

Cultural anthropology essay sample

Religion



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1. Your textbook describes Weber's famous secularization thesis in "The Protestant Ethic" (589-591). What does Weber think about the relationship between religion and political structures? America is presented as an exception to this thesis; why do you think the US does not show the same religious trends as those found in most other industrialized countries? 2. How does Gmelch define the term magic in the article "Baseball Magic" and why does he think people use it? 3. What parts of baseball are most likely to lead to magical or superstitious practice and why? Can you think of other examples in U. S. life in which magic/superstition is incorporated?

1. Max Weber believed that religious ideas were key for understanding the unique development of societies worldwide and the rise of industrial capitalism. He suggested that the ascetic values of self-denial and self-discipline that developed in western European Protestantism provided the ethic that was necessary for capitalism to flourish. An increasing systematization and rationalization of religious ideas was also key to the development of Western capitalism. He concluded that as society became more rationalized, they became less religious and therefore losing the spirit that helped them to succeed. However, the United States is an exemption to this as its religious beliefs and practices remain strong. They have found a way to incorporate religion to the public and political life of its people, for example, prayers are said before sporting events and the U. S. military singing "God Bless America".

2. George Gmelch uses Bronislaw Malinowski's hypothesis to define the term magic. According to Malinowski, magic and religion are in a way similar but very different. They both include beliefs of supernatural forces. However,

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religion seeks to worship, honor, and please God, while magic just uses supernatural forces. Magic is mainly used for moments that are unpredictable, where chance or uncertainty is a part of the condition.

3. Hitting and pitching are the two parts of baseball that are most likely to result in a superstitious practice since they involve the most chance or uncertainty. For example, Gmelch ate pancakes before his game and had a bad game. The next time, he ate pancakes and once again had a bad game.