

Religion & State in The Modern World

PLSC 389U-01 – Winter 2021

Asynchronous meeting times

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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.

Given the intricacy of this topic, the winter course structure further limits the ability to explore its vast depth. It would take way too much work to cover everything this quickly. As such, I did have to pick-and-choose my topics accordingly. I have primarily chosen to focus on the cases that I have specifically researched, rather than those I only have a passing familiarity with. I think focusing on these cases will help me better communicate some of the more complex ideas, since I can talk about them endlessly.

Most reading material is floating around on the internet, but if it's not I'll upload it to MyCourses.

COURSE STRUCTURE

I will confess that I have struggled with the best way to construct this course: I picked a pretty big topic and only got a month to do it. That being said, I like this topic and I think we'll have fun with it. I do apologize in advance for issues related to winter course scheduling, me being overwhelmed by the other work I have to do, or the ongoing situation regarding the collapse of civilization as we know it.

We're going to start with some of the tougher, more convoluted questions. That means — what is religion? How does it work? What has it done, historically? What's it doing today? From

there, we'll move on to specific cases. The historical, sociological, and philosophic aspects of religion are far more complicated than we can feasibly cover in any course, much less a month-long one. I've picked out a few academic traditions that I think will cover the most bases.

If there's an overarching theme to this course: religions are humans' way of creating a sense of belonging. Belonging is not just an incentive for politics, but the central incentive. 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.

Due to the constraints of a winter course, I'm not able to hold synchronous lectures. That means that I will upload short videos several times a week, for students to watch at their leisure. Although I cannot hold the classes live, that doesn't mean I'm not free to communicate! I can hold live zoom meetings whenever students need — just shoot me an email and we can arrange a time. I can also provide regular feedback.

Because this is an asynchronous course, your classroom participation will be judged by your participation in the discussion board. The discussion board will be an open forum to discuss the themes of each lecture. You can also earn participation credits by meeting with me over zoom. Participation will be the bulk of your grade, but there will be many opportunities to shape that grade. I expect vibrant, active discussions on the message boards.

Beyond participation, I will give a weekly writing assignment. There will be no exams. I will provide weekly participation and writing grades in the grade center; due to difficulties in the format I cannot provide direct, written feedback on participation unless you ask me first. I will, however, provide comments on the writing assignments.

Neither the discussion board nor the writing assignments have specific rubrics to follow; this is by design. These formats are meant to be open and flexible so that students have freedom of self-expression. There are many paths up the mountain to success and this course is meant to illustrate that.

What I'm hoping for with the discussion board is a vibrant conversation akin to the kind we would have in-person. That being said, please be civil. We here in the political science department have received vague reports from the ether that students during the pandemic have taken to vitriolic competition in the context of various group chats. We have absolutely no idea what all of you talk about in your spare time, but we do hope that you'll refrain from personal attacks and insults. I don't mind profanity — in fact, you'll probably hear me curse up a storm at least once — but do make sure you don't target your classmates. You are all adults, and you are expected to respect each other.

GRADING

Again, I struggled with the best way to do this. The whole “teach a whole course in a month” thing can make grading a challenge, and I got a lot more sign-ups than usual. Most winter/summer courses max out around 10-15 students and, as of the start of the course, there's

30 of you! This is the best grading policy I could come up with that isn't overcomplicated or too demanding for either of us:

- Participation — 50% — 12.5% weekly.
- Writing assignments — 50% — 12.5% weekly.

Participation grades can be earned by one or both of the following:

- Discussion board posts, including threads, replies, and back-and-forth conversations.
- Personal contact regarding the material, including email threads and zoom meetings.

I retain the right for leeway in the participation grade based on my impression of your demeanor, interest, etc. Don't be a jerk! You will lose points for uncivil behavior.

There will be no exams and no term paper. I really, really wanted to do a term paper with the prompt "design your own religion. Explain where it would evolve, what needs it would fulfill, and how it would interact with government" but I feel like that would be a little much for such a short-term course and might also get me some complaints.

