

POLS 244: Religion and Politics (Spring 2018)

Tuesday & Thursday 9:30-10:45am

Classroom: CSB 272

Instructor: Andre P. Audette

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Andre's Office: CSB 330

Office Hours: 1:30-3 MWF, 11-12:30 TR, and by appointment

"We have this idea in our minds that there's this separation of church and state in America...and we extend that to our politics – not just church and state, but it's also there's a separation of religion and politics. But of course there isn't." – Stephen Colbert (2012)

Course Description

Despite a supposed constitutional principle of "separation of church and state," religion has a long history of influence in American politics. In this course, we will critically examine the interrelationship of religion and politics beginning with the American Founding and continuing through the present day. We'll begin with a discussion of how religion and politics are allowed to/should mix, then explore how various religious organizations have attempted to influence the political system. We'll analyze recent research on the beliefs and behaviors of American religious groups and how they interact in an increasingly diverse religious and political environment, and conclude by discussing whether religion plays a supportive or damaging role in American democracy.

Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

- Identify the major groups, events, and ideas that have defined U.S. religion and politics
- Explain how religion impacts mass-level political behavior and opinions
- Apply political science concepts and theories to frame religious motivations for politics
- Think critically about the role of religion in American democracy
- Better synthesize and intelligently express your own points of view, both orally and in writing

Required Texts

The following books are available in the campus bookstore or through other online retailers. Please be sure to purchase the correct edition.

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown. 2014. *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 7th ed. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Wilcox & Robinson. 2011. *Onward Christian Soldiers? The Religious Right in American Politics*. Westview Press.
- Wilson (Ed). 2007. *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic*. Georgetown University Press.

All other course materials will be made available on Moodle or by email.

Course Requirements

To help you achieve the course objectives, final grades will be assessed through the following evaluations:

- 2 exams (10% midterm, 15% final; 25% total)
- Religion and the American Constitution paper (15%)
- Religion and the candidates paper (15%)
- Faith tradition paper (15%)
- Religion and democracy paper (20%)
- Participation (10%)

Further information on these course requirements will be distributed in class

Exams

There will be two in-class, closed-book exams this semester. They are not cumulative and will include fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Exams will cover material from lectures, reading assignments, and discussion.

Religion and the American Constitution paper

One of the persistent questions in American religion and politics is the extent to which the Framers of the U.S. Constitution intended religion to play a role in law and politics. Commentators look for evidence in the religious values of the Framers themselves, as well as for clues in their writings and the Constitution itself. In a paper of about 5 pages (double-spaced), you should gather and present evidence for your position on this question. The paper should be turned in via email and as a hard copy in class as listed below.

Religion and the candidates paper

For this paper, you will select one of the many 2016 presidential candidates and write about the role that religion played in their campaign. Among the topics you should cover include: the religious background of the candidate, their positions on issues related to religion, support or opposition from religious groups, and how religion may have helped or hindered the candidate's presidential ambitions. In about 5 double-spaced pages, your paper should ultimately address why religion played the role it did in the candidate's campaign. The paper should be turned in via email and as a hard copy in class as listed below.

Faith tradition paper

For this 5 page (double-spaced) paper, you will research the history, beliefs, and political involvement of a faith tradition that is different from your own (if any). You will also attend one off-campus worship service of this faith tradition and discuss which aspects of the service could be considered "political" or "non-political" in any way. Come see me if you have questions about where to attend and how to prepare for your visit. The paper should be turned in via email and as a hard copy in class as listed below.

Religion and democracy paper

After spending the semester reading about religion and politics, you will write a paper that answers the question of whether religion plays a damaging or supportive role in American democracy. In this paper, you should synthesize the course readings and gather evidence to support your own opinion on this question. The paper should be at least 5 pages (double-spaced) and turned in via email and as a hard copy in class as listed below.

Participation

A large part of our class will be based on discussion; therefore, it is essential that you come to class ready to actively participate. This includes (but is not limited to): attending class regularly, carefully reading the assigned texts, sharing your thoughts, opinions, and insights in discussion, considering and raising opposing viewpoints, engaging in respectful dialogue with others, listening attentively to others' perspectives, and following the discussion policies listed in this syllabus. Additionally, there may be short daily homework or participation quizzes. You will receive an advisory midterm participation grade to help you assess where you are at halfway through the course.

