societal Concerns, and Intuitive reasons. God Relational, Bad Experiences with Religion, Emotional, and Socialization reasons for nonbelief were endorsed less strongly. These results can help inform our understanding of the structure of nonbelief.

Brake, Matthew
George Mason University
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Title: The Rise of the Nones: Politics, Spirituality, and Neo-Secularization
Abstract: The United States has traditionally been a “churched” nation and has often been cited by desecularization theorists as an indicator of the flawed nature of the secularization thesis; however, in the past decade, the U.S. has seen a rise of those identifying themselves as having no religious affiliation. These so-called religious "nones" have caused some debate about the future of religion in the U.S. Are there any societal reasons for this increase? Does the rise of the religious nones indicate a decline of religious belief in the United States? Does this trend give validity to the secularization thesis? In this paper, I will first evaluate the reasons for the rise of the religious nones in light of considerations from José Casanova's article, “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective.” In dialogue with Casanova, I will compare the relationship between state/church politics and the secularization of Europe with the relationship between state/politics politics and the rise of the nones in the United States. Next, I will consider the religious make-up of the religious nones with particular attention paid to the presence of any private spirituality among this group.
Appropriating the work of Rodney Stark, I will consider whether the persistence of spirituality among the nones constitutes an effective rebuttal of the secularization thesis. Finally, I will consider the work of Mark Chaves and consider whether or not neo-secularization is an adequate concept for understanding the phenomenon of the religious nones in the United States.

Caldwell-Harris, Catherine
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Title: Examining Low Religiousness Among University Students in Istanbul
Abstract: College students in Istanbul are surrounded by considerable contradictions. The life-style of a cosmopolitan European city beckons, but family life frequently retains traditional values such as skepticism of western behaviors like dating. A key source of tension for young people is religion. Turkey has a history as a secular state, but religious political parties and culturally powerful groups like Gülen have grown in importance in recent decades. To learn more about religious attitudes among young adults in this rapidly changing region, we surveyed 200 students at Istanbul University. Students completed an Islamic version of the Religious Orientation Scale (ROS), along with personality measures. Using the ROS categories, 37% of students were high on both intrinsic and extrinsic subscales, 13% were extrinsic, 14% intrinsic, while 36% were low/nonreligious. This group responded 'disagree' on average to most questions, thus rejecting statements such as Unless conditions are blocked, I fast in the month of Ramadan. In several recent western studies, possessing an analytical reasoning style was associated with atheism. We examined this using the Cognitive Reflections Test (CRT) and the Rational Experiential Inventory (REI). To obtain correct answers on the math problems of the CRT, respondents must inhibit responding with an intuitive but false answer. Correct answers on the CRT negatively correlated with ROS extrinsic orientation, r= -0.45. The REI sub-scores measuring Rational Engagement correlated with ROS extrinsic at r= -0.35, a new finding in the literature (our team previously found a trend in this direction with American college students). No relationships were found between religiousness and the broader autism phenotype (using the Autism Quotient) in contrast to several western studies. Interview data with a small number of students revealed multiple reasons for atheism and low religiousness, but a salient issue was perceived incompatibility between scientific theories (especially evolution) and religious teachings.

Christof, Catharine
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Title: Michel Foucault, Religion & the Theatrical Work of Jerzy Grotowski
Abstract: In this paper I will locate the work of Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1933 – 1999) in the context of Michel Foucault's poststructuralist concepts, particularly those regarding the body, history and Christianity. I will investigate two plays within Grotowski’s Theatre of Productions phase to see if they indeed did manifest the boundary-defying exploration of ideological structures that Foucault’s inquiries offer to religious studies work. I will then delve more specifically into the use of what religious studies scholar Thomas Beaudoin calls a ‘Foucaultian imperative’ in art, demonstrating
that Grotowski’s work could be seen to manifest a new way of religious knowing through a secular realization of theatre art. I will use Foucault’s work through the traditions of religious studies scholars Jeremy Carrette and James Bernauer to challenge the place of the body in the understanding of religion. By using Foucault as an interpretive theoretical framework, religion and the body can be linked much more effectively. I will explore the impact and resonance of these ideas as they exist in the secular productions of Grotowski’s early theatre career. I will examine Grotowski’s art in light of these critiques, notably exploring Grotowski’s work in light of Carrette’s assessment of Foucault’s ‘spiritual corporality.’ In so doing I will explore how the religious studies work on Foucault provides an interpretive lens through which to view these productions as a challenge to the boundaries and limits of spiritual experience. The secular form of theatre art can then be explored as a means of experiencing the sacred.

Cragun, Ryan T.
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Title: “Splitters!”: Lessons from Monty Python for Nontheist/Freethought Organizations in the US
Abstract: While the 19th century saw a wave of popularity for freethinkers in the US, much of this excitement had died down by the early part of the 20th century. Just a handful of nontheist and freethought organizations remained, and most of them were very small and on the verge of collapsing. However, starting in 1941 with the founding of the American Humanist Association and followed by the founding of American Atheists in 1963, the number of nontheist organizations experienced a slow increase. Today, there are several large, national, member-based nontheist/freethought social movement organizations in the US and thousands of smaller, local organizations. In this paper we examine the origins and inter-relations of four of the largest nontheist/freethought organizations in the US: the American Humanist Association, American Atheists, the Council for Secular Humanism, and the Freedom From Religion Foundation. In examining the origins of these organizations, we draw upon several social movement theories but also extend current theorizing by discussing the importance of inter-personal relationships for understanding how social movement organizations “split” or “fracture”. We also discuss whether these “splits” facilitate or hinder the aims of the broader movement in the US.

