

Religion & Global Relations

Course Title: Religion and International Relations

Course Number and Section: POLS 5345.001

Scheduled Class Days and Times: Tuesdays from 6p to 8:45p.

Professor: Dr. Robert Sterken

Office Location: Arts & Sciences

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Best way to contact: Email.

Office Hours: Days/Times:

Tuesdays before class and by
appointment in Zoom.

Course Description:

Religion represents one of the most persistent and powerful facets of human social life. Despite predictions by social scientists of the imminent disappearance of religion from modern societies, religion remains important not only in individual lives but also as a factor in social and political life. Rather than making religion seem irrational and irrelevant, the disruptions of modernity have drawn many people to religion as they seek to make sense out of changing circumstances and attempt to protect their interests. If anything, religion is a more important factor in the modern world than it has ever been, as demonstrated in recent decades by the rise of religious nationalism, the emergence of the Christian Nationalism in the United States, the explosion of sectarian conflicts in India, Lebanon, Sudan, the former Yugoslavia, the Caucasus, and Nigeria, and the involvement of Christian churches in revolutionary movements in Latin America, South Africa, and Eastern Europe. This course explores religion as a factor in world affairs, focusing in particular on the impact of religion on politics, both domestic and international. The course takes an interdisciplinary approach, introducing works by scholars trained in political science, international relations, anthropology, and religious and theological studies. The readings are organized around major themes in the study of religion and world affairs but are also chosen to expose students to a variety of approaches to the subject, both qualitative and quantitative, including works written using a range of theoretical lenses. We will be reading the assigned texts with a particular interest in the methodologies employed by the authors, thinking critically about the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches to religion and world affairs.

Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students should:

- Understand and be able to employ the basic terminology and concepts used to talk about religion in world affairs;
- Understand the main theoretical approaches and methodologies used to study religion in world affairs;
- Hold a basic understanding of secularization theory and its limitations, religion in the modern state system, and the relationship of religion to identity politics, conflict and peacemaking, democracy and authoritarianism;
- Hold improved capacity to analyze texts critically and improved ability to write about the role of religion in world affairs.

Course Readings:

1. An Introduction to International Relations and Religion 2nd Edition by Jeffrey Haynes.
2. Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy by Andrew Preston.
3. Religion and Authoritarianism: Cooperation, Conflict, and the Consequences by Karrie Koesel.
4. PDF articles and chapters shared in Canvas.

Assessment of Student Learning:

Attendance and Participation: 10%. This is a seminar (not a lecture) course and students must come to class prepared. Students who have not read are not prepared.

Midterm Examination: 25%. This will be an essay exam given in Canvas.

Research Paper: 35%. Details will be shared in class and in Canvas.

Final Examination: 30%. This will be an essay exam given in Canvas.

Attendance and participation: Zoom and in-class attendance in this seminar is not only mandatory but also very important. It is important that you have your camera on during class and that you are engaged in the class - not in other activities. Your contributions will be invaluable and you need to be in each meeting. You will be allowed two unquestioned absences. After the second absence, each additional absence will result in a full letter-grade reduction (10%) of your attendance grade. Obviously, this is a serious matter, so try to plan ahead. Unquestioned

absences include sickness, job interviews, personal matters, etc. Therefore, if you anticipate having to miss a class at any point during the semester, please plan accordingly. If a University activity will cause you to miss more than two classes please see your instructors. Students who anticipate being absent from class due to a religious observance are requested to inform us by the second class meeting of such absences.

Participation: Participation in Zoom and in-person class means that you are present with your camera on and not engaged in other activities. Reading assignments are listed below. All students are expected to have read the assigned material by the beginning of class. Partial completion of an assignment is unacceptable; coming to class unprepared will result in a full letter-grade reduction (10%) of your participation grade. On the other hand, please understand that while we expect you to have read the assigned readings, we do not necessarily expect you to have mastered them. Like all readers, you will have questions and perhaps even occasional problems with these texts. That's part of the reading process. In such cases, please be sure to bring those problems and questions to class so that we can discuss them as a group. We strongly suggest that you take notes on each text while you read it, focusing on its central ideas, characters, and plot points. Such careful reading will prepare you for discussion