

## Religion & Politics

POLI 476 – Fall 2023

Meeting times: Wednesday, Friday 11:35-12:55

Instructor: Dr. Brendan Szendrő

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At the tail end of the Cold War, as academics scrambled to predict the future of politics, Fukuyama (1989) made his ill-fated proclamation on the “end of history.” His theory that the liberal doctrine of individual rights had won an enduring victory against all other competing forms of social organization carried a brief caveat, as he acknowledged challenges from religious corridors. “One is inclined to say,” he wrote, “that the revival of religion in some way attests to a broad unhappiness with the impersonality and spiritual vacuity of liberal consumerist societies” (p. 14). Still, he hand-waved such movements as unimportant.

This course seeks a more nuanced view of the role of religion in the political realm. In doing so, it seeks to answer a long-standing disciplinary question – does the religious resurgence represent, as Fukuyama wrote, a dissatisfaction with modern, materialistic life?

This course examines the role of religion in shaping the modern political landscape. In order to properly address the question of religion and state in the modern world, it is also imperative to ask what religion is, in a political sense, and how religious and political institutions have historically functioned and intertwined.

### Course Aims & Objectives

If you’ll permit me to wax poetic – I assembled this course to challenge the assumption that religion and politics are separate topics. Substantively, this course will equip you with a foundational knowledge of the social-scientific framework of religion. You will learn the key definitional aspects of religion within the context of political science as well as their application in several key cases; you will also learn a number of outstanding controversies within the discipline. On top of all that, you’ll get an interesting new perspective on what religion has to say about political science. In the early stages of the class, we’ll cover theoretical, historical, and empirical aspects of how religion and politics intersect. In doing so, we will re-contextualize a number of themes from the broader field of political science within the framework of religion-state relations. In the second half of the class, we’ll examine these concepts in terms of specific countries.

Each one of these lectures could be its own class; for our purposes, starting with definitional and historical aspects allows us to examine their applicability in a wide range of cases and contexts. You can think of this as something of an *introduction* to the subject of religion and politics – a subject that remains relatively niche in political science but that I personally hope will get more mainstream over time. This can also serve as a gateway to a

number of other subfields if any of the lectures interest you in particular. In the latter half of the semester, I'll be discussing specific countries and regions at length – The United States, The Middle East-North Africa, Israel, India, Myanmar, China, France, and maybe Eastern Europe if we get to it, in that order. There are entire departments dedicated to courses on these countries, so think of these not as in-depth case studies but as overviews of how the theoretical, historical, and empirical ideas we're covering can be applied in different contexts.

If there's an overarching theme to this course: religions are humans' way of creating a sense of belonging; and belonging is not just an incentive for politics, it's *the* incentive – the reason anybody does anything. Whenever governments fail to provide their people with that sense of belonging – be it economically, socially, or politically – religions step up to fill the void.

### Grading

#### Participation – 10%

Participation can be fulfilled in multiple ways: through in-class contributions to discussion; through office hour meetings over zoom; and through in-class writing assignments. If participation averages out to being really, really bad I'll make it bounded by the others. If, for whatever reason, these options do not work for you, please contact me to arrange alternatives.

#### Short writing assignments – 60%

Including three short assignments (1-2 pages), each worth 20%.

Prompts will be given on MyCourses two weeks in advance.

Assignment #1 due September 27

Assignment #2 due October 26

Assignment #3 due November 29

#### Final paper – 30%

Due December 19

This one is actually two components. At the end of the semester, you'll be asked to write a 5-10 page paper in which you will choose a country of interest and examine the relationship between its religious and state institutions. We will discuss this paper over the course of the semester. No more than 10 students will be allowed to choose English-speaking countries. The first 10 will be chosen on an alphabetical basis. On October 13, you'll have a 1-2 page proposal for your paper topic due. This proposal will be worth one-third of the final paper grade, or 10%.

A note on attendance and grading – I won't be keeping attendance, but the truth is it's hard to keep track of students when they don't show up. If you don't engage, you can't fulfill the participation credits.

There are no formal rubrics for writing assignments, but we will discuss guidelines in class; there will be directions, guidelines, and example papers available on MyCourses.