Edgell, Penny
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Title: Atheists Still Others? A 10-year Followup on the Findings of the American Mosaic Project
Abstract: In a major national survey fielded in 2003, atheists were named as the least trusted group in American society when compared to a range of other religious and racial out-groups. Michele Lamont has argued that moral worthiness is an important form of social capital in the United States, and religiosity has served as a kind of proxy for this social capital in both private and public life (e.g. for being a good neighbor, or a good citizen). Religion serves as a basis for cultural membership in American life, and
a stated rejection of religion (e.g. the affirmation of an atheist identity) serves to define and sharpen a key symbolic boundary that separates authentic/good/true citizens from inauthentic/problematic ones. In the spring of 2014, a 10-year follow-up survey was fielded by the Boundaries in the American Mosaic project team. In this paper, I compare the findings on religious outsiders in 2014 with those from 2003. Attitudes towards atheists have not changed appreciably in that ten-year time frame, despite the rising percentage and visibility of those claiming no religious identity (the “nones”). In this analysis, I first compare the determinants of atheist distrust in 2003 and 2014 with a special focus on the intersection of age and religiosity. Second, I compare the determinants of atheist distrust with those factors predicting distrust of other small religious out-groups (Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Mormons). My aim is to further our understanding of the role of religiosity in designating insider/outsider status in American life.

Ertit, Volkan
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Title: Universalized –Classical- Secularization Theory
Abstract: The classical theory of secularization remains one of the most controversial in the field of social science. According to the theory, modernization is the main reason behind the aggressive secularization process now pervading Europe. There are two main issues of discussion among respected sociologists and theologians in this regard. First, there is an ongoing debate on the meaning of the theory, especially among American and European scholars, in which they have yet to find consensus regarding the answers to the questions, “what does the theory assert?” and “what does it not assert?” The second discussion, which cannot be considered separately from the first one, is whether the theory is able to put forward a clear explanation for the bumpy relationship between religion and society in the European context and other parts of the world. In my paper, I will attempt to provide some answers to the two questions mentioned above. Firstly, I will try to shed some light on what the classical secularization theory asserts and does not assert. Then, in a clear departure from more well-known theorists like Steve Bruce and Bryan Wilson, I will argue that the theory is not only valid for European societies but for every society at large. To make the theory universal in its relevance, the old classical secularization paradigm needs to be slightly revised. In attempting this, aspects of the old paradigm that belong to the history of Europe and its offshoots (Protestan Reformation) will be somewhat downplayed while those with more universal relevance (scientific advances, urbanization and industrial capitalism) will be highlighted.

Exline, Julie J.
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Title: If Given Clear Evidence for the Existence of a God, How Do Atheists and Agnostics Think They Would Respond?
Abstract: How do atheists and agnostics imagine that they would respond in two hypothetical situations: 1) being presented with clear evidence that a god actually did exist and 2) encountering this god, with a choice to approach, stand still, or move
away? Adult participants (N = 520) from the U.S. completed an online survey via Amazon's MTurk. Only those who endorsed nonbelief in any god on a screening question completed the survey. Results suggested that nonbelievers varied considerably in their imagined responses to god-focused evidence and encounters. On Likert items (consolidated through factor analysis), confusion was endorsed most, then fear, a loss of freedom, and positive emotion (these three did not differ), then anger, then guilt/shame. An open-ended item revealed responses not tapped in the Likert items, including shock/surprise, continued skepticism, curiosity, awe, and decisions about whether to follow the god and whether/how to change one's life and beliefs. In terms of the imagined encounter, most participants reported preferences to approach or stand still vs. moving away. In comparison to agnostics, atheists (especially “closed” atheists) imagined more negatively valenced responses (e.g., more anger, more loss of freedom, less positive emotion, less approach behavior, and more avoidance). In general, more positively valenced emotions and behaviors were associated with greater age, higher agreeableness and conscientiousness, lower neuroticism, more positive ratings of the (hypothetical) god's attributes, more struggles involving religious doubts, less certainty about one's nonbelief, fewer interpersonal struggles around religion, and fewer microaggressions related to one's nonbelief.

Fazzino, Lori L.
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Title: What Happens in Vegas is... Moral Embattlement: Irreligious Moral Performance as Cultural Resistance in Sin City
Abstract: Labeling atheists as immoral individuals, the very personification of evil, is not a particularly new idea. Attaining civic inclusion in a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah, a city like Las Vegas where God is believed to be absent, would be easy. This is simply not the case. The strong cultural lore of “Sin City” promotes a false illusion that Las Vegas is a city where vice trumps virtue for sinners rather than saints. In this paper, I take a qualitative ethnographic approach that integrates participant observation, visual data, and in-depth interviews with textual analysis of local news stories. My goal is to understand how atheists have engaged in community building, activism, and collective boundary work in Las Vegas. My findings suggest that the moral landscape of Las Vegas very much a terrain of resistance where the interplay between religious and secular ideologies create a contested web of power and counter-power relations, indicating that even in Las Vegas where it is acceptable to be a sinner, heathens are persona non grata. I argue that the mobilization of collective action among the Las Vegas humanists and atheists community should be understood as dramaturgical performances of irreligious morality that both justifies the rejection of deviant labels and challenges the moral proclivity of American theists. The implications of these findings center on larger issues concerning atheist visibility, which I contend is a cultural expression of resistance, not only in “Sin City”, but in the United States as a whole.

Fiala, Andrew
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Title: Nonreligion, Secularism, and Cosmopolitanism
Abstract: Nonreligion and secularism may undermine traditional political authority as well as traditional religious commitment. This may be why Locke warned that atheism “dissolves all.” If we turn away from religion, some may worry that there remains no firm foundation for political authority. There is, in fact, a close connection between atheism and anarchism (see Fiala, 2013). Bakunin, for example, rejected both “God and the State.” However, in the contemporary world, secular political authority remains the best pragmatic mechanism for the development of nonreligion, since secular political systems defend the rights of nonbelievers. There is no denying, however, that the nonreligious standpoint is skeptical of unjustified authorities and traditions. This skepticism can easily extend toward skeptical critiques of traditional political affiliations. This presentation will discuss connections between nonreligion and cosmopolitan or anti-political (even anarchistic) ideas.

