**Reading Questions**

Note: Please read the Nunn article first.

Nunn, Nathan. 2010. “Religious conversion in colonial Africa.” *American Economic Review: Papers & Proceedings, 100*(2): 147–152. Read till the end of Part II.

Meyer, Birgit. 1999. *Translating the Devil: Religion and modernity among the Ewe in Ghana*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. Introduction, pp. xvii - xxvi and Epilogue, pp. 213 - 216.

As you read Nunn, consider:

* Nunn’s paper is actually quite sparse in terms of contextualisation (short introduction and conclusion, a total of 9 citations). To the best of your knowledge, try to situate Nunn’s paper in the field of economics and the theory and literature that it draws upon. What are the implications of Nunn’s findings for economic theory?
* What are the assumptions being made here? What is the epistemological perspective?
* What is the hypothesis that Nunn is testing?
* Why do you think Nunn is going to such lengths to rule out other ways that missions could be correlated with contemporary belief? What does this imply?
* This article essentially shows that after Christian missionary efforts in Africa, there were Christians. Shouldn’t this be obvious? Why would such an article be published in a fancy economics journal? What makes this compelling to Nunn (and to others)?
* Do you think Nunn’s conclusions are valid? Regardless of their validity, do you think they are consequential?

As you read Meyer, consider:

* How does Meyer situate her study within the research on religion in Africa (and elsewhere)? What does she say they have overlooked? What contribution does she claim to make?
* How does Meyer engage with the foundational work of Max Weber? How do you expect she uses his theory and concepts in the rest of the book?
* State Meyer’s main research question, as you understand it.
* Does Meyer’s research design give you confidence that she will convincingly answer that question and make her claimed contribution to the literature? (To find out definitively, you can read the main chapters of the book!)
* Meyer has studied Christianity as practiced by the Peki Ewe in Ghana – what conclusions can we draw from her work that extend beyond this one corner of the world? How does her use of theory help Meyer speak to more than just the experiences and beliefs of her interlocutors?

Now, consider both together:

* What is the evidence that Nunn and Meyer draw upon? Why is it so different? What does this imply about how they are engaging with theory?
* What sorts of puzzles do Nunn and Meyer set for themselves?
* What do you make of the contrast between Nunn’s talk of the “effect” of European missionary activities, and Meyer’s talk of Ewe “appropriation” of Christianity? What does this contrast imply about the perspectives and methods they are using?
* Meyer states (pg. xix): “The point I wish to make is that Christianity at the grassroots level cannot be reduced to the intentions and actions of Western colonial missionaries. African Christianity is not merely an extension of the missionary impact, but a continuously developing product which is shaped by a great number of experiences.” Does this mean that her findings refute Nunn’s? Is Nunn wrong? Misguided? Is Meyer’s evidence of the continued salience of Ewe gods and spirits to Christians evidence against Nunn’s claims?

In class, we will ask you to complete the following comparisons:

* First, state the research questions of each reading.
* Second, compare the epistemology (positivism v constructivism) and methods (quantitative and qualitative) of each reading.
* Third, the nature of their theoretical claims (ideology, paradigm, and/or approach). Also, what are the main objectives of their theoretical claims (description, interpretation, and/or explanation/prediction)?
* Fourth, the alignment between their theoretical claims and empirical evidence (induction, deduction, and/or abduction).
* Fifth, their findings and why their findings are significant (or not).