## Class Schedule & Reading Bank

This is reading bank rather than a reading list. This is such an in-depth topic that no one set of readings is going to cover it perfectly. So, what this does is outline some of the readings that I think will be particularly useful. This includes four “main readings” and four “suggested readings” for each week. These are the primary and secondary readings that make up the source material for these lectures; the lectures will provide an overview of these materials and how they fit together, but you will likely need to do a certain amount of the readings in order to fully understand the lecture material.

You’ are not *required* to do any given amount of reading – whatever you think is enough to keep your engagement high. I usually say if you’re not sure, pick two and see if that works for you; if it’s not enough, read more, and if it’s more than enough, read less. In cases where full books are listed, you may also choose to read the full book rather than the other materials.

Also, this list is non-exhaustive. Please feel free to contribute! If you have any ideas for readings, shoot me an email and I’ll add it to the list. This list is subject to change over the course of the semester. Most of this is floating around on the internet, but if it’s not I’ll upload it to MyCourses.

### SECTION I: THEORY & HISTORY

#### Week #1: Theoretical foundations (September 6, 8)

Part I: Foundational concepts

Part II: Reinterpreting political science theories through a religious framework

Main reading:

- Berger, Peter L. 1974. “Some Second Thoughts on Substantive versus Functional Definitions of Religion.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 13(2): 125-133.
- *Book of Judges, the*. Chapters 19-21. Available online.
- *Book of Leviticus, the*. Chapters 24-26. Available online.
- Durkheim, Émile. 1912. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Excerpts available on MyCourses.

Additional resources:

- Boix, Carles. 2015. *Political Order and Inequality: Their Foundations and Their Consequences for Human Welfare*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Friedman, Richard Elliot. 2017. *The Exodus: How It Happened and Why It Matters*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
- Olson, Mancur. 1993. “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development.” *American Political Science Review* 87(3): 567-576.
- Wilson, David Sloan. 2002. *Darwin’s Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

#### Week #2: Religion-State Relations Before Westphalia (September 13, 15)

Part I: Polycentric Sovereignty in Europe

Part II: Religion and the Legitimization of Law in Comparative Context

Main reading:

- *Book of Corinthians, the*. Chapters 11-12. Available online.
- *Book of Matthew, the*. Chapter 22. Available online.
- Blaydes Lisa. 2017. "State Building in the Middle East." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20: pp. 487-504.
- Gryzmala- Busse, Anna. 2020. "Beyond War and Contracts: The Medieval and Religious Roots of the European State." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 23: pp. 19-36.

Additional resources:

- Fukuyama, Francis. 2011. *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- *Medina Charter, the*. Available online.
- Salter, Alexander and Andrew Young. 2019. "Polycentric Sovereignty: The Medieval Constitution, Governance Quality, and the Wealth of Nations." *Social Science Quarterly*, 100(4): pp. 1241-1253.
- Pirie, Fernanda. 2021. *The Rule of Laws: A 4,000-Year Quest to Order the World*. New York, NY: Basic Books, pp. 17-287.

### Week #3: The Advent of Liberalism (September 20, 22)

Part I: Religious Wars and Secular Revolutions

Part II: Individualism and Atomization

Main reading:

- Akturk, Sener. 2020. "Comparative Politics of Exclusion in Europe and the Americas: Religious, Sectarian, and Racial Boundary Making since the Reformation." *The Journal of Comparative Politics*, 52(4): pp. 695-719. Available on MyCourses.
- *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, the*. Available online.
- Gunn, T. Jeremy. 2004. "Under God but Not the Scarf: The Founding Myths of Religious Freedom in the United States and Laicite in France." *Journal of Church and State* 46: 7-24.
- Jefferson, Thomas. 1801. "Letter to the Danbury Baptists." Available online.

Additional resources:

- Acemoglu, Daron and James A. Robinson. 2019. *The Narrow Corridor: States, Societies, and the Fate of Liberty*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Hobbes, Thomas. 1651. *Leviathan*. Chapter 12, "Of Religion" and Chapter 44, "Of Spiritual Darkness from Misinterpretation of Scripture." Available online.
- Jones, Meirav and Yossi Shain. 2017. "Modern Sovereignty and the non-Christian, or Westphalia's Jewish State." *Review of International Studies*, 43(5): pp. 918-938.

