

**POL 314.10: Religion and Politics in the United States**  
**Washington College, Spring 2017**

**Dr. Melissa Deckman, Professor of Political Science**

Daly 207; Phone x7494; E-mail: [mdeckman2@washcoll.edu](mailto:mdeckman2@washcoll.edu)

Twitter: @MelissaDeckman

Office Hours Monday and Wednesdays, 11:00 to 12:30 and by appointment

Class meets Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30 to 3:45.

**Course Description**

Despite the supposed constitutional maintenance of “separation of church and state” in the United States, religious groups have hardly avoided political involvement. As Alexis de Tocqueville observed, “By the side of every religion is a political opinion, which is connected with it by affinity.” This observation is even truer today than it was when de Tocqueville visited the United States in the 1830s. The presence of religious voices in debates about such issues as abortion, social welfare, the environment, and sexuality provides plenty of evidence to show that the link between religion and politics is alive and well in the United States.

This course is designed to analyze the nature of the relationship between religion and various aspects of politics in the United States. We will begin by asking why religion and politics are so thoroughly interwoven in the United States by examining the religion-politics relationship in historical and theoretical perspective. Then we will proceed to analyze how religion affects American politics; in doing so, we will learn a bit about a variety of other broad themes in the study of American politics. Lastly, we will consider church-state conflicts in American jurisprudence by examining some of the most hotly contested Supreme Court cases dealing with First Amendment issues.

**Required Books**

There are five required books in this course:

Fowler, Robert Booth, Allen D. Hertzke, Laura R. Olson, and Kevin R. den Dulk. 2013. *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Jones, Robert D. 2016. *The End of White Christian America*. NY: Simon & Schuster.

Meacham, Jon. 2006. *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*. New York: Random House.

Putnam, Robert and David C. Campbell. 2012. *American Grace*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Smith, Mark. 2015. *Secular Faith: How Culture Has Trumped Religion in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

These books are available at the campus bookstore and are widely available on-line. In addition, there are *numerous* reading assignments available via Canvas. I strive to use the most relevant, recent research in the field (along with some classics), so make sure you are also reading the required materials on reserve. I will likely e-mail you relevant news articles, clips, etc from time to time, so check your Washington College e-mail daily. E-mail is the most efficient way to communicate with me as well.

### Class Requirements

Writing Assignments:	
Brief Reflective Essay	5%
Church as a Political Institution	10%
Research Paper	20%
Group Presentation/Teaching Demo	5%
Two exams	40%
Reading Questions	15%
Class Participation	5%

Your grade will consist of three papers. More details about the papers are included in the Written Assignments sheet handed out along with this syllabus. In addition, you will take two, non-cumulative exams, one in class (Midterm) and one as a take-home final exam. Each exam is worth 20 percent of your final grade. You will also participate in a group presentation to the class, which is worth 5 percent of your grade. For each class, you are required to submit, in writing via CANVAS, a minimum of three questions for class discussion based on the reading for that day's class. **THESE QUESTIONS ARE DUE NO LATER THAN 12 PM of our class day.** You will be given 3 points for excellent questions, 2 points for so-so questions, and 1 point for lame or late questions and a final letter grade for the quality of all questions that will be worth 15 percent of your final grade. Lastly, class participation counts for the remaining 5 percent of your class grade. Class participation involves more than just coming to class and warming a chair. I expect you to attend class, prepared to contribute.

**Workload:** To obtain a good grade in this course, on average, you should expect to **spend approximately three hours outside of class on work for every hour you spend in the classroom**; those who want to earn a grade in the A range should spend more time. These three hours should be spent reading ALL assigned readings as listed on the syllabus and taking notes of the major points, reviewing those notes along with your notes from class and reviewing Powerpoint presentations that are available on Canvas (regularly, note just before an exam) and preparing for papers. I strongly encourage you to develop regular study habits, and to seek out Andrea Vassar, the Director of the Office of Academic Skills (x7883), for help in doing so if necessary.

**The Writing Center:** The Washington College Writing Center is a resource that is available to any member of the college community. There, you can meet with a Consultant to receive one-on-one feedback over any kind of writing at any stage in your writing process: before you begin writing, once you've started a rough draft, or as you're editing a final draft. In this exchange you'll get an outside perspective and gain valuable

insight into how effectively you've communicated your ideas. Every writer, no matter how experienced, can benefit from the response of a thoughtful, engaged reader. As you work on the writing assignments in this class, you should strongly consider making an appointment at the Writing Center by calling 410-810-7417, e-mailing them or dropping by Goldstein 106.

