

Course Syllabus
POL 369.01
Religion and Politics
Credit Hours: 3
Fall, 2007

Class Location: University Center
Class Meeting Time: MN, 6-9
Instructor: Dr. William E. Carroll
Office Location: AB1 315D
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Office Hours: 11-12 MWTH, 11-12 T at University Center

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Religion and politics: Only in recent years, and largely as a consequence of apparently religiously inspired violence, has the role of religion in politics become a focus of study in the field of international relations. Before then, however, the rise of the so-called religious right in US electoral politics was also generating a renewed focus on religion and politics. Both these, religion in domestic politics and international conflict, are behind and contained in this special topics course.

Before we can discuss religion and politics, we will have to define both: this will constitute the first part (Overview) of the course. It is possible to arrive at a universally valid (or at least useful) definition of politics; but religion is more difficult, this because of the variety of world religions. We will try to get an intellectual handle on this variety. The second and third parts of the course will be devoted to religion's role in domestic politics: first, in the US – in terms of at times controversial Constitutional issues (establishment and free exercise) and in American electoral and party politics; and comparatively - in Europe, South and East Asia, and lastly and most profoundly important, the Middle East and the Islamic world. The final part of the course will be taken up with historical and contemporary issues of religion and conflict, war and peace, and conflict resolution. The cases we will discuss are probably obvious: they include the Balkan conflicts, the Israeli-Arab/Palestinian conflicts, India-Pakistan, and the threats posed by Islamic (and other) extremists.

Approach/Method of Instruction: This course will be approached as if it were a senior seminar: this means it will involve student reading and considerable class discussion along with background lectures. I will be bringing whatever expertise I have developed in this area into class in the form of lectures and discussion (and recommended readings); you the student are expected to keep up with assigned reading, participate in class discussion, and bring all the enthusiasm and interest in the subject matter you possess to class with you. *NOTE:* Given the nature of the subject it is all too possible (even likely) that we, all of us, have deeply held views, on both religion and politics and on the proper relationship between the two. To put it another way, there is a strong normative dimension to the subject, which is fine, but let us all remember to approach the subject – and each other – with decorum and respect.

Prerequisite: 6 hours of Political Science

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Factual knowledge: substantive knowledge of various religions, and the role of religion in domestic and international politics, particularly in the concrete cases we examine
- Critical thinking: obviously the subject matter itself lends itself to thinking beyond existing knowledge and pre-existing stereotypes
- Analytical skills: throughout the course we will encounter various epistemological approaches to the subject, in more prosaic terms, ways of analyzing religion and politics

REQUIRED TEXTS

Buruma, Ian Murder In Amsterdam

Campbell, David E., editor A Matter of Faith: Religion in the 2004 Presidential Election

Stern, Jessica Terror in the name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill

Other readings will be assigned, these to be placed on e-reserve; other readings will be recommended, to be read based on the individual student's interest. We will also want to keep up with current events: the New York Times and USA Today are provided free on campus. In addition to the various Political Science and International Relations journals available in the library, a particular journal to know about is the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance is required, following general university regulations. Needless to say, a course which will depend as this one does on participation and discussion places a particular premium on attendance. Repeated absences result in a grade penalty. Makeup exams are given, only for verified and excused absences and at the convenience of the instructor.

ASSIGNMENTS

In addition to exams (see below), there will be two out-of-class assignments, the details of which will be explained in class and separate handouts for each will be provided.

EXAMS

There will be three exams, each counting equally toward the final grade. The exams will likely have a mixed format (objective and written). Dates of exams will be announced in class.

GRADING PLAN

Exams will count 60% toward the final grade, the out-of-class assignments 20% each, and class attendance/participation 10%. The normal grading scale is used: 90 and above, A; 80-89, B; 70-79, C; 60-69, D; 59 and below, F.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY: Per University policy. The possibilities include (but are not exhausted by) cheating and plagiarism.

CLASSROOM RULES OF CONDUCT: Per University policy. Disruptive behavior – intentionally disrupting class, persistent talking at inappropriate times, disrespectful words or actions toward classmates or instructor, etc. shall result in a directive to leave class and possible referral to the Dean of Students.

VISITORS IN THE CLASSROOM: If the visitor is not a registered student, it is at the instructor's discretion whether or not the visitor will be allowed to remain in the classroom.

COURSE OUTLINE

- I. Introduction and Overview: Religion, Politics, Religion and Politics
 1. Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism
 2. religion as “input” and “environment” of political systems

Readings: e-reserve; handouts; a list of recommended readings
- II. Religion and Domestic Politics: US

1. Church and State in the US: Constitutional Issues
2. Religion and Electoral/Party Politics in the US
3. what role *should* religion play in American politics and public life

Readings: e-reserve; handouts; Campbell, all chapters

First Exam

III. Religion and Domestic Politics: Comparative

1. “Secularized” Europe?
2. Islam and politics in Muslim world
3. South Asia (Hinduism, Sikhism, and Muslims in India and Pakistan)
4. East and Southeast Asia (Buddhism, Shinto, Confucianism)

Readings: e-reserve; handouts; a list of recommended readings

Second Exam

IV. Religion and World Politics

1. Religion, war and conflict
2. Religion and conflict resolution

Readings: e-reserve; handouts; Stern, all chapters

Final Exam

STUDY TIPS: While the class will involve considerable discussion, often wide-ranging, it is still advisable to take thorough class notes, particularly on lecture material. It is also essential to keep up with the assigned readings. Another tip is to find classmates to study with, comparing notes, etc.

INSTRUCTOR EVALUATIONS: Students will be asked to complete a course/instructor evaluation toward the end of the semester.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES will be accommodated in any way necessary and possible. Please let me know your needs early in the semester.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS: Any student who needs to miss a class due to observance of a religious holiday will be accommodated in any way possible. Please let me know early in the semester.

NOTE: The syllabus is subject to change if circumstances dictate. This would happen only if, for example, it made sense to shift material between exams for student ease; or to add/delete topics depending on time constraints; and finally, if it were necessary to add to or subtract from the number of exams specified above.