

Course Syllabus
POL 3369.01
Religion and Politics
Credit Hours: 3
Fall, 2017

Class Location: CHSS 232

Class Meeting Time: 12-12:50 MWF

Instructor: Dr. William E. Carroll

Department: Political Science

Office Location: CHSS 496F

Instructor Contact Information: Phone – 41469; pol_wec@shsu.edu

Office Hours: 10-10:50 MWF

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 fields of political science and 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 course.

Before we can discuss religion and politics, we will have to define both. 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 and the disagreements over what does and does not constitute (a) religion. We will try to get an intellectual handle on this variety. The first half or more 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), religion in American electoral and party politics, and the place of particular religious traditions in American politics and culture. The second half or more of the course will be taken up with historical and contemporary issues of religion at the global level. What is the role of religion in the international system, as a fundamental aspect of state and foreign policy? Change and diversity in Catholicism, including liberation theology in Latin America, Judaism and Zionism in Israel, political Islam, Hindu nationalism in India, Buddhism in Asia: all these are covered. Finally religion and the global order: democracy and human rights, war, conflict resolution, globalization, and concluding with a final discussion of religion in a “secular” age.

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 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

Fowler, et al, Religion and Politics in America, fifth edition (Westview, 2014)

Rowe, Religion and Global Politics (Oxford, 2012)

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: domestic news sources such as the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, USA Today, and the Christian Science Monitor as well as foreign news sources (the latter especially important as we will be looking at religion and politics in all parts of the world), most accessible online. In addition to the various Political Science and International Relations journals available in the library, two specific journals to know about are the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion and Religion and Politics.

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 there is the option of writing a research paper; the details of the paper will be explained in class. A journal may be required.

EXAMS

There will be four exams. The exams will be written, short identifications and an essay. Dates of exams will be announced in class.

GRADING PLAN

Exams will count 80% toward the final grade, the out-of-class assignments 10%; attendance and participation another 10%. If the paper is written then exams will be 50%, attendance and participation 10%, and the paper 30%. 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. Historical legacy of religion in US
2. Religious map of the U.S., notes and handouts
3. US as a secular society?
4. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in US

Fowler, chapters 1-3; Rowe, chapter 3; handouts

First Exam

II. Religion and Domestic Politics

5. Voting and Religion
6. Mobilizing religious interests
7. Religion and political elites
8. Religion and political action and public opinion
9. Civil society and political culture
10. Church and state
11. Latinos, African Americans, and women

Fowler, chapters 4-11; notes and handouts

Second Exam

III. Religion in the International System and Religion and Domestic Bases of State and Foreign Policy

1. Introduction
2. Roman Catholicism: change and diversity
3. Judaism and Zionism
4. Political Islam

Rowe, chapters 1-5

Third Exam

IV. International System continued and Religion and Global Order

- 5. Hindu nationalism in India and the diaspora**
- 6. Buddhism in Asia**
- 7. Democracy and war**
- 8. Conflict resolution**
- 9. Globalization and religion in a “secular” age**

Rowe, chapters 6-12

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. For a more detailed description of University policy go to www.shsu.edu/dept/disability

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.