Frost, Jacqui
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Title: Atheist Churches: All of the Community with “None” of the Theology
Abstract: Many have shown that religious involvement is one of the most common gateways into other forms of civic and community involvement in America, with the church being both a physical and ideological anchor around which community and morality are built. As younger cohorts are associating with organized religion less and less, many fear that America is in a “crisis of community” in which an increase in individualism and a decrease in religious affiliation has led to a decline in group membership and social networks, which in turn has led to a decline in reciprocity and trust amongst Americans. However, instead of retreating from community involvement, a large portion of these “nones” are instead forming their own voluntary associations, even churches, in response to a lack of secular outlets for community and civic engagement. This research is an ethnographic exploration of one of these communities - The Sunday Assembly. Founded in 2013 and dubbed an “atheist church” by the media, this group expects to have 100 “assemblies” worldwide by the end of 2014. Through in-depth interviews with organizers and members of one smaller, local group, as well as participant observation at their gatherings, I explore how this group is both copying and re-molding the church model in order to build a secular community around bettering themselves and their communities without invoking religious ideologies, in many ways complicating the crisis of community thesis. I will detail key findings from the first eight months of observations and interviews, fleshing out how one assembly is navigating their way through the logistics of becoming an organization while simultaneously fostering an emotionally and socially engaged community.

Goodman, Kathy
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Title: Secular Students and Spirituality
Abstract: Within higher education and student affairs, it has become very common to provide programming related to “spirituality” of college students, based on the premise that everyone is spiritual. Using data from a national study of college student spirituality
conducted by the Higher Education Research Institute, I will investigate to the extent to which the concepts of spirituality as defined in the study are applicable to secular students in the sample. The original study, conducted from 2003-2007, used principle components analysis to identify factors related to spirituality, religion, and related qualities (which they defined as charitable involvement, ethical involvement, etc.). A major conclusion from the study was that today's college students have very high levels of spiritual interest and involvement. My study seeks to understand whether that holds true for secular students. Preliminary findings suggest that secular students score lower than the overall sample on measures of spirituality and religion, but they score only slightly lower on the related qualities measures. I conclude that many of the topics called “spirituality” are salient for secular students, however, the concept is not universally applicable. A practical implication based on these findings is that educators should begin with the broad concept of “Pathways to Purpose,” or “Purpose, Meaning, and Values” (rather than defining that as spirituality) to create a more inclusive environment. Framing programming in this way will broaden conversations so students can position themselves in the conversation in ways that are authentic to them, whether they are spiritual, religious, secular, or some combination.

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Title: TBA
Abstract: TBA

Hoesly, Dusty
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Title: Your Wedding, Your Way: Personalized, Non-Religious Weddings through the Universal Life Church
Abstract: Major national news outlets such as The New York Times have observed that weddings in the United States, especially for young educated people, are increasingly performed by ministers who are friends or relatives of the couple and who become ordained online just for that purpose. The primary organization licensing these ministers, and thus authorizing these weddings as legally valid, is the Universal Life Church (ULC), which has ordained over 20 million people since 1962. To date, there has been no focused study of the ULC or weddings conducted under its auspices. According to my initial research findings, both ULC ministers and the couples who engage them self-describe as non-religious, usually as agnostic, atheist, apathetic, secular, or spiritual. Similarly, they describe their weddings in non-religious terms, emphasizing the personalization of the ceremony to match their particular beliefs and tastes as well as the conscious exclusion of most religious language. These secular or spiritual wedding ceremonies reveal non-religious couples' desires for an alternative apart from bureaucratic civil ceremonies or traditional religious rites. Using original survey, interview, and participant observation data, this paper explores why “secular” people employ ULC-ordained ministers for their weddings, and how ULC ministers and couples married by them label and valuate their “non-religious,” personalized wedding ceremonies. My examination of ULC weddings reveals not only the diversity of non-
theistic self-identification and lifecycle ritualization, but also how constructs such as religious and secular can be co-constitutive rather than purely oppositional.

Huff, Peter A.
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Title: The Pope and the “Nones”: Pope Francis and the New Age of Atheism
Abstract: The Catholic church’s Second Vatican Council (1962-65) identified atheism as “one of the most serious problems of our time.” The council’s landmark document, The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, called for “sincere and prudent” dialogue with unbelievers in the age of secularism. Pope Paul VI (1963-78) endorsed dialogue with atheists in his encyclical Ecclesiam Suam and established an unprecedented Vatican department to oversee the dialogue: the Secretariat for Non-Believers. He also commissioned the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) to make the study of atheism a priority for the priestly order’s intellectual apostolate. A half century after the council, however, Catholic-atheist dialogue remains part of Vatican II’s unfinished agenda. The 2013 papal election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio has sparked new interest in dialogue between believers and unbelievers. A “Francis Effect” has been observed in various areas of ecclesial and social life—from curial reform in the Vatican to public discourse on social justice and gay marriage. This paper investigates the impact of Pope Francis on the relationship of the church to non-believers, especially the “nones” rapidly reshaping contemporary religious experience. The paper traces the development of Francis’ understanding of the phenomenon of modern unbelief from his writings as Jesuit educator and Archbishop of Buenos Aires to his principal papal messages: his encyclical Lumen Fidei, his apostolic letter Evangelii Gaudium, his 2014 World Day of Peace message, and his controversial interviews in La Repubblica and La Civiltà Cattolica. The paper seeks to advance the argument: As the church’s first Jesuit and American pope, Francis brings to his office fresh resources and unexpected perspectives that promise to fulfill Vatican II’s dream of “sincere and prudent” dialogue with the secular world.