- Levy, Jacob T. 2014. *Rationalism, Pluralism, and Freedom*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

#### Week #4: Secularization Theory (September 27, 29)

Part I: Post-War Theories of Modernization

Part II: Problems with “Social Scientific” Observation

Main reading:

- Dhima, Kostanca and Matt Golder. 2021. “Secularization Theory and Religion.” *Politics and Religion*, 14(1): pp. 37-53. Warning: contains math
- Gaskins, Ben, Matt Golder, and David A. Siegel. 2013. “Religious Participation, Social Conservatism, and Human Development.” *The Journal of Politics*, 75(4): pp. 1125-1141. Warning: contains math
- Gorski, Philip S. and Altinordu Ates. 2008. “After Secularization?” *Annual Review of Sociology* 34: pp. 55-85.
- Stolz, Jörg. 2020. “Secularization theories in the twenty-first century: Ideas, evidence, and problems.” *Social Compass* 67(2): 282-308.

Additional resources:

- Höllinger, Franz and Johanna Muckenhuber. 2019. “Religiousness and existential insecurity: A cross-national comparative analysis on the macro- and micro-level.” *International Sociology* 34(1): 19-37. Warning: hope you like math
- Inglehart, Ronald and Pippa Norris. 2004. *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. Cambridge University Press.
- Swatos Jr., William H. and Kevin J. Christiano. 1999. “Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept.” *Sociology of Religion*, 60(3): pp. 209-228.
- Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

#### Week #5: Religious Resurgence (October 4, 13)

Part I: Religion in the Age of Globalization

Part II: Empirical Definitions and the Problem of Endogeneity

Main reading:

- Fox, Jonathan. 2013. “Is It Really God’s Century? An Evaluation of Religious Support and Discrimination from 1990 to 2008.” *Politics and Religion*, 7: pp. 4-27. Math warning
- Fox, Jonathan, Roger Finke, and Dane Mataic. 2021. “The causes of societal discrimination against religious minorities in Christian-majority countries.” *Religions* 12(8), 611. Math warning
- Gill, Anthony. 2020. “The comparative endurance and efficiency of religion: a public choice perspective.” *Public Choice*, pp. 1-22.
- Huntington, Samuel. 1993. “The Clash of Civilizations?” Available on MyCourses.

Additional resources:

- Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, 16: pp. 3-18.
- Karakoc, Ekrem and Birol Baskan. 2012. "Religion in Politics: How Does Inequality Affect Public Secularization?" *Comparative Political Studies*, 45(12): pp. 1510-1541.
- Said, Edward. 2001. "The Clash of Ignorance." *The Nation*. October 22, 2001. Available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/clash-ignorance/>
- Toft, Monica Duffy, Philpott, Daniel, and Timothy Samuel Shah. 2011. *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. W.W. Norton & Company.

## Week #6: Reconstitution (October 18, 20)

Part I: Religious Resurgence as Religious Nationalism

Part II: Religious Resurgence as Post-Liberalism

Main reading:

- Barber, Benjamin R. 1992. "Jihad vs. McWorld." *The Atlantic*, March 1992. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1992/03/jihad-vs-meworld/303882/>
- Fordahl, Clayton and Berglind Ragnarsdóttir. 2021. "When the Gods Fall: Varieties of Post-Secularization in a Small, Secularized State." *Politics and Religion*, 14(2): pp. 362-387.
- Kinnvall, Catarina. 2004. "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security." *Political Psychology*, 25(5): pp. 741-765.
- Mendelsohn, Barak. 2012. "God vs. Westphalia: radical Islamist movements and the battle for organising the World." *Review of International Studies*, 38(03): 589-613.

Additional resources:

- Barber, Benjamin. 1995. *Jihad Vs. McWorld: Terrorism's Challenge to Democracy*. New York, NY: Random House Publishing Group.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2008. *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al Qaeda*. University of California Press.