**Attendance Policy:** Out of courtesy, you should inform me when you will be missing class, either in person or via e-mail or phone message. Excused absences include illness or injury, family emergencies, religious holidays, field trips or other off-campus activities for other classes, and scheduled varsity athletic contests. Proper documentation should follow each of these excused absences when appropriate. As we meet two times per week, you may incur 2 unexcused absences during the course of the semester. After this absence, your final grade will be deducted by one point for each excessive absence. **MAKE-UP EXAMINATIONS WILL BE GIVEN ONLY IN THE CASE OF EXCUSED ABSENCES.**

**Classroom Etiquette and Electronics:** Good etiquette means arriving to class on time and staying in class for the duration of class. **The use of electronic devices in class is prohibited**, which means cell phones and laptops should be turned off. (One exception, if you have an approved learning disability that requires the use of a laptop in class, please verify this in writing.)

**Learning Disabilities:** Washington College strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions or other learning disability), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, you will need to register with Disability Services in the Office of Academic Skills (OAS). After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. OAS contact information: Andrea Vassar, Director of Disability Services & the Office of Academic Skills; [avassar2@washcoll.edu](mailto:avassar2@washcoll.edu); 410-778-7883; Miller Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

**Late Assignment Policy:** Written assignments that are late will be deducted by one part of a letter grade for each day of lateness. For example, a B+ paper will become a B paper if it is turned in one day late, a B- two days late, etc. Extensions will only be given in unusual circumstances and **MUST** be cleared prior to when the assignment is due.

**Grading Criteria:** Examinations will be based on a numerical score (for example, any exam that scores a 93 or higher will be graded A; 90-92 will be graded A-; etc.). Papers will be given a letter grade and later converted into numerical points (as listed below) to calculate the final grade for the course. **Improvement during the semester will be weighed in evaluation.**

**A, A-:** Demonstration of excellent work, written and oral, in fulfillment of the course objectives. For individual written assignments, a letter grade of A will be equivalent to 96 points, and an A- will be worth 92 points.

**B+, B, B-:** Demonstration of good work in fulfillment of course objectives. For individual written assignments, a B+ will be worth 88 points, a B will be worth 85 points, and a B- will be worth 82 points.

**C+, C, C-:** Merely satisfactory work in fulfillment of course objections. A C+ on an individual written assignment will be worth 78 points, a C will be worth 75 points, and a C- will be worth 72 points.

**D:** Assigned work is not satisfactory or not completed. A D on an individual written assignment will be worth 65 points.

**F:** Failure to meet minimum course goals. A grade of an F for an assignment that is turned in will be worth 20 points. An assignment that is never turned in will receive 0 points.

**Honor Code:** “We at Washington College strive to maintain an environment in which learning and growth flourish through individuals’ endeavors and honest intellectual exchanges both in and out of the classroom. To maintain such an environment, each member of the community pledges to respect the ideas, well being, and property of others. Thus, each member of the Washington College community abides by an honor code.”

Each written assignment and exam in this class should be signed with a statement that you have abided by the Washington College honor code while completing the assignment. I take Honor Code violations very seriously, particularly plagiarism.

**Plagiarism involves willfully presenting the language, ideas, or thoughts of another person as your own original work.** If you are not sure that you are plagiarizing material, for example, in a paper, please see me and I can help you tell the difference between plagiarism and proper citation and proper paraphrasing. I know that the Internet makes cheating very tempting, but it also makes it easier to get caught. **Violation of the Honor Code in this course will result in a failing grade and referral to the administration and College Honor Board.**

### **Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

January 23: Introduction

#### *I. History and Theory*

We need to set the stage for the study of religion and politics for the rest of the semester. To what extent did religion bear upon the framers of the Constitution? How does America’s religious past shape its present and future? We will also take up several theories about the significance of the interaction between religion and politics in the United States. How religious are Americans? What are the ramifications of religious pluralism in the United States?