Jelen, Ted G.
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Title: Religious Markets, Regimes, and Secularity: A Comparative Study
Abstract: In this paper, we present three models of religion/regime relations. The “Quasi-Establishment” model describes nations with pluralistic religious markets, in which explicitly religious alternatives seek social and political advantages. Nations which embody the ancien regime model have a dominant religious tradition, which has been discredited through association with a previously undemocratic regime. Finally, National Identity regimes consist of nations in which a particular religious affiliation is a component of national identity, and in which this link has been defined by the actions of an outside power. We hypothesize that the correlations of religious non-affiliation will be different in each regime type. In religiously pluralistic societies, non-affiliation will largely be caused by individual characteristics, such as education and education. In nations that embody the ancient regime model, religious non-affiliation will be positively related to indicators of secular social integration, such as participation in voluntary...
associations, partisan identification, etc. Conversely, religious non-affiliation will be negatively related to social integration in national identity regimes. Data for this study will be taken from the World Values Surveys, with two cases for each regime type. We will consider India and Brazil to be examples of the Quasi-establishment model, Chile and Turkey as instances of the ancient regime model, and Poland and Iran as national identity exemplars.

Kasselstrand, Isabella
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Title: Belonging without Believing: Secular Functions of Churches in Northern Europe
Abstract: Levels of religious beliefs, practices, and identification are at the center of the current debate on European secularization. Grace Davie (e.g. 1990; 2002) argues that Europeans believe without belonging, referring to high levels of individualized understandings of the supernatural, while active participation is low. In contrast, I argue that attendance alone offers a limited understanding of religious belonging, and that many Northern Europeans, particularly Scandinavians, belong without believing, in that they support and identify with latent, secular functions of churches while they no longer believe. This study uses a mixed-methods approach comprised of in-depth interviews as well as quantitative data from the International Social Survey Program and the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey. While figures of religious belief and belonging are frequently presented in the literature, few explain and highlight such findings with qualitative data. Scotland and Sweden were chosen as two comparative case studies from the relatively secularized Northern Europe. Findings reveal that a majority of Swedes are culturally religious (e.g. Zuckerman, 2008) as they do not believe but still identify with the Church of Sweden, which serves a largely secular purpose as part of a cultural heritage and as a provider of life cycle ceremonies. In Scotland, on the other hand, belonging without believing is more closely associated with a sense of community or cultural defense (e.g. Bruce, 2002) in a nation that is more religiously diverse. The findings ultimately draw attention to the importance of context and conceptualization in the study of distinct and multidimensional processes of secularization.

Kenney, Jeffery T.
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Title: Transformations of Self and Society in Modern Egypt
Abstract: According to measures such as the World Values Survey, Muslim-majority nations like Egypt constitute the most religious, and thus the least secularized, regions of the globe. Voices of atheism can be heard in Egypt, and they are becoming more forceful, but they are rare and draw attention more for their novelty than their social and political significance. Indeed, rational discussions about secularism/secularization in Egypt have been made difficult by an array of factors: the legacy of Western colonialism, authoritarian politics, a forceful Islamist opposition, and ongoing cultural debates about modern identity and authenticity. But signs of liberalism are evident in the emerging consumer culture. Egyptians are coming to see themselves, and express their identities, like many others around the world: in terms of class and the power to
consume. And this trend has opened up the possibility for what one author has termed “cultural extroversion”—the capacity of Muslims to interpret lifestyle choice as coincident with religion. My presentation will explore the growing trend in self-help and personal development literature in Egypt, situating it within the demands of global capitalism and the psychological values of the enterprising self. Self-help, whether in Egypt or the US, legitimizes a turn inward, to explore and nurture the true self—a self often portrayed as hidden or suppressed by the dictates of traditional mores. The result of such self-exploration is not a rejection of Islam as much as it is its transvaluation: envisioning Muhammad as the Muslim Dale Carnegie or Allah as life coach. Through an analysis of self-help literature, I will analyze how the inroad of capitalism in Egypt is reshaping notions of the self, away from traditional Islamic notions to a self more in line with global capitalist culture.

Langston, Joseph
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Title: Atheism Looking In: Attitudes of Nonbeliever Group Affiliates and Nonaffiliates on the Goals and Strategies of Organized Unbelief
Abstract: This descriptive study contributes to research on nonbelievers, their communities, and the atheist movement in general by assessing individual attitudes, perceptions, and preferences in three areas: (1) The preferences of nonbelieving group members and nonbelieving non-members (“secular nonaffiliates”) on atheist group goals, functions, and activities; (2) the attitudes of both types of members on the nature of interactions with and approaches to religion and religious individuals; and (3) the perceptions of secular affiliates on why secular nonaffiliates don’t join nonbeliever groups, and reasons given by secular nonaffiliates themselves as to why they don’t join nonbeliever groups. Discussion focuses on recent perspectives of the politics of atheism and atheism as a social movement.

Lanman, Jonathan A.
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Title: Religious Actions Speak Louder than Words: Exposure to Credibility Enhancing Displays (CREDs) Predicts Theism and Non-theism
Abstract: A central claim of the cognitive science of religion (CSR) is that pan-human cognitive mechanisms explain supernatural agent beliefs. This claim faces the challenge of accounting for non-theism. More precisely, if nearly all human beings possess the cognitive mechanisms outlined by CSR scholars, then how do we explain patterns in the presence of theists and non-theists? Evolutionary anthropologist Joseph Henrich has proposed the existence of a psychological bias focused on “Credibility Enhancing Displays” (CREDs). We are biased, Henrich argues, to believe the representations we receive from others to the extent that they ‘walk the walk’ and not just ‘talk the talk’. The implication for theism and non-theism is that individuals will be much less likely to acquire the theistic beliefs of their communities if they are not exposed to sufficient levels of CREDs. We will present new evidence from a diverse sample of Americans suggesting that CREDs exposure, as measured by our recently validated scale (alpha=.92), predicts theism vs. non-theism (B=.519, p<.001,
Exp(B)=1.680), certainty of God’s existence (b = .27, t (192) = 2.45, p = .014), and intrinsic religiosity (b = .30, t (192) = 2.82, p < .01), all while controlling for religious socialization. These results are among the first to empirically support the theorized significance of CREDs for theism. They suggest that actions do indeed speak louder than words in convincing individuals of the reality of supernatural agents and that, to be successfully transmitted, religious commitments must be embodied.

