



Lesson Plan: "Religious Reformation in Game of Thrones"

Objective:

Students will analyze how religious competition can challenge existing political institutions and reshape society. They will apply concepts from public choice economics, institutional competition, and transaction cost economics to understand the relationship between religion, political power, and economic development.

Materials Needed:

- Clip from Game of Thrones featuring Melisandre and worshippers of the Lord of Light.
- Handouts explaining institutional competition and legitimacy.

Lesson Steps:

1. Introduction (10 minutes):

- Provide an overview of the role religious institutions played in medieval and early modern societies.
- Introduce the Protestant Reformation as a challenge to existing religious and political authority.
- Explain how competition among institutions can influence political and economic outcomes.
- Discuss how Stannis's alliance with the Lord of Light represents a challenge to established religious authority in Westeros.

2. Viewing Clip (3 minutes):

- Show the clip featuring Melisandre leading worship of the Lord of Light and Stannis publicly supporting the faith.
- Ask students to identify how religion is being used to build political legitimacy.

3. Group Discussion (10 minutes):

- Divide students into small groups to discuss:
 - Why might rulers support new religious movements?

- How can religion strengthen or weaken political authority?

4. Concept Application (15 minutes):

- Public Choice Model:
 - Explain how political actors respond to incentives.
 - Analyze the incentives facing:
 - Stannis Baratheon.
 - Melisandre.
 - Religious followers.
 - Discuss how leaders may use religious institutions to increase political support and legitimacy.
 - Examine how religious leaders gain influence through alliances with political rulers.

5. Wrap-Up and Reflection (10 minutes):

- Recap public choice theory, institutional competition, and transaction costs.
- Discuss similarities between Westeros and Europe during the Protestant Reformation.

6. Homework/Activity (20 minutes):

- Assign students to compare the Lord of Light movement with a historical religious reform movement.
- Students must address:
 - Political incentives.
 - Economic consequences.
- Students present their findings in a 2–3 minute presentation.

Handout – Religious Reformation in Game of Thrones

Key Concept: Institutional Competition

Religious institutions compete for followers, resources, and political influence.

Key Terms

- **Institution**
An organization or system of rules that shapes behavior.
- **Legitimacy**
The belief that a ruler or institution has the right to exercise authority.
- **Public Choice**
The study of how political actors respond to incentives.

Why It Matters

Religious institutions can influence politics, economic development, and social organization.

Historical Connection

The Protestant Reformation challenged the authority of the Catholic Church and transformed political and economic institutions across Europe.

Game of Thrones Example

Stannis aligns himself with Melisandre and the Lord of Light, challenging established religious authority in Westeros.

Discussion Questions

1. Why might rulers support new religious movements?
2. How can religion strengthen political legitimacy?