Course Engagement Expectations

- Classroom activities (2.5 hours/week)
- Reading and class prep (6 hours/week)
- Papers (2.5 hours/week)
- Exam prep (1 hour/week)

Total: 12 hours/week

Grade Scale

A (93-100), A- (90-92.9), B+ (87-89.9), B (83-86.9), B- (80-82.9), C+ (77-79.9), C (73-76.9), C- (70-72.9), D+ (67-69.9), D (63-66.9), D- (60-62.9), F (<60)

Course Policies and Additional Resources

Academic Honesty

It is your responsibility to be familiar with and uphold the academic honesty policy of MC, as defined in the Scots Guide (<http://ou.monmouthcollege.edu/life/residence-life/scots-guide/academic-regulations.aspx>). Any student found to have violated these policies of academic integrity will receive a failing grade on the assignment and may be subject to further penalties by the College, including suspension or expulsion. If you have any questions about avoiding plagiarism or any of the other policies, please come talk to me.

Late Work/Extra Credit

An important part of academic and career preparation is the ability to meet deadlines and fulfill the requirements of your work. Therefore, late assignments will be subject to a half-letter grade reduction for every 0-24 hour period that the assignment is late. Additionally, there will be no extra credit given on an individual basis.

Laptops and Electronic Devices

Unless instructed otherwise, you are permitted to use laptops in class for note-taking purposes only. Cell phones and other electronics should be put away during class. To do otherwise detracts not only from your learning, but from other students' as well.

Attendance

Class attendance is expected, but not required, in this course. Beware that it is difficult to pass this course if you have a number of unexcused absences, as it is impossible to participate if you do not attend class or make other arrangements with me. Furthermore, you are responsible for all of the material covered in class, and it is thus in your best interest to attend every class. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student and to contact me about any makeup work.

Discussion Policies

The goal of discussion is to understand and learn from the viewpoints and experiences of others in order to better understand our own opinions and the functioning of the world around us. Specifically, our goal in this course is to consider various components of and to think critically about American democracy. Just as multiple voices are necessary for a healthy democracy, your participation is important for the learning experiences of your fellow classmates and your instructor. Therefore, participation will be graded on the quality, and not just quantity, of your contribution to this endeavor. To create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to participate, respect for individual differences and viewpoints will be maintained at all times. In sum, you are allowed and encouraged to disagree with other students, the professor, or the texts, but disagreement should always be expressed in a respectful manner inside and outside of the classroom.

Exceptions, Extensions, and Exemptions

Exceptions to the policies and schedule on this syllabus are granted only in the cases of a true emergency. Please make arrangements with me if an emergency arises.

Disabilities and Learning Differences

Any student who feels they may need support or accommodation for a disability should visit the Teaching and Learning Center on the 2nd floor of Poling Hall to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations. I am happy to work with you and Disability Services to provide those accommodations. For more information, visit:

<http://ou.monmouthcollege.edu/life/disability-services/default.aspx>.

Writing Center and Tutoring – take advantage of these resources!!

The Writing Center offers unlimited, free peer tutoring sessions for MC students. Peer writing tutors are trained to work with writers from any major of any writing ability, on any type of writing assignment, and at any stage of their writing processes, from planning to drafting to revising to editing. The Writing Center is located on the 3rd floor of the Mellinger Teaching and Learning Center, and is open Sunday-Thursday 7-10pm and Monday-Thursday 3-5pm on a first-come, first-served basis. No appointment necessary!

You can also make an appointment with a Teaching and Learning Center tutor or stop by during drop-in hours. Information about tutoring services is available at:

<http://ou.monmouthcollege.edu/academics/teaching-learning-center/tutoring.aspx>.

Counseling Services

Counseling Services assists students in addressing personal, social, career, and study problems that can interfere with your academic progress and success. All services are free and can include individual and group counseling, crisis consultations, and wellness groups. The Counseling Center is located in the lower level of Poling Hall, and appointments can be made by calling Student Affairs at x2114 or by email to hfisher@monmouthcollege.edu or cbeadles@monmouthcollege.edu. You can find more info online at: <https://ou.monmouthcollege.edu/life/counseling-services/appointments.aspx>.

Syllabus Changes

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus or the course schedule if it will benefit all students. Advance notice will be provided for any changes.

Questions, Concerns, Comments

If you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me! I encourage you to come to my office hours even if you just want to discuss politics or some other subject, and I can set up appointments if you are unable to meet during the scheduled times. (Please try to give me at least 24 hours notice if you'd like to make an appointment.)

Course Outline and Schedule

*Reading assignments are to be completed before the date they are listed.

*Please bring all assigned readings to class (paper or electronic).