Lee, Lois
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Title: Secular or Nonreligious? Profiling and Theorising European and US ‘Religious Landscapes’

Abstract: In profiling religiosity, Europe and the US are almost always described as different: ‘secular Europe’ and ‘religious America’. This paper presents quantitative data that show that the secular population (i.e. the number of people who are more or less indifferent to religion) is consistent not only across European countries but is also of a similar scale in Europe and the US. On the other hand, the size of the active nonreligious population varies, between these countries and continents. Thus, secularity appears to be less significant for understanding differences between the European and US ‘religious landscapes’ than active participation in religious and nonreligious cultures: several European countries appear to have vital nonreligious cultures with established histories, whilst this is an emerging phenomenon in the US. I argue therefore that the study of nonreligion as distinct from secularity is fundamental to progressing understanding of contemporary societies and theorising their causes and development.

Lenehan, Kevin
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Title: Nonreligion and Religious Pluralism in Australia: A New Context for Christian Identity and Dialogue

Abstract: By all indicators, Australia is among the most nonreligious nations on earth, rated 10th by the WIN-Gallup 2012 Global Index of Religiosity and Atheism. In this paper I will firstly outline religious/nonreligious identification in Australia on the basis of the 2011 national census data. A comparison with earlier data shows a steady decrease in identification with Christian churches other than Roman Catholicism, a small but steady increase in identification with religions other than Christianity, and a consistent increase in the number of Australians identifying as ‘no religion’ (22.5% in 2011). In the second section of the paper, I will look beyond the statistics of institutional identification to explore social research into the beliefs and practices Australians use to make sense of life. This perspective calls for a more nuanced description of religious/nonreligious identity than data such as a national census can provide. In the Australian context, as well as intentional religious and nonreligious identification we find evidence of high levels of both ‘believing without belonging’ and ‘belonging without believing’, within a pragmatic cultural attitude of ‘practical secularity’. This situation is reminiscent of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s analysis of his own 1940s European context, a post-Christendom culture in which people lived and acted ‘as though God does not
exist'. In the third section of the paper, I will draw on Bonhoeffer’s challenging insights about what the Christian church can learn from the ‘promising godlessness’ of its contemporaries to propose some characteristics of the kind of dialogue Christians are called to in Australia’s pluralistic context.

Lockett, Linda  
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Title: Religious Markets, Regimes, and Secularity: A Comparative Study  
Abstract: In this paper, we present three models of religion/regime relations. The “Quasi-Establishment” model describes nations with pluralistic religious markets, in which explicitly religious alternatives seek social and political advantages. Nations which embody the ancien regime model have a dominant religious tradition, which has been discredited through association with a previously undemocratic regime. Finally, National Identity regimes consist of nations in which a particular religious affiliation is a component of national identity, and in which this link has been defined by the actions of an outside power. We hypothesize that the correlations of religious non-affiliation will be different in each regime type. In religiously pluralistic societies, non-affiliation will largely be caused by individual characteristics, such as education and education. In nations that embody the ancient regime model, religious non-affiliation will be positively related to indicators of secular social integration, such as participation in voluntary associations, partisan identification, etc. Conversely, religious non-affiliation will be negatively related to social integration in national identity regimes. Data for this study will be taken from the World Values Surveys, with two cases for each regime type. We will consider India and Brazil to be examples of the Quasi-establishment model, Chile and Turkey as instances of the ancient regime model, and Poland and Iran as national identity exemplars.

MacMurray, Nicholas J.  
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Title: Irreligious Death: Making Meaning without the Theist Crutch  
Abstract: Death is a universal experience, but the meanings and practices surrounding death vary according to cultural and temporal contexts. Examining how different groups approach end of life preparations, death practices, and grief management provides valuable insight into the varied meanings of death and the broader sociocultural context in which they exist. In the United States, death is often understood in the context of religion. As such, secular death practices and grief management is grossly understudied. This ethnographic study is an attempt to understand how individuals with an irreligious worldview handle the management of death within a hegemonic religious context where much of the language and practice surrounding death holds little meaning, and consequently, little value. Because irreligious individuals lack the social crutches provided by religion, they must find other means for confronting death and managing grief. Utilizing a “death acceptance” framework, we identify the unique challenges irreligious individuals face when reconciling the “death of self” and dealing with the “death of other” and outline various irreligious death practices and grief management strategies. We argue that the lack of
institutionalized secular death culture increases the difficulty of managing death and
grief, but ultimately reinforces an irreligious death acceptance perspective. By
focusing inquiry on irreligious understandings, negotiations, and practices surrounding
death and the ways in which these contrast with normative social practices at large,
this study highlights the need for establishing a more inclusive death culture and
contributes to the scholarship on the lived experience of irreligion in the United States
today.

Mastiaux, Björn
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Title: Organized Atheism in the US and Abroad – A Typology of Members from the
Freethought-Secularist Movement
Abstract: With this paper, I would like to present the main results from my research on
members of atheist or secularist organizations in the United States and Germany. In a
situation in which religious indifference and strict religiosity were shown to be growing
simultaneously in the modern world, yet the phenomenon of convinced irreligion was
largely ignored, I set out several years ago to answer the question: Who are the
decided, committed, and organized atheists and what drives their activism in different
socio-religious settings within Western societies? This research was completed in late
2013. The results are based on 58 qualitative in-depth interviews with members from
local atheist organizations, which offer their members community as well as chances
for participation in political activism and which are conceptualized as part of a broader
freethought-secularist movement. Despite their highly diverse religious / nonreligious
backgrounds and biographies, processes of joining, and strategies and degrees of
activism, eight distinctive types of members were identified. These are based on
recurring narrative and action patterns (“motives”). The motive of political conflict unites
the “Political Fighter” and the “Indignant”, the motive of belonging unites the
“Collectivist” and the “Alienated”, the motive of philosophical and religious knowledge
unites the “Intellectual Enlightener” and the “Silent Intellectual”, while finally the motive
of identification with the organization is central to the “Dissociate” as well as to the
“Euphoric”. These types show the face of organized atheism to be very diverse and to
be much more than and different from the caricature of “militant atheists” that has
dominated public perception of the movement in recent years (in much of whatever
little notice it has received).

