

Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective
Political Science 459
MR 10:00-11:50 AC 263
Spring 2018

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Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Please Note: This syllabus is subject to change.

Course Description:

What is the relationship between religion and politics? This course examines the meanings of, and interactions between, religion and politics from a comparative perspective. We will begin by examining the theoretical understandings of the relationship between religion and the state. Next, we will turn our attention to the various ways in which religious groups are politically involved around the world. Religious groups are an obvious and important part of political life around the world. Though their involvement is not always welcome, religious believers of many faiths have mobilized dynamic social movements to affect political change. The purpose of this course is to better understand these interactions, to anticipate what they might look like in the future, and to make some evaluations on the possible values and problems of the mix of religion and politics.

Course Requirements:

A good class, much like a good government, requires an active, engaged, and interested citizenry. Because this course is primarily a reading seminar, class attendance and participation are crucial. Everyone is expected to complete the reading before every class and to contribute actively to class discussions. "Cold calls" may sometimes be used, although comments contributed will only help, and not hurt, one's grade.

I encourage student questions, comments, and arguments about religion and politics. At the same time, we should all be aware that the issues covered in this class are highly contentious ones. What we are aiming for is conversation that enlightens and expands our understanding of the issues, what we need to avoid is invective or diatribe that stifles conversation.

Classroom Etiquette:

There is a funny thing about technology. We (humans) create it and in many ways it simplifies and expands our lives. But, we often become captive to the very thing that we created in the first place. Technology has its place, but there is a growing body of

[evidence](#) that students are better off without technology in the classroom precisely because our various tools distract us from engaging fully in the intellectual give and take that is at the heart of the academic enterprise. Thus, I ask you to turn off your cell phones, laptop computers, and Ipads during class. The only exception to this rule are for students who are registered with the Student Accessibility Office. If you have a documented case that allows you to use a computer, you must sit in the first row of the classroom.

Political Minutes

In order to facilitate student involvement, I will assign one student to begin each of our classes with a “political minute.” In the days leading up to your political minute, you should read the newspaper or do a search on the web for stories related in some way to religion and politics. At the beginning of class, I will have you give a brief review of **two** stories that you have read and possibly lead a discussion of the issues raised in those stories.

The final grade for the course will be based upon the following scale:

Research Paper	(eight to ten pages)	100 points
Midterm Examination		100 points
Final Examination		100 points
Short Paper	(four to six pages)	50 points
Presentation		50 points
Participation		25 points

Total 400 points

Final grades will be based on the percentage of total points earned where:

94-100 A	90-93 A-	87-89 B+	84-86 B
80-83 B-	77-79 C+	74-76 C	70-73 C-
66-69 D+	60-65 D	< 60 F	

Books: The following books are available at the Pepperdine book store.

1. J. Christopher Soper, Kevin den Dulk, and Stephen Monsma, *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Five Democracies*, third edition, 2017
2. Mohammed Ayoob, *The Many Faces of Political Islam: Religion and Politics in the Muslim World*
3. Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*
4. Various hyperlinked readings.

Course Schedule:

