**Chapter 12: Religion:**

**The Social Meaning of Sacred Meaning**

**Web Exercises**

1. Go to adherents.com and examine the most popular [major religions of the world](http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html) and [most popular religions in the United States](http://www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html#religions). Compare the two lists to one another.
2. What similarities and differences do you notice among the most popular world and U.S. religions?
3. Do a general search on “religious cults” or “new religious movements.” Write a report (including proper citations) that includes the largest cults in the United States and worldwide, the types of people who join cults, and the resocialization (deprogramming) process that people sometimes undergo when they leave cults. Some possible places to search include:

[The Internet Public Library](http://www.ipl.org/)

[Google Scholar](http://scholar.google.com/)

[Adherents](http://www.adherents.com/)

[Beliefnet](http://www.beliefnet.com/)

Your college online library database

1. The Gallup Poll conducts surveys on a variety of topics relevant to current events and American culture. Read the article from The Gallup Poll on “[Questions and Answers about Americans' Religions](http://www.gallup.com/poll/103459/Questions-Answers-About-Americans-Religion.aspx),” then answer the following questions:
2. What questions does the Gallup Poll ask to measure what religion a person is a member of?
3. What questions does the Gallup Poll ask to measure people's religiosity?
4. What are some of the difficulties in measuring religion in the United States?
5. Visit the website of a local church or place of worship. Then visit the website of a larger-level, affiliated religion (i.e., if you visit the local Catholic Church’s website, then visit the website of the Vatican or the Regional Archdioceses). Discuss how the goals and scope of the institutions are similar or different at different levels of social analysis.
6. Conduct a web search on a major domestic news website [CNN](http://www.cnn.com) or [Fox News](http://www.foxnews.com) for “religious issue” or “religious conflict.” Find one current issue through this web search (i.e., something that has occurred within the last 2 years) and write a 1-page brief on how religion influenced this issue.
7. Conduct a web search on a major international news website [BBC World](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world%20) or [Al Jazeera](http://english.algazeera.net) for “religious issue” or “religious conflict.” Find one current issue through this web search (i.e., something that has occurred within the last 2 years) and write a 1-page brief on how religion influenced this issue.
8. Visit the website for Portraits of American Women in Religion at <http://www.librarycompany.org/women/portraits_religion/intro.htm> and a paragraph about at least two of the women. What is the historical significance of each? What role did they play in their contemporary times? What about these women surprised you in terms of women’s involvement in religion in the 18th and 19th centuries?
9. Compare and contrast the components of various religions on this website: [http:loa//www.religionfacts.com/](http://www.religionfacts.com/). Write a paragraph comparing the components of these various religions. How do these religions differ? Can you locate any similarities?