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Religion and Politics

Spring 2016
Political Science Course # PSCI 314 01
M-W, 8:40-10:10am
Fox 209

Course Description

In 2015, a Kentucky county clerk went to jail rather than issue marriage licenses to gay couples; while her position required her to issue these documents, she argued that doing so would violate her beliefs as an Apostolic Christian. Later that year, Republican Presidential candidate Donald Trump called for a ban on all travel to the United States by any member of the Muslim faith. Also in 2015, an organization claiming to speak for that Muslim faith (ISIS/ISIL) claimed responsibility for over 50 attacks in which over a thousand people were killed. And yet for much of the last century, many social scientists pretended that religion and politics actually were growing apart.

Thanks to events like those noted above, and the efforts of a few committed scholars, the study of religion and politics is now a growing subfield of political science. Scholars can no longer ignore religion's important consequences for political outcomes, both in the United States and across the globe. And so in this class, we will examine a number of ways in which religion and politics interact. We will focus somewhat on the contemporary United States—mainly due to the instructor's expertise—but will also look to other contexts and countries.

After an overview of some important definitions and concepts from the study of religion and politics, we will examine religion as a force for political change in the world, ranging from social movements like abolition and civil rights to the religious fundamentalists found in all major religions. Next we will investigate religious doctrines of war and peace, and also examine challenges to religion's role in politics offered by atheists and other critics. Time permitting, we will include an examination of selected, contemporary public policy issues that have a religious dimension, such as abortion and marriage equality. By the end of the course, students should have a better understanding of how religion impacts political and public life, for better and for worse.

Required Texts

Students are encouraged to purchase the following book:

Religion and Politics in the United States
Kenneth D. Wald, Allison Calhoun-Brown (eds)
7th Edition (2014)
ISBN: 9781442225541

This book should be available from the campus bookstore (www.campusstore.rmc.edu). If you purchase elsewhere, however, make sure that you get the correct edition and can get the book in a timely fashion. (E-books are fine if you prefer.)

Additional readings may be assigned throughout the term through the use of handouts and/or online links at the course's Canvas website.

Course Requirements

- Come to class prepared. Complete all required readings beforehand, and bring your textbook/readings to class whenever possible.
- Participate. Attend class regularly and on time—you cannot participate if you are not present—and join your colleagues in critical analysis of the assigned readings. In order to encourage participation, you will be asked to complete the following assignments:
 - **Monthly Summaries.** Write three (3) one-page summaries of assigned readings, one for each of the first three months of the semester (so September, October, and November). Guidelines for summary writing will be distributed during one of the first few class sessions. In general, you can submit summaries whenever you would like during the month. Still, I encourage you to WRITE YOUR SUMMARIES EARLY – do not wait until the end of the month, or you may run out of opportunities. Summaries must be submitted through the course's Canvas site.
 - **Discussion Question Response Posts.** Before most class sessions, I will post a discussion question based on the assigned reading. Students will actually be responsible for TWO kinds of responses:
 - Students must post a response to my discussion question before class.
 - Students must post at least TWO responses to EACH OTHER'S POSTS from the PREVIOUS class's question; these responses will form the basis for our review/reflection session at the beginning of each class.

Posts should be 25-50 words, and must be posted in Canvas well before the start of class (i.e., by 8am each class morning). Participation grades will be based in part upon completion of enough question assignments during the term (typically the number of opportunities -1), as well as question quality.

[I know this is confusing. We'll go over it in class, and you'll figure it out eventually.]

- Complete all other written assignments:
 - **Exams.** You will be given two examinations throughout the course, a mid-term and a final. The final exam focuses primarily on material covered in the second half of the course, but may build upon and refer to material discussed earlier. Exams will consist of brief essay questions, with the questions distributed in advance. Exams will be based on assigned texts and classroom discussions. Students may not miss the scheduled exam time without advance notice and documentation. (For the final, this would require permission from the Provost’s Office.)
 - **Paper Assignments.** A 10-12 page research paper is required, with final draft due towards the end of class. As part of your research, you will be required to submit an annotated bibliography, which will be graded separately from the paper. Details for the assignment, including deadlines and instructions, will be distributed in class later in the semester.