- 1/8: **Introduction: Why study religion and politics?**
1. Toft, Philpott, Shah, chapter 1.
- 1/11: **Religion and Politics: The Critics**
1. Steve Bruce: [Post-Secularity and Religion in Britain: An Empirical Assessment](#)
 2. Pew Research Center: [Rise of Religious Nones](#)
 3. *Christopher Hitchens, **Chapters one, two, and thirteen**, [God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything](#)
 4. Karl Marx, Abstract from “[The Introduction to Contribution To The Critique Of Hegel's Philosophy Of Right](#)”.
 5. Karl Marx, “The Communism of the *Rheinischer Beobachter*” (handout)
 6. *Sigmund Freud, [The Future of an Illusion](#).
(Read pp. 32-end).
- 1/15: **No Class: MLK Day**
- 1/18: **Religion and Politics: The Defenders**
1. Toft, Philpott, Shah, chapter 3
 2. *Rodney Stark, “[Secularization: RIP.](#)”
 3. Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, [chapter 17](#) (read from “Religion Considered as a Political Institution Which Powerfully Contributes to the Maintenance of a Democratic Republic Among Americans” to the end).
 4. Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, [chapter 5](#)
 5. Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, [chapter 2](#).
 6. *Barack Obama, [Reach Out to Christ, and to the Christian Faithful](#).
- 1/22: **Religion and the State: Perennial Questions and Political Actors**
1. *Soper, den Dulk, Monsma, chapter 1.
 2. Toft, Philpott, Shah, chapter 2
- 1/25: **The United States: Foundations**
1. Soper, den Dulk, Monsma chapter 2.
 2. *Robert Bellah, “[Civil Religion in America.](#)”
- 1/29: **The United States: The No Establishment Clause**
1. [Zelman v. Simmons-Harris](#) (the Rehnquist opinion and the Souter dissent).
 2. [McCreary County v. ACLU of Kentucky](#) (Souter opinion and Scalia dissent).
- 2/1: **The United States: Free Exercise of Religion**
1. [Sherbert v. Verner](#). (the Brennan opinion)
 2. [Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith](#) (The Scalia opinion)
- 2/5: **The United States: The Politics of Religious Traditions**
1. *[Pew survey #1](#) (read summary of the report)
 2. *[Pew survey #2](#) (play around with the data)
 3. Pew Research Center: [How the faithful voted: A preliminary 2016 analysis](#)
 4. Ross Douthat, [Is Trump a Blessing or Curse for Religious Conservatives?](#)

2/8: **Israel: Antisemitism, Zionism, and the Creation of a State**
1. *Oldmixon and Samaniego, "Israel as a Jewish and Democratic State." (on courses)

2/12: **Israel: Antisemitism, Zionism, and the Creation of a State**

2/15: **Guest Speaker: Ken Wald.** "The Politics of Israel" (10-11)
"The Ghosts on the Wall: Meeting My Grandparents after their Deaths." (1-2)

2/19: **The Crisis in the Middle East**
1. [PBS Timeline of the Arab-Israeli Conflict](#)
2. Benny Morris, ["Talks Will Go Nowhere"](#)
3. Rashid Kalidi, ["John Kerry and Israel: Too Little and Too Late."](#)

2/22: **Midterm**

SPRING BREAK: 2/26-3/2

3/5: **Religion and Politics Around the World: Some Models and Patterns**
1. *[Pew: Global Restrictions on Religion](#) (click on complete report on the right. Read pp. 1-35 and 70-91).
2. Toft, Philpott, Shah, chapter 4.
3. Jonathan Fox ["Equal Opportunity Oppression."](#)

3/8: **France: Laicité and the 'problem' of Religion**
1. Soper, den Dulk, Monsma, chapter 3.

3/12: **Models of Pluralism: the Netherlands and Australia**
1. *Soper, den Dulk, Monsma chapters 4-5 (2 presenters)

3/15: **Models of Establishment: England and Germany**
1. *Soper, den Dulk, Monsma, chapters 5-6 (2 presenters)

3/19: **The Challenge of Islamic Immigration**
1. *Soper and Fetzer, "The Not So Naked Public Square: Islam and the State in Western Europe" (on courses).

3/19: **Writing Workshop and individual meetings**

3/22: **Political Islam and Islamic Models**
1. Ayoub, chapters 1-2
2. *Wills, "What the Quran Meant" (2 presenters)

3/26: **Muslim States: Saudi Arabia and Iran**
1. Ayoub, chapter 3
2. Hubbard, ["A Saudi Morals Enforcer Called for a More Liberal Islam. Then the Death Threats Began"](#)

3. *Scott Shane, [“Saudis and Extremism.”](#)
4. *Haleh Esfandiari, [“Reform or Revolution: Iran’s Path to Democracy.”](#)

3/29 and 4/2: **Muslim Democracies and Semi-Democracies: Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Egypt**