Grading Scheme:

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Percent</i>
A	94 – 100%
A-	90 - <94%
B+	87 - <90%
B	84 - <87%
B-	80 - <84%
C+	77 - <80%
C	74 - <77%
C-	70 - <74%

TOPICS

Week 1: January 4-10

- Unit #1: Sociological foundations
- Unit #2: Historical foundations

Week 2: January 11-17

- Unit #3: Modernization & globalization
- Unit #4: Evangelism in the United States

Week 3: January 18-24

- Unit #5: Jihadism in the Middle East-North Africa
- Unit #6: Kahanism in Israel

Week 4: January 25-31

- Unit #7: Hindutva and the 969 Movement in South Asia
- Unit #8: Assertive secularism: China, Europe, and beyond

READINGS

With such an intricate and complicated topic, it's not possible to cover everything – especially in a short time frame. In addition, the fact that we have students at all levels of their academic careers means that different levels of complexity may prove too difficult for some and not difficult for others. So, in short, I picked out a handful of readings that I think are important to providing a basis for further exploration. I divided these into required, recommended and additional material. Required reading will usually be easier to understand. Recommended or additional material primarily draws on academic sources that would probably read more like gibberish than anything coherent to younger students.

We're going to cover two topics a week; most topics typically entail 2-3 readings and occasionally some videos. Required readings are mostly either news articles, excerpts, or primary source documents.

Content warning: we will read or watch material from politicians, terrorists, and various religious leaders that some students may find disturbing. I have marked some of these. There is, for example, a topic where we will read manifestos from Al-Qaeda leaders. I also marked a couple course materials – a speech by segregationist George Wallace and a video on religious extremism in Israel – that contain some fairly shocking language regarding racial minorities and women. There remains the possibility that other materials may also have similar, sensitive content.

Week 1A: Sociological foundations

Required reading:

- Durkheim, Émile. 1912. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Excerpts available on MyCourses.
- *The Book of Leviticus*. Chapters 24-25. Available online.
- Hobbes, Thomas. 1651. *Leviathan*. Chapter 12, “Of Religion” and Chapter 44, “Of Spiritual Darkness from Misinterpretation of Scripture.” Available online.

Additional resources:

- Graeber, David. 2011. *Debt: The First 5,000 Years*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House Publishing.
- Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion*. Vintage Books.
- Wilson, David Sloan. 2002. *Darwin's Cathedral: Evolution, Religion, and the Nature of Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Week 1B: Historical foundations

Skim:

- 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.

Recommended for skimming:

- 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.
- Kuru, Ahmet T. 2007. "Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion." *World Politics*, 59(4): pp. 568-594.

Additional resources:

- Blaydes Lisa. 2017. "State Building in the Middle East." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20: pp. 487-504.
- Fukuyama, Francis. 2011. *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- 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.

Week 2A: Modern developments

Required 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/>

Pick one of:

- Fukuyama, Francis. 1989. "The End of History?" Available on MyCourses.
- Huntington, Samuel. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" Available on MyCourses.
- Said, Edward. 2001. "The Clash of Ignorance." *The Nation*. October 22, 2001. Available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/clash-ignorance/>

Additional resources:

- 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.
- Gorski, Phillip. 2000. "Historicizing the Secularization Debate." *American Sociological Review*, 65(1): pp. 138-167.
- Karakoc, Ekrem and Birol Baskan. 2012. "Religion in Politics: How Does Inequality Affect Public Secularization?" *Comparative Political Studies*, 45(12): pp. 1510-1541.
- Toft, Monica Duffy, Philpott, Daniel, and Timothy Samuel Shah. 2011. *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. W.W. Norton & Company.

Week 2B: Christianity in the United States

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.

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.

Optional reading – this infamous speech by the segregationist George Wallace is particularly relevant but contains disturbing, racist language:

- Wallace, George C. 1963. "The Inaugural Address of Governor George C. Wallace." Available on MyCourses.

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 3A: Islam

Required reading:

- 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>.
- 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 3B: Judaism

Skim first:

- Gavizon, Ruth. 1999. “Jewish and Democratic? A Rejoinder to the ‘Ethnic Democracy’ Debate.” *Israel Studies*, 4(1): 44-72.
- Kaufman, Michael T. 1994. “Remembering Kahane, and the Woman on the Bridge.” *New York Times*. Published March 6, 1994.

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-8tZqPF14>
- 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)

Optional viewing – this discussion of religion-state relations in Israel is comprehensive but contains content that may be offensive or disturbing. Proceed with caution.