Tuesday, Jan. 16th – Introductions and Thanksgiving dinner

Thursday, Jan. 18th – Religion in American society: why should we study it?

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown chapters 1-2

Tuesday, Jan. 23rd – The Framers and the Constitution: A fight over religion

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown chapter 4
- For 1 hour, read everything you can about debate over whether the Framers of the Constitution intended religion to play a role in politics (take notes for your paper!)

Thursday, Jan. 25th – The debate continues

- “The Godless Constitution” (Kramnick & Moore)
- “Did America Have a Christian Founding?” (Hall)

Tuesday, Jan. 30th – Religion in early America

- Chapters 1-2 of *The Churching of America 1776-2005* (Finke & Stark)

Thursday, Feb. 1st – Big changes

- Chapters 3-4 of *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (Putnam & Campbell)

Tuesday, Feb. 6th – The current religious landscape

- Chapter 11 of *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (Putnam & Campbell)
- Skim “America’s Changing Religious Identity” (Jones & Cox)

Thursday, Feb. 8th – Important theories, definitions, measurement

- Introduction to *The Political Influence of Churches* (Djupe & Gilbert)
- “Beyond the ‘Three Bs’: How American Christians Approach Faith and Politics” (Friesen & Wagner)
- “When You Ask People to Describe their Religion, Bad Things Happen” (Burge)

Tuesday, Feb. 13th – Religion and the 2016 election

- **Religion and the American Constitution paper due**

Thursday, Feb. 15th – Religion and political campaigns

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown chapter 5
- Chapter 5 of *Thumpin’ It: The Use and Abuse of the Bible in Today’s Presidential Politics* (Berlinerblau)

Tuesday, Feb. 20th – Culture wars: a divided America or political myth?

- Prologue and chapter 1 of *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (Hunter)
- Chapter 2 of *Souled Out: Reclaiming Faith & Politics After the Religions Right* (Dionne)

Thursday, Feb. 22nd – Religion and public opinion

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown chapter 7

Tuesday, Feb. 27th – Learning funtime

- **EXAM 1**

Thursday, March 1st – Politics in/of churches

- Chapter 12 of *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (Putnam & Campbell)
- Skim “The Political Activities of Religious Congregations in the United States” (Beyerlein & Chaves)

Tuesday March 6th – Thursday, March 8th – NO CLASSES (SPRING BREAK)

Tuesday, March 13th – The Christian Right I: historical dominance

- Wilcox & Robinson chapters 1-3

Thursday, March 15th – The Christian Right II: future prospects

- Wilcox & Robinson chapters 4-5

Tuesday, March 20th – The Christian Left?

- Wilson chapter 3
- **Religion and the candidates paper due**

Thursday, March 22nd – Mainline Protestants: stuck in the middle without you

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown pages 263-270
- Wilson chapter 2

Tuesday, March 27th – Catholics: Kennedy to Kerry and beyond

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown pages 243-263
- Wilson chapter 4

Thursday, March 29th – Jews in American politics

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown 270-278
- Wilson chapter 8

Tuesday, April 3rd – Muslims: no longer a swing voter

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown pages 297-304
- Wilson chapter 9
- “Bands of Others’? Attitudes towards Muslims in Contemporary American Society” (Kalkan et al.)

Thursday, April 5th – Mormons: more than just Mitt

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown pages 205-311
- Wilson chapter 5

Tuesday, April 10th – Religious switching

- Skim chapter 5 of *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (Putnam & Campbell)
- **Faith traditions paper due**

Thursday, April 12th – Latinos: a new religio-political target

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown pages 291-297
- Wilson chapter 7
- Excerpts from *Latino Protestants in America* (Mulder et al.)

Tuesday, April 17th – African-American religions: the original American political church?

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown pgs. 280-290
- Introduction to *Something Within: Religion in African-American Political Activism* (Harris)

Thursday, April 19th – From nuns to nones: the new largest religious voting bloc

- Chapter 3 of *Secularism & Secularity: Contemporary International Perspectives* (Keysar)
- “The Non-Religious Are Now the Country’s Largest Religious Voting Bloc” (Ingraham)
- “Breaking Faith” (Beinart)

Tuesday, April 24th – NO CLASS (SCHOLARS DAY)

Thursday, April 26th – Religion and democracy: The verdict

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown chapter 12
- “Religion and Democracy” (Edwards)

Tuesday, May 1st – The Last Day ☹

- **Religion and democracy paper due**
- Review of class and preparation for the final exam

Tuesday, May 8th – Eschatology

- **EXAM 2 at 8am in our normal classroom**