Melton, J. Gordon
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Title: The Nones Shall Always Be with Us: Toward an Historical Perspective on Unbelief in
America
Abstract: The years of the 21st century have been marked by the heightened visibility
of the American community of Unbelief (atheists, humanists, freethinkers), a growth of
Christian anti-atheist rhetoric led by periodic papal pronouncements, and the most
recent discovery of a seemingly growing community of “nones,” people variously
defined as disassociated from any religious community and/or lacking any religious
preference/identity, which has led at times to the nones being identified with the

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community of Unbelief in things religious or supernatural. Reflection on this state of affairs is provided by an assemblage of two sets of data. First, the historical data on religious affiliation in America through the 19th and early 20th centuries indicates that the “nones” provided a far greater percentage of the population, being the majority in the decades prior to World War II. Simultaneously, unbelief, first manifest at the end of the 18th century as deism, survived and grew through the 19th century as freethought and through the 20th century in a variety of movements—Ethical Culture, Marxism, atheism, and Humanism. By 1940, some 4 to 5 percent of the population identified themselves as non-theists. Projecting the historical trends into the future, the Unbelief community has grown substantially through the last half of the twentieth century to the present, though it remains as the same 4 to five percent of the population (12 to 15 million. In that time, however, it has developed more than a half-dozen national organizations, each with local communities scattered across the continent, an organized base that provides the potential of substantial growth in the next generation.

Murico, Jeffrey
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Title: The Politics of Secularism and the Paradox of a Christian-American Ethos
Abstract: This paper analyzes the presence of secularization debates in the political arena in order to reveal a prevalent paradoxical Christian-American ethos. In short, this paper argues that those who are concerned with the encroachment of “secularism” are themselves secularizing various aspects of “religion” when engaging in the political process. Citing multiple examples, but focusing on one case study in more depth – the Mount Soledad Cross controversy - this paper argues that in each of these cases, those who seek to defend “the religious” from the threat of “secularism” are ultimately the ones doing the secularizing. Since 1913, some form of a cross has stood in the center of a public city park atop Mount Soledad in San Diego, California despite efforts by separationists to remove it who claim that its existence and maintenance is a violation of the Establishment Clause. Defenders of the cross argue that its existence on public land is Constitutional because the cross is not a religious symbol. Rather, they argue that the cross should be understood as a secular symbol – one that represents American identity, patriotism, and military service. This particular approach, I argue, is representative of a wider, paradoxical Christian-American ethos where “defenders of Christianity” resort to secularizing “the religious” as an attempt to preserve what they hold to be sacred. In order to preserve the cross in its current location, appellants are arguing that the cross has been divested of its religious meaning. In the end, such tactics contribute to, rather than defend against, the secularization process.

Quillen, Ethan G.
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Title: Atheist Exceptionalism: The Definition and Legality of Atheism under the First Amendment
Abstract: For my Doctoral Thesis I employed a discursive analysis to the field of scholarly definitions of Atheism in order to alleviate the need to either define the term
anew, or adopt a particular definition. This methodology granted me the freedom to see how individuals might shape their Atheist identities based upon the particular influences that have shaped the scholarly discourse on how the concept itself is defined. What this paper intends is a similar analysis, using the discursive method to interpret a judicial field in order to understand how the concept is addressed, defined, and given agency by means of legal limitations. In the collection of worldwide political organizations, the United States is exceptional in the sense of its intricate legal system based upon a Constitution and its subsequent Amendments, as well as the Supreme Court's position in overseeing and determining the legality of the citizenry's religious actions in relation to that Constitution. As a discursive field, the decisions made by the court in regards to Atheism reveal to us an interesting perspective on how the concept is defined legally, especially in relation to its ‘legality’ under the First Amendment's two clauses concerning the disestablishment of a ‘national religion' and the free exercise granted the American citizenry. This paper will discuss this ‘legality’ across three case studies—public education, oath requirements, and public displays—in order to see how certain decisions by the Court have offered both a judicial definition of Atheism, as well as where this definition places Atheism—and Atheists—within the American Civil Religion.

Rectenwald, Michael
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Title: Secular Cooperation in England and the Americas
Abstract: In this paper, I treat Secularism as founded by George Jacob Holyoake in 1851-52. In particular, I focus on the distinction that Holyoake maintained over the course of fifty years regarding his branch of Secularism, in the face of the broader, arguably more successful division of the movement led by Charles Bradlaugh. As distinct from Bradlaugh, for Holyoake the “secular” did not primarily signify the absence or negation of religious belief or practice. Rather, by the secular, Holyoake indicated a substantive category in its own right. Secularism itself represented a “positive” creed and movement intended to supersede or superintend both theism and atheism. Holyoake imagined and fostered the co-existence of secular and religious elements subsisting under a common umbrella. The secular and religious were figured as complementary and co-constituting aspects of what we might call, after Charles Taylor, an overarching “secularity,” but which Holyoake termed Secularism proper. Holyoake’s Secularism was not only at odds with the understanding of the Bradlaugh camp during his own lifetime but also it differs markedly from the standard secularization thesis as developed from the nineteenth century and beyond. This paper examines the movement that united atheists, skeptics, “agnostics,” and liberal theists, who might cooperate for the material improvement of humanity, especially the working classes, using Secularism as their creed. It particularly emphasizes Holyoake's insistence on the cooperation among believers and unbelievers. It traces the movement to the Americas and examines the varieties of Secularism that came under Holyoake's influence, or resisted it.