## Week #7: Evangelism in the United States (October 26, 27)

Part I: Southern Feudalism and Rural Consciousness

Part II: The role of the church in "small government" philosophy

Watch first 15 minutes of:

- Cruz, Rafael. 2016. "Reclaiming America." Kenneth Copeland Ministries Ministers Conference. January 21, 2016. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EeytBEMYEoE>
- Cruz, Ted. 2015. "Keynote Speech: Rally for Religious Liberty." Available at <https://www.c-span.org/video/?327740-1/senator-ted-cruz-r-tx-religious-rally-des-moines-iowa>

Read:

- Ivins, Molly. 1993. "Toss (some of 'em) to the lions." *The Tuscaloosa News*. Published September 15, 1993.
- Wallace, George C. 1963. "The Inaugural Address of Governor George C. Wallace." Available on MyCourses. Content warning: contains disturbing, racist language.

Recommended for skimming (academic article, hard to read):

- Scala, Dante J. and Kenneth M. Johnson. 2017. "Political Polarization along the Rural-Urban Continuum? The Geography of the Presidential Vote, 2000-2016." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 672(1): pp. 162-184.

Additional resources:

- Cramer, Katherine. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. University of Chicago Press.
- Du Mez, Kristen Kobes. 2020. *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*. Liveright publishing.
- Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark. 2005. *The Churching of America, 1776-2005*. Rutgers University Press.

#### Week #8: Jihad and Islamist Government in the Middle East-North Africa (November 1, 3)

Part I: Non-State Activity – Failure of Secular Nationalism?

Part II: Islamism as State-Based Ideology

Main reading:

- Hinnebusch, Raymond. 2006. "Authoritarian persistence, democratization theory, and the Middle East: An overview and Critique." *Democratization*, 13(3): 373-395.
- Mazrui, Ali A. 1998. "Globalization, Islam, and the West: Between Homogenization and Hegemonization." *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, 15(3): pp. 1-13.

Pick two of (primary source documents):

- Al-Zawahiri, Ayman. 2001. *Knights Under The Prophet's Banner*. Excerpts available from World News Connection library. Available at: <https://wnc-eastview-com.proxy.binghamton.edu/wnc/article?id=36511266>
- Azzam, Abdullah. 1988. "al-Qa'ida al-Subah." [The Al-Qaeda Manifesto] *al-Jihad* 41. Trans. Kronos Advisory. Available at <[http://kronosadvisory.com/Kronos\\_InsideTheJihad\\_AlQaidaAlSubah.pdf](http://kronosadvisory.com/Kronos_InsideTheJihad_AlQaidaAlSubah.pdf)>.
- Bin Laden, Osama. 2002. "Letter to America." Trans. *Observer Worldview*. Published November 24, 2002. Available at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130826184301/http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver>

Recommended for skimming (law article, hard to read):

- Haider, Aliya. 2002. "The Rhetoric of Resistance: Islamism, Modernity, and Globalization." *Harvard Blackletter Law Journal*, 18: pp. 91-128.

Additional resources:

- Aburaiya, Issam. 2009. "Islamism, Nationalism, and Western Modernity: The Case of Iran and Palestine." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 22(1): pp. 57-68.
- Keddie, Nikki. 1994. "The Revolt of Islam, 1700 to 1993: Comparative Considerations and Relations to Imperialism." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36(3): pp. 463-487.
- Wright, Lawrence. 2006. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. New York, NY: Knopf Publishing.

### Week #9: Halakha and Religious-Zionism in Israel (November 8, 10)

Part I: Kahane vs. the "Status Quo"

Part II: Institutional Chaos – a Non-Westphalian Solution?

Skim first:

- Gavizon, Ruth. 1999. "Jewish and Democratic? A Rejoinder to the 'Ethnic Democracy' Debate." *Israel Studies*, 4(1): 44-72.

Then watch in this order:

- 60 Minutes. 1984. "Meir Kahane." Available from Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-oJW6pur3UQ>
- I24News. 2019. "Reflecting on Meir Kahane and Israel's Emerging Far-Right." Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aj-8tZqPFI4>
- Gav HaUmah. 2018. "How to slowly move from individualism to fascism." Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QuvafxYRPQA> (this one is short and funny)

Additional resources:

- Halmai, Gabor. 2016. "Constitutionalism, Law, and Religion in Israel" A State's Multiple Identities." *Journal of Civil and Legal Sciences*, 5(1): 1-11.
- Peled, Yoav and Horit Herman Peled. 2019. *The Religionization of Israeli Society*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Shelef, Nadav. 2010. *Evolving Nationalism: Homeland, Identity, and Religion in Israel, 1925-2005*. Cornell University Press.
- Talshir, Gayil. 2022. "Which 'Israel before all'? From the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to the Jewish/democratic Left-Right axis." *Israel Affairs*, 28(6): 896-916.