January 25: Fowler et al, *Religion and Politics in America*, Chapter 1  
Jon Meacham, *American Gospel*, Intro, Chapter 1- 2

Op-Ed: [Was the American Revolution a Holy War?](#)  
Peter Manseau, “Twenty Nations or None,” (see Canvas)

- January 30: Washington’s Farewell Address (Appendix, Meacham, pp 261-262)  
Treaty of Peace and Friendship Between the United States/Tripoli (Appendix, Meacham, p 262)  
Letter of the Danbury Baptist Association to Jefferson; his response (Appendix, Meacham, pp 263-264)  
David Barton, *America’s Godly Heritage*, selections (see Canvas)  
Shorto, [How Christian were the Founders?](#)
- February 1: Meacham, *American Gospel*, Chapter 3-4  
Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, “Obituary for White Christian America,” Chapter 1  
Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (see Canvas)  
Robert Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” (see Canvas)  
Carly M. Jacobs and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, “Belonging in a Christian Nation,” *Politics & Religion*, June 2013 (see Canvas)  
PRRI, [Is America A Christian Nation? Majority of Americans Don’t Think So](#)  
Sarah Pulliam Bailey, [“How Nostalgia for White Christian America Drove So Many to Vote for Trump”](#)

## **Paper 1 Due: Brief Reflective Essay Due**

### *I. America’s Religious Diversity*

The United States is a remarkably diverse religious marketplace. We will explore the basic belief systems of America’s major religious traditions, with an emphasis placed on Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam. We will also examine what America’s religious behaviors entail and consider how all of this potentially factors into politics. We will also consider the rapid growth of secular Americans as well and what this growth means for our politics.

- February 6: Fowler et al. Chapter 3, Chapter 12  
Robert Putnam and David Campbell, *American Grace*, Chapter 1-3  
PRRI, [The American Values Atlas](#), (See Canvas)  
Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, Chapter 2
- February 8: Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, Chapters 4-5  
Emily Fetsch, [“Who Practices Multiple Religions?”](#) (See Canvas)  
PRRI, “Exodus: [Why Americans are Leaving Religion—and Why They’re Unlikely to Come Back](#)”  
Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, Chapter 1, 4 (see Canvas)

Mark Brockway, David Campbell, and Geoffrey Layman, [“Secular Voters Didn’t Turn Out for Clinton the White Evangelicals Did for Trump.”](#)

## *II. Religion, Morality and the Culture Wars*

What are the culture wars in America? How does religion link to morality and to views about politics, policy, and social dynamics? How have we as a nation dealt with such conflicts historically? How are they likely to be similar or different in the future?

- February 13: Smith, *Secular Faith*, Intro and Chapter 1  
Stephen Prothero, [“Conservatives Start Culture Wars, Liberals Win Them”](#)  
Jones, *End of White Christian America*, Chapter 4-5  
James Davidson Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, Chapter 1 (Canvas)
- February 15: Smith, Chapters 2 and 3  
Group Presentations 1 and 2
- February 20: Smith, Chapters 4 and 5  
Group Presentations 3 and 4
- February 22: Smith, Chapter 6 and 7  
Group Presentations 5

### **Topic for Research Paper due**

## *III. Religion and American Politics at the Mass Level*

To what extent does religion affect America’s political inclinations and attitudes? How do religious variables affect ideology, partisanship, and issue positions? How do religious variables affect political participation? What role do churches or other religious organizations play in shaping the political views and actions of their members?

- February 27: Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, Chapter 11  
Corwin Smidt, Lyman Kellstedt, and James Guth, “The Role of Religion in American Politics” (see Canvas)  
Pew Research Center, [“US Religious Groups and their Political Leanings.”](#)  
McKenzie, Brian D. and Stella Rouse. “Shades of Faith: Religious Foundations of Political Attitudes among African Americans, Latinos, and Whites.” (See Canvas)  
Driskell, Robyn, Elizabeth Embry, and Larry Lyon. “Faith and Politics: The Influence of Religious Beliefs on Political Participation. (See Canvas)

March 1: Melissa Deckman, Dan Cox, Robert Jones, and Betsy Cooper, “Faith and the Free Market,” (See Canvas)  
Bean, Lydia, “Compassionate Conservatives? Evangelicals Conservatism, and National Identity.” (see Canvas)  
Williams, Rhys. [“Immigration and National Identity in Obama’s America: The Expansion of Culture-War Politics.”](#)  
PRRI, [“How Immigration and Concerns about Cultural Change are Shaping the 2016 Election”](#)

March 6: Putnam and Campbell, Chapter 12  
Kenneth Wald, Dennis Owen, and Samuel Hill, “Churches as Political Communities,” *American Political Science Review*, 1988, 82:531-548 (see Canvas)  
Lydia Bean, *The Politics of Evangelical Identity*, excerpts (see Canvas)

March 8: **Midterm Exam in Class**

Spring Break

#### IV. *Religious Interest Groups, Social Movements, and the Vote*

When you think about religion and politics in a general sense, one of the things that might come to mind almost immediately would be the role played by various religious interest groups and social movements in American politics. We will explore some of the prominent American religious interest groups and social movements and consider the extent to which they have achieved success in promoting their political agendas. We will also do a breakdown of the religious vote—what electoral strategies do such groups use? Are they effective? Will they be challenged as Americans become more secular?

