

## Italian Society for the Sociology of Religion

6-7 November 2008

### Grace Davie: Schedule of sessions and preparatory readings

#### Session 1

This session will discuss the current agenda in the sociology of religion – its advantages and disadvantages and – more importantly – how the agenda came to be the way that it is. Should we simply accept this agenda or should we revisit some of the assumptions that lie beneath it? Is there a specifically Italian answer to this question?

See Grace Davie, *The Sociology of Religion*, London: Sage 2007, especially chapters 1 and 12

Three discussants: Salvatore Abbruzzese, Roberto Cipriani, Matteo Bortolini.

#### Session 2

This session will be primarily concerned with methodology. It will start by looking at the following article:

Grace Davie, 'Religion in Europe in the 21st Century: The Factors to Take into Account', *Archives européennes de sociologie / European Journal of Sociology/ Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie*, XLVII/2, 2006: 271-962

Each 'factor' in this article suggests/ requires a different methodology, including – at the end – the importance of working comparatively. The final point will be developed by looking in more detail at the comparison between the United States and Europe. This part of the session will be based on:

Peter Berger, Grace Davie and Effie Fokas, *Religious America, Secular Europe: A Theme and Variations*, London: Ashgate 2008, especially chapter 2

The key question is this: why is Europe so different from the US and what 'tools' (or methods) are available to us to investigate and to explain these contrasts? The American election will offer an excellent starting point

Three discussants: Stefano Martelli, Chantal Saint-Blancat, Luca Diotallevi.

#### Session 3

The emphasis on the comparative method will merge into the final session on religion in the modern world, with a special emphasis on China.

Background material:

Grace Davie, *Europe: The Exceptional Case*, London: DLT 2002  
John Micklethwait 'Religion and Public Life', *The Economist*, 1 November 2007  
[http://www.economist.com/specialreports/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=10015255](http://www.economist.com/specialreports/displaystory.cfm?story_id=10015255)

On China specifically:

Fenggang Yang, 'The red, black, and gray markets of religion in China', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 47 (2006): 93–122

Christianity in China. 'Sons of heaven', *The Economist*, 2 October 2008  
[http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=12342509](http://www.economist.com/world/asia/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12342509)

Here two points need highlighting: (a) the growing significance of religion in the modern world order and (b) the implications for the sociology of religion, indeed for social science per se. Is the discipline(s) able to respond to this challenge? If not, what is to be done? This discussion will take the seminar full circle, since it will return to the agenda of the sociology of religion. The Chinese case is but one example among many – it is, however, a particularly significant one (for a whole variety of reasons).

Three discussants: Enzo Pace, Stefano Allievi, Valter Zanin.