- Gav HaUmah. 2019. “What’s Wrong With A Little Religion?” Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cLH28MpGM9g>

Additional resources:

- Shelef, Nadav. 2010. *Evolving Nationalism: Homeland, Identity, and Religion in Israel, 1925-2005*. Cornell University Press.
- Shindler, Colin. 2017. *The Hebrew Republic: Israel's Return to History*. London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Tepe, Sultan. 2008. *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey*. Stanford University Press.

Week 4A: Non-Abrahamic faiths

Watch:

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

Read in this order:

- Bookbinder, Alex. 2013. "969: The Strange Numerological Basis for Burma's Religious Violence." *The Atlantic*. Published April 9, 2013.
- 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.
- Verghese, Ajay. 2020. "Taking Other Religions Seriously: A Comparative Survey of Hindus in India." *Politics and Religion*, 13(3): pp. 604-638.

Week 4B: Assertive Secularism

Watch:

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

Read:

- Xuecun, Murong. 2014. "Opinion: China's Clampdown on 'Evil Cults.'" *New York Times*. Published June 17, 2014.

Then take a break, switch gears, and read:

- 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

OTHER IMPORTANT DETAILS

Note that this section was copy and pasted from my fall syllabus which was in turn copy and pasted from pre-pandemic times and it is unclear to me if any of it has changed. Feel free to reach out to me if you need assistance with anything.

Disability-Related Accommodations:

Students wishing to request academic accommodations to insure their equitable access and participation in this course should notify the instructor by the second week of class. Authorizations from Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) are generally required. Please contact SSD at (607)777- 2686 to schedule an appointment with the Director or Learning Disabilities Specialist. Their website (www.binghamton.edu/ssd) includes information regarding their Disability Documentation Guidelines. The office is located in UU-119. Do not hesitate to reach out to me personally if you need any help. I myself have an experience with a “learning disability” – Autism Spectrum Disorder – and I know how hard college can be.

Academic Honesty:

Please review university guidelines regarding academic honesty and submit your work, and only your work. Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, can have an adverse effect on your career – you will almost certainly receive a failing grade and you may very well face expulsion. Don’t do it – just muscle out the assignments, please. It will go easier on both of us. If you have any doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or a violation of academic honesty, please consult the university code and/or contact the instructor. Information on plagiarism can be found at <http://www2.binghamton.edu/watson/about/academic-honesty.html>, and tutorials on academic honesty can be found at <http://library.binghamton.edu/research/tutorials/WebTutorials/web/index.html>. All students are required to have completed the “Avoiding Issues of Academic Dishonesty” tutorial on the Binghamton University Libraries website (Tutorial #1 at <http://www.binghamton.edu/libraries/research/tutorials/webtutorials/index.html>).

Stress:

College is hard in general, and the current situation definitely doesn’t help. If you need any personal or academic assistance, please seek support as soon as possible – no one can help if you don’t let us know! If you’re dealing with personal issues you’d rather not entrust to an embattled graduate student, please reach out to any of the following parties:

1. Dean of Students Office: 607-777-2804
2. Decker Student Health Services Center: 607-777-2221
3. University Police: On campus emergency, 911
4. University Counseling Center: 607-777-2772

5. Interpersonal Violence Prevention: 607-777-3062
6. Harpur Advising: 607-777-6305
7. Office of International Student & Scholar Services: 607-777-2510
8. Ombudsman:
 - Main Campus: 607-777-2388
 - University Downtown Center office : 607-777-2388
9. Services for Students with Disabilities: 607-777-2686 (Voice, TTY)

Don't wait until it's too late – mental or physical health issues can have a serious impact on your performance and experience. If you don't let anyone know, we can't help, and it's a lot harder to do something after the fact than it is up front. We're not your enemies – we're here to help if we can.

Sexual Violence:

Please note that should you choose to discuss any matters pertaining to sexual violence with myself, federal and state laws require that I notify the proper authorities. If you would like to disclose your experience confidentially, you can contact University Counseling Center, Decker Student Health Services, Harpurs Ferry, Ombudsman, or Campus Ministry. For more information, please go to <https://www.binghamton.edu/ivp/> or <https://www.binghamton.edu/rmac/title-ix/>.