March 20 FILM in CLASS: Christian Right in American Politics, “With God on Our Side”

March 22: Clyde Wilcox and Carin Larson, *Onward Christian Soldiers*, Chapter 1-2 (See Canvas)  
David Brody, *The Teavangelicals*, (Canvas)  
Robert Costa, [“Evangelical Leader Endorses Trump”](#)  
Emma Green, [“The Evangelical Reckoning Over Trump.”](#)  
Russell Moore, [“President Trump: Now What For the Church?”](#)  
Kate Shellnut, [“Is it Too Late for Russell Moore to Say Sorry?”](#)

March 27: Black Church, Race and Religion  
Meacham, Chapter 5  
Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, “ ‘Now is the Time!’ The Black Church, Politics, and Civil Rights Militancy, from *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, (See Canvas)

Eric McAllister's *Politics in the Pews*, selections (See Canvas)  
Emma Green, ["Black Activism: Unchurched."](#)

March 29: Catholics, Mainline Protestants, Religious Minorities  
Pew Research Center. ["The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States."](#)  
PRRI, ["The Francis Effect?"](#)  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, ["Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship."](#)  
Emma Green, ["Why Only Cafeteria Catholics Can Survive American Politics."](#)  
Center for American Progress, ["Twelve Faith Leaders to Watch."](#)  
Paul Djupe and Christopher P. Gilbert. ["Politics and Church: By Product or Central Mission?"](#)

April 3: Elections and Religion  
Jones, *End of White Christian America*, Chapter 3  
Gregory Smith and Jessica Martinez, ["How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary Analysis."](#)  
John McTague and Geoffrey C. Layman, "Religion, Parties, and Voting Behavior," (See Canvas)  
Campbell, David E., John C. Green, and Geoffrey C. Layman. "The Party Faithful: Partisan Images, Candidate Religion, and the Electoral Impact of Party Identification." (See Canvas)

### **Peer Review Exercise in Class**

April 5: **Advising Day: No Classes**

### **Paper 2, Church as Political Institution, Due by 2:30 pm (CANVAS)**

#### **B. Church/State**

The First Amendment specifies: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." What does this mean in practice? Interpretation of the religion clauses of the First Amendment has challenged some of the greatest legal minds in American history. We will spend the three classes of the semester exploring the Supreme Court's approaches to religious establishment and religious free exercise, especially as they relate to education politics. We will also consider the growth on some public schools of Bible elective courses and consider whether or not such courses violate the First Amendment. Also consider debates about religious liberty

April 10: Fowler et al, Chapters 8-9

### **Annotated Bibliography Due for Research Paper**

- April 12: Guest Speaker in Class: Readings TBA
- April 17: Field Trip to DC\*\* Tentative
- April 19: Education and Public Schools: Supreme Court Cases (visit [www.oyez.org](http://www.oyez.org))  
 Fowler et al, Chapters 8-9 (continued)  
*Abington School District v. Schempp*  
*Engel v. Vitale*  
*Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe*  
*Rosenberger v. University of VA*

**Outlines, Introductory Paragraph for Paper Due**

- April 24: Education in Public Schools: Teaching the Bible in Public Schools  
 Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy*, Introduction and Chapter 1 (see Canvas)  
 Melissa Deckman, “Religious Literacy in Public Schools: Teaching the Bible in America’s Classrooms” (see Canvas)  
 Barry Lynn, “Studying the Bible in Public Schools: Sounds Good in Theory, But...” (see Canvas)
- April 26: Religious Liberty: the New Frontier.  
 Emma Green, [“Most Christians Believe They are the Victims of Discrimination.”](#)  
 Richey, [“Hobby Lobby 101: Explaining The Supreme Court’s Birth Control Ruling.”](#)  
*Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (visit [www.oyez.org](http://www.oyez.org))  
 Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, Chapters 6 and Epilogue, SPLC, [“Religious Liberty and the Anti-LGBT Right.”](#)  
 Steinmetz, [“Why So Many States are Fighting over LGBT Rights in 2016”](#)  
 Concerned Women for America, [“No Christians Allowed”](#)
- May 1: Research Paper Presentations
- May 3: Research Paper Presentations, Review for Final Exam

**Paper 3 due: Religion, Public Policy or Public Opinion**

Take-home Exam due during finals week; date TBD.