Richter, Charles Louis
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Title: “I Know It When I See It:” Humanism, Secularism, and Religious Taxonomy

Abstract: Few outside the academic study of religion have thought very hard about how “religion” might be defined. If pressed, they may employ the same definition that Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart used when he defined “hard-core pornography” in 1964: “I know it when I see it.” The tendency toward such an intuitive definition of religion opens the door to confusion in communication—and potentially in policy. For most Americans, the terms “religion” and “church,” when used to describe broader categories, retain Christian connotations of structure, belief, and practice. These connotations are retained when they attempt to describe—in terms of religion—“secular humanism” or other quasi-religious philosophies or movements. This paper argues that secular humanism is a disruptive concept that brings to light the normative quality of religious worldviews. This paper will examine how observers who “know it when they see it” have taxonomized secular humanism and other examples of non-religion/irreligion as religions. The inclusion since the 1920s of “humanism” in catalogues of religious movements shows an evolving response to the concept that shifts with the perceived prevalence of irreligion in society, as well as the relationship between religion, irreligion, and the state. The modern case study of the Sunday Assembly, a “godless church” that started in England in 2013 and has toured North America seeding new congregations, provides a useful example of how the criteria of belief, ritual, dogma, and community are employed by both critics and supporters of the movement to evaluate its religious/irreligious/non-religious status.

Schutz, Amanda
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Title: Organizational Variation in the Nonreligious Community

Abstract: With the rapid rise of religious non-affiliation in the United States over the past two decades, scholars have recently produced impressive work on the topic of nonreligion. However, little work has focused specifically on the role organized nonreligion plays in shaping a nonreligious identity, or the organizational variation that exists within the nonreligious community. How do different organizational types affect the development, maintenance, and salience of a nonreligious identity, and how might the individual and collective identities of members in turn affect organizational identity (i.e., the features that an organization is expected to possess)? My dissertation aims to uncover answers to these questions. I expect that a typology of nonreligious organizational identity can be developed, similar to the typologies of nonreligious individual identity currently being explored. This research will add to existing knowledge of nonreligion in the United States; American nonreligion is likely as diverse a phenomenon as American religion, and current research is only beginning to reflect this reality. I will investigate these topics using various qualitative methods, including participant observation and in-depth interviews with nonbelievers, which will include a significant sample of nonbelievers who are not involved with a nonreligious organization, in order to control for the actual effect of organizational membership on nonreligious identity. After conducting pilot research this summer, I will begin collecting data for my dissertation after defending my proposal early this fall. The proposed presentation would provide an opportunity to share preliminary results and acquire
valuable feedback from experts in the field.

Sherkat, Darren
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Title: Believing and Belonging – or not?: Trends and Predictors of Religious Belief and Belonging in the United States
Abstract: In the last two decades, religious scholars and pundits have increasingly argued that Europeans and Americans “believe, but don’t belong.” It is a comforting analysis for people with religious commitments, since it suggests that the rising proportion of people who don’t identify with religion, nonetheless believe in the Christian gods or the divine inspiration of Christian sacred texts. Yet, recent studies also show that belief in gods are also on the wane, and that more Americans reject the divine inspiration for Christian sacred texts. Further, many who do not believe are compelled to identify with religious groups or to participate in religious services, and this may well have been the norm in prior generations. In this paper, I use data from the 1984-2012 General Social Surveys to examine trends in believing and belonging. I focus on two measures of religious belief—non-theism and secular views of the Bible, and two measures of religious belonging—non-identification and less than yearly religious participation. I compare trends over time and across generations for (1) believing belongers; (2) believers who don’t belong; (3) non-believers who belong; and (4) people who don’t believe or belong. I estimate sets of multinomial logistic regression models to examine how patterns of belief and belonging are influences by demographic factors and childhood religious identification.

Shook, John R.
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Title: Polysecularity and Types of Nonbelief: Framing the Field of Secular Studies
Abstract: The affirmative commitments of nonreligious people leave them generally uninterested in personal religiosity, and keep them at relative distance apart from organized religions. This nonreligiosity is poorly characterized in terms of some “religious deficit” model, as if nonreligiosity should be framed by cognitive/affective disabilities to be religious (e.g. a deficit in mentalization or theory of mind). Nor should nonreligiosity be framed in terms of any “religious aversion” model, supposing that the nonreligious person suffers from compulsive aversions to religion's communal, compliance, or character demands. The establishment and development of Secular Studies has been obstructed by theological stereotypes for the nonreligious: the ‘secular’ involves insensitivity or impassivity to religious wonders, or secularity is the realm of rudely materialistic and utilitarian matters, or secularity may be a manifestation of ‘anti-religious’ antagonisms. Fair research into the thoughts and motives of nonreligious people should instead begin with them in their own lived worlds, not just contrasted against idealized theological portraits of religious people in theirs. Secularity should no longer be conceptualized solely in terms of regrettable deviations from hegemonic theological norms. The enjoyment of rewarding worldly pursuits, the concern for sound social relationships, and the engagement with important civic issues are prominent modes of functional secular living displayed
across historical time periods and civilizations. I have labeled this broadly historical and

global phenomenon as ‘polysecularity’, suitable for multidisciplinary investigation. The

world’s highways are not all roads going away from Rome; worldly pursuits are not all

flights heading away from religion.

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Title: On the Origin and Rise of Atheism
Abstract: Theism has probably been the most influential belief in human history. However, atheism/naturalism can be traced back to ancient schools like Epicureanism and Cārvāka (India) and during the last 300 years atheism has gradually become fairly general in some countries. What is the origin of atheism? Why is it increasing? Based on dual-process theory and recent research on atheism a theoretical ‘holistic’ hypothesis can be made. According to dual-process theory processes of human mind can be divided into intuitive (automatic, rapid, nonverbal, evolutionary old) and reflective (controlled, slow, linked to language, evolutionary recent). In holistic hypothesis three levels of factors are taken into account in explaining atheism/theism. 1) Biological level. Especially two universally evolved intuitive human cognitive traits — hyperactive agency detection device (HADD) and theory of mind (ToM) — have helped mankind to survive but have also made theism attractive. This partially explains why gods and supernatural beliefs have dominated the human history. 2) Psychological level. Those who are more prone to reflective processing or have deficiency of ToM seem to have a tendency towards atheism. This in part explains why scepticism/atheism is an ancient and universal phenomenon. 3) Sociocultural level. Certain (mostly modern) factors – like general wealth, security, modern environment, freedom of belief, education, secularization, and public visibility of atheism and natural/scientific explanations – seem to decline people's motivation for religion and/or incline minds into reflective processing. From the viewpoint of holistic hypothesis, both theism and atheism are ‘natural’ stances.