### Week #10: Religious Nationalism in Dharmic Countries (November 15, 17)

Part I: Sectorial Transitions in Myanmar

Part II: The Rise of Hindutva – a War on Islam?

Watch:

- Oliver, John. 2020. "Facebook." *Last Week Tonight*. Available online.

Then read in this order:



- Zin, Min. 2015. "Anti-Muslim Violence in Burma: Why Now?" *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 82(2): 375-397.
- Wilson, Chris. "A new law in India could put Muslims at greater risk of persecution, including Rohingya." *The Conversation*. Published December 19, 2019.
- Bose, Sumantra. 2019. "Here's why Hindu nationalists aspire to Israel's 'ethnic democracy.'" *Quartz India*. Published February 15, 2019.

Additional resources:

- Kaul, Nitasha. 2017. "Rise of the Political Right in India: Hindutva-Development Mix, Modi Myth, and Dualities." *Journal of Labor and Society*, 20(4): 523-548.
- Laborde, Cécile. 2021. "Minimal Secularism: Lessons for, and from, India." *American Political Science Review*, 115.
- Orru, Marco and Amy Wang. 1992. "Durkheim, Religion, and Buddhism." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30(1): 47-61.
- Verghese, Ajay. 2020. "Taking Other Religions Seriously: A Comparative Survey of Hindus in India." *Politics and Religion*, 13(3): pp. 604-638.

#### Week #11: Assertive secularism in China (November 22, 24)

Part I: Religious Regulation in a Communist Regime

Part II: Human Rights Concerns

Almost there! Skim these:

- Kuru, Ahmet T. 2007. "Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion." *World Politics*, 59(4): pp. 568-594.
- Yang, Fenggang. 2011. *Religion in China: Survival and Revival under Communist Rule*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Excerpts available on MyCourses.

And watch this:

- Oliver, John. 2020. "China & The Uighers." *Last Week Tonight*. Available online.

Then pick one of these:

- Congressional-Executive Commission on China. 2004. "Regulations on Religious Affairs (Chinese and English Text)." <https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/regulations-on-religious-affairs>
- Ministry of Public Security of the People's Republic of China. 2003. "Notice on Various Issues Regarding Identifying and Banning of Cultic Organizations." *Chinese Law and Government* 36(2): 22-38.
- Zhang, Chi. 2021. "'Illegal Religious Activities' and Counter-Terrorism in China." *Politics and Religion* 14(2): 269-293.
- Vala, Carsten. 2013. "The State-Religion Relationship in Contemporary China: Corporatism with Hegemony," in *The Chinese Corporatist State: Adaption, Survival and Resistance*. Ed. Jennifer Hsu and Reza Hasmath. Oxfordshire, UK: Routledge, 102-119.

## Week #12: Other Approaches and Conclusions (November 29, December 1)

Part I: French, East European, and Latin American Models

Part II: What is the Future of Religion and State?

Thought you were done but wait – there's more! A bit of the ol':

- Geisser, Vincent. 2020. "Opinion: Is France Fueling Muslim Terrorism by Trying to Prevent It?" *New York Times*. Published October 31, 2020.
- Zaretsky, Robert. 2016. "How French Secularism Became Fundamentalist." *Foreign Policy*. Published April 7, 2016

And then these are a little something else (skim the second one, it's got math):

- Coakley, Amanda. 2021. "Hungary's Orban Tries to Snatch Mantle of Christian Democracy." *Foreign Policy*. Published August 3, 2021.
- Schleutker, Elina. 2021. "Co-optation and Repression of Religion in Authoritarian Regimes." *Politics and Religion* 14(2): 209-240.

And there you go! You made it!

### **Language of submission**

In accord with McGill University's [Charter of Students' Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à [la Charte des droits de l'étudiant](#) de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté.

### **Academic integrity**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#)" (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) (See [McGill's guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon [le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et procédures disciplinaires](#) » (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 29 janvier 2003) (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le [guide pour l'honnêteté académique de McGill](#).)