Grading

Your grade will be based on your written work and your class participation. Course requirements will be weighted as follows when calculating your grade:

Annotated Bibliography:	10%
Research Paper:	25%
Mid-Term Exam:	20%
Final Exam:	25%
Participation:	20%

Participation grades are based in part on discussion questions and summary assignments. Submission of all summaries, and successful completion of enough discussion question posts to earn the required number of points, establishes a base participation grade of B. Failure to submit a required summary or earn enough question points will lower this grade by a third of a letter or more, with cumulative reductions for each missing assignment. Frequent and thoughtful contributions to class discussion, as well as consistently appearing in class on time, can have the opposite effect.

Incomplete grades will be assigned only for a valid and documented cause, for a length of time specified by the instructor when the documentation is accepted.

Academic Integrity

The College’s Code of Academic Integrity sets out a list of prohibited behavior, including plagiarism, cheating, and tampering with or destroying College property. The most common act of academic misconduct is plagiarism, which—as the college’s Code notes—is traditionally defined as “the unauthorized use of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own,” and “includes the act of turning in, as one’s own, work

done wholly or in part by another person.” Any student who plagiarizes or otherwise violates the Code will be subject to the policies and procedures outlined in the student handbook. It is each student’s responsibility to read, and be familiar with, the Code.

Special Needs/Disabilities

Any student who has a physical or learning disability that may interfere with full participation in this course, whose primary language is other than English, or who has other special needs and may thus require special accommodations should notify me immediately. Students may not receive any special accommodations unless they are registered with the Director of Disability Support Services (currently Jack Trammell).

Electronic Devices

All phones and personal electronic devices should be silenced and put away for the duration of each class session, with the following exceptions:

- You may bring a personal computer, tablet, or other device to class in order to take notes. In this case, you may ONLY use appropriate software (e.g., MS Word) to complete this task.
- If there is an electronic version of an assigned text, you may bring a personal computer, tablet, or other device to class in order to refer to the text. In this case, you may ONLY use your e-reader software to complete this task. Students who use electronic texts are responsible for coordinating pagination and text structure against the print version of the book, and that papers or submitted work appropriately cite the text.
- If a student has a legitimate requirement for an electronic device in class -- for example, because of accommodation for a disability, on-call duty as an EMT, etc. -- the student should clear the use of the device with the instructor BEFORE the class session starts.

Under NO circumstances should you be web surfing, texting, checking e-mail, etc. during class. Any student found in violation of these policies will receive a warning for an initial violation; for a second violation, they may be asked to leave the class. Accessing your cell phone or other electronic device for any purpose during a quiz, exam, or other in-class graded assignment, without prior instructor approval, will be considered a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity and will be handled according to the Code’s procedures.

Course Topics/Readings *(subject to change)*

INTRODUCTION

Monday, February 8

Introduction and Course Overview

Wednesday, February 10

Politics in Religion

- Religious Texts

Monday, February 15

Why Religion?

- “Classical Sociological Definitions of Religion,” handout

RELIGION AND POLITICS

Wednesday, February 17

Secularization

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 1

Monday, February 22

Religious Interests

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 5

Wednesday, February 24

Religious Action

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 6

Monday, February 29

Church and State

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 4

Wednesday, March 2

Religion and American Political Culture

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 3

Monday, March 7

Religious Fundamentalism

- Excerpts from “Fundamentalisms Comprehended,” handout

RELIGION AND POLITICAL CHANGE

Wednesday, March 9

Civil Rights and Social Movements

- King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”, online

Monday, March 14

Liberation Theology

- Kater's "Whatever Happened to Liberation Theology?", Moodle

Wednesday, March 16

Christian Evangelicals

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 8

Monday, March 21

Exam Review

Wednesday, March 23

MID-TERM EXAMINATION

Monday, March 28 - Wednesday, March 30

NO CLASS – SPRING RECESS

Monday, April 4

FILM: T.B.D.

WAR AND PEACE

Wednesday, April 6

Just War Theory

- NCCB's "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace", online

Monday, April 11

Islamic Jihad

- Reading T.B.D.

Wednesday, April 13

The "War on Terror"

- Reading T.B.D.

RELIGION AND PUBLIC POLICY

Monday, April 18 - Wednesday, April 20

Monday, April 25 – Wednesday, April 27

Topics T.B.D.

CHALLENGING RELIGION

Monday, May 2

The "Proper Role" of Religion

- Wald & Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 12

Wednesday, May 4

The Atheist Challenge

- Reading T.B.D.

Monday, May 9

Secularism and Religion

- Dacey's "The Secular Conscience," handout

Wednesday, May 11

Course Review and Exam Review

Wednesday, May 18, 2-5pm

FINAL EXAM