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Title: Atheist Churching: New Congregational Activity at the Sunday Assembly
Abstract: This paper will explore the social and interactional dynamics of the Sunday Assembly, a growing international atheist congregation created in 2013. Based on on-site fieldwork, participant observation, and in-depth interviews with atheists at the San Diego congregation of the Sunday Assembly – one of the largest of a growing number of nonreligious/godless congregations in the United States – I explore the collective meaning-making activities and congregational identity work of this newest iteration of the broader secular and atheist community. Parallels and differences between religious and irreligious congregational and identity work, as well as the interactional, moral, symbolic, and cultural details of the proactive construction and celebration of godless worldviews through congregational activity will be explored. The concepts of – and relationships between – emotional communities, nonreligious identities, and worldview development will be brought to bear on understanding the dynamics of godless
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Title: Looking for a ‘God-Shaped Hole’: The Political Dimensions of Religiosity and Anti-Atheist Attitudes

Abstract: The current literature on negative attitudes towards atheists reports many Americans carry cultural prejudice, seeing them as immoral, cynical, and hedonistic, and that individuals with high levels of religiosity are more likely to hold these kinds of biases. That story may be too simple, though, because we do not know what kinds of religiosity are associated with these attitudes. Existing literature on the topic often mixes indicators of distinct religious constructs or narrowly chooses indicators of only one type of religiosity. Using a combination of structural equation and ordered logit modeling with 2014 survey data from The American Mosaic Project, this paper demonstrates that high religious centrality—a personal identity favoring the integration of faith with other roles in public life—is distinctly and significantly associated with both public and private distrust of atheists unlike other forms of frequent religious participation or high religious orthodoxy. This centrality also has a strong Christian component and is explicitly political. It is expressed in relationships among survey questions probing respondents' personal religiosity and their expectation that good citizens and competent leaders will be both Christian and religious, respectively. Substantively, these results lend support for a theoretical account of citizenship which incorporates a critical approach to studying dominant cultural forms of religiosity in the United States. They also suggest that it is methodologically prudent to carefully distinguish respondents' constructs of religiosity when attempting to explain negative attitudes towards religious and non-religious minority groups.

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Title: Religious Nones in Canada: A Qualitative Exploration

Abstract: Similar to many other modern Western nations, religious nones are growing rapidly in Canada. Religious nones represent one-quarter of Canadian adults and one-third of Canadian teens today yet little is known empirically about this group in the Canadian context. Drawing on thirty interviews with religious nones, this paper explores some of the perceived benefits for identifying as a religious none, their beliefs about the supernatural, about meaning and purpose in life as well as the afterlife, about morality, and their aversion to religion that is forced on to others. Amidst their varied views on the supernatural and the afterlife, overall most religious nones believe that they are free and open-minded relative to those who are deeply religious, they believe that they have meaning and purpose in life, they reject the assertion that humans need religion to be moral, and they adamantly oppose those who force their religion on to others – and this includes religious nones who do not believe that they ought to convince others to also become religious nones. In total these findings resonate with a pervasive and growing Canadian secular ethos that rejects exclusive belief systems, prides itself on the stance that religion is an individual and private
matter, and opposes forcing one’s beliefs on to another – all in the name of protecting cultural ideals of diversity, pluralism, tolerance, and individualism.

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Title: How Christian Atheists Can Shed Light on Anti-Atheist Prejudice in America
Abstract: Anti-atheist prejudice in the United States is well documented in both academic studies and in news media yet its underlying causes are still not fully known. Since data suggests that atheists experience prejudice in different ways and for different reasons than other more prominent types of discrimination, such as racial prejudice, the process of understanding anti-atheist prejudice likely requires unique research and critical thinking. In this essay, I will explore possible explanations for anti-atheist prejudice based on the most comprehensive scientific examinations of atheists as well as propose that social scientists study Christian atheists, people who lack a belief in God but subscribe to the moral teachings of Jesus, to see if they experience the same degree of prejudice and stereotyping as other atheists. While sociological data indicates that much of the negative stereotyping surrounding atheism results from concerns about an atheist’s ability to behave morally, it is not clear precisely what causes this moral distrust since atheists tend to not only lack a belief in any supernatural moral scorekeeper, but also any universal and codified set of ethical norms such as those found in religious texts. Since Christian atheists affirm the set of ethical norms of Christianity while lacking a belief in God, it would be highly useful to investigate whether people hold the same stereotypical view of them as they do atheists who do not self-identify as Christian atheists.

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Title: The Hypothetical God: Asking Nonbelievers to Imagine a Divine Figure
Abstract: As anyone who has played a good game of Dungeons and Dragons can attest, people are able to create detailed representations of entities they do not believe exist. While previous research suggests that nonbelievers are able to create images of divine figures, the content of these images had not been thoroughly investigated. We asked nonbelievers from the United States if they could form an image of a hypothetical divine figure. Of 520 participants, 81% were able to form an image of a divine figure. While images based on popular religious teachings were the most common, images based on previously held religious beliefs and other personal ideas were also reported. Participants then rated the characteristics of the hypothetical divine figure using the God-10, which measures the degree to which a divine figure is seen as cruel, distant, or loving. Compared to religious believers, nonbelievers described their imagined divine figures as somewhat crueler and substantially more distant and less loving. Participants later answered two questions about what they would say in an encounter with an imagined god and how this god would respond. Most participants did respond to these questions, and several themes emerged which paralleled the God-10 results. While many nonbelievers asked questions about the purpose of suffering and the god’s absence, there were few angry responses or accusations of sadism. These
results show that nonbelievers can generate robust and informative images of a hypothetical god figure.