1. Ayoob, chapters 4 and 5.
2. Sonar Cagaptay, [“Turkey’s Troubling Turn”](#)
3. *Khan, [“Islamist Radicalism in Pakistani Politics”](#)

4/5: **NO CLASS**

4/9: **National Resistance and Transnational Islam and Transnational Religion**

1. *Ayoob, chapters 5-6 (2 presenters)
2. *Katzenstein and Byrnes, [“Transnational Religion in an Expanded Europe.”](#)

4/12: **Catch up day**

4/16: **Catch up day**

4/19: **Religion and Politics: A Healthy or a Toxic Mix?**

1. *Toft, Philpott, and Shah, chapter 8.
2. *Soper, den Dulk, Monsma, chapter 7.

Research Paper is due.

4/24: **Final Examination: Tuesday, April 24th, 7:30-10:00**

Short Essay Assignment

You will write one short essays over the course of the semester. The essay will respond to one of the following questions listed below, and each option has a different due date.

Each essay should be completed in four-to-six double-spaced pages, using standard fonts (e.g. 12- point Times New Roman, Calibri, etc.) and margins (1"). Most importantly, each essay should demonstrate your close reading of, and active engagement with, the texts that are relevant to answering the questions. While you are free to do additional research for any of these essay topics you are no under no obligation to do so. This is particularly true for topic #1 which does not lend itself to research per se.

Each of these topics is large and challenging. The point of the assignment is for you to boil the question down to its essence, to focus in on a central argument, and to support that argument with carefully selected references (including quotations) to the sources that we have read. What I am looking for is a clear argument of your own that responds to the assigned question and that is supported by a careful, detailed, and thoughtful discussion of the materials we have read.

Paper Topic #1: What does your faith require in terms of social and political involvement? Is faith primarily a personal matter of individual salvation or does it also ask you to do something to change the political world around you? Should your faith inform your politics? If so, in what ways? While you are free to share your views on particular issues (abortion, the environment, etc.) I am more interested in how your religious principles shape how you understand the world of politics. This paper is due January 25th.

Paper Topic #2: Does religion lead to war, peace, or both? Discuss examples in different religious traditions in which it has led to either or both. Make sure you discuss at least three readings we have done over the course of the semester. This paper is due on February 5th.

Paper Topic #3: What role, if any, should religion play in democratic politics? What do you believe to be the dangers and insights that people of faith can bring to politics? Is a government without some religion possible, or desirable? Make sure you discuss at least three readings we have done over the course of the semester. This paper is due March 15th.

Paper Topic #4: Are Islam and democracy compatible? What are the preconditions of a democratic state and to what degree do Muslim majority countries meet those standards? Is that the best measure for answering the question of the compatibility of Islam and democracy? Make sure you discuss at least three readings we have done over the course of the semester. This paper is due April 5th.

Presentation

Starting with our second class, one or more student(s) will help to lead each session by providing a ~10 minute presentation. The presentation is to engage the assigned material and pose questions for discussion. Each presentation should have three components: (a) a thesis, (b) an overview of the argument, and (c) a focused, critical question that follows from the thesis and the overview. Presentation assignments will be made soon after our first meeting. The readings that are eligible for a presentation have a star (*) next to them in the syllabus. Students assigned to a presentation are to send two concise, critical questions to me via email by 5pm the day before class. Those questions should focus on central issues, pages, distinctions, and concepts in the week's readings. Class discussion will take its bearings from the presentation(s), and should reference important textual passages in the course of advancing an insight or question.

Research Paper Project

For this assignment you need to write an eight to ten page paper in which you look at the relationship between religion and politics in a country in the world, but not a country that we have discussed extensively in class (United States, Israel, etc.). Some of the questions that you should consider in this paper include: What are the statutory or constitutional principles that shape religion-state relations in that country? What is the history behind how the country came to adopt its particular religion-state model? To what extent does the government aid religion? What limits, if any, are there on religious freedom in this particular country? What are the central tensions between religious and political groups in the country? You should have at least eight sources for this paper, and possibly more. In addition to a search of the online library sources, the following links might be of some help to you, although you will have to play around with them some to get the information that you need.

The United States Department of State Annual Report to Congress on International Religious Freedom:

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/rpt/>.

Religion and State Project: <http://www.biu.ac.il/soc/po/ras/>

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life: <http://pewforum.org/>

Freedom House: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=1>

For this particular assignment, I am going to ask that you turn in the paper electronically through Blackboard so that it can be run through the Turnitin system. Turnitin is an online plagiarism detection service that conducts textual similarity reviews of submitted papers and internet sites. In other words, it checks your paper against others to ensure that it is unique and original. Turnitin allows you to see your document once you have posted it, so you can double check that you have attached the right file (and not an older version of your essay, your reading notes, or a blank file, etc.). It also helps to keep everyone honest and ensures that in the future, your work cannot be claimed by another student as his or her own.

To submit your paper through Turnitin, log onto the course site in Courses and click "upload assignments" on the far left. The process should be clear from that point. After you submit your work, it may look like the formatting has changed, but don't be concerned: I will see the original, properly formatted version. If you are a Mac user, be aware that there are problems uploading through Safari, so you will need to use the Firefox browser when you submit your paper. The research papers is due on April 19th.

Course Overview and Relation to the Christian Mission

When I was growing up, my grandmother informed me that religion and politics were two of the three topics that were not discussed in “polite” company. Money was the third taboo topic. We won’t say much about money in this class, but we will, obviously, talk a lot about religion and politics. I think the reason that my grandmother told me that, however, was that even way back then religion and politics were subjects that elicited a great deal of strong opinions, vehement disagreements, and heated arguments, even among friends and family members.

I don’t believe that we should shy away from those debates, but I trust and expect that we will have those conversations respecting the fundamental humanity of those with whom we disagree. The idea of the *Imago Dei* is that we are all – saints and sinner alike – created in the image of God. As such, we have value for who and what we are as children of God, and we should expect others to respect us just as we should respect others.

I also firmly believe that ignorance of politics is not an option for people who are committed to the public good, or making the world a more humane, loving, and just place. For Christians, a commitment to the public good is grounded in the conviction that the world is made in God’s image and that Christ’s humanity makes the world a place that is open to, and in need of, redemption. In an ideal world, politics can become a vehicle for this redemptive work. Understanding the interactions between religion and politics, the good and the bad, is one way to contribute to that positive end.

Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (physical, learning, or psychological) needing academic accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility (Main Campus, Tyler Campus Center 264, x6500) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <https://www.pepperdine.edu/student-accessibility/> for additional information.

Evaluation

There shall be an online evaluation at the end of the semester. I strongly encourage you to complete the evaluation of the course, but you are under no formal obligation to do so and there will be no impact on your final grade based on your decision to do so.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is the expression of intellectual virtue in human beings as a result of their creation in God's image. It represents the convergence of the best of the human spirit and God's spirit, which requires personal, private and community virtue. As a Christian institution, Pepperdine University affirms that integrity begins in our very created being and is lived out in our academic work. In order for the code to be effective, the community must maintain its health and

vitality. This requires a genuine sense of maturity, responsibility, and sensitivity on the part of every member. In particular, each member of the Seaver College community is expected to pursue his or her academic work with honesty and integrity.

Student Learning Outcomes

After successfully completing this course, a student should be able to:

- Identify how different countries manage religious-political relations within their borders.
- Detail how different religious traditions have been involved in politics.
- Understand various theories that explain when and how religious groups are politically involved
- Appreciate how his or her own faith and/or ethical commitments shape an understanding of politics.

These are based on the following learning objectives:

- Compare political institutions, governmental and non-governmental actors, and political cultures in the United States and other states, distinguishing basic differences and similarities among them.
- Analyze and apply theories of politics and society to contemporary politics.
- Integrate political knowledge and personal experiences with faith commitments, civic responsibilities, and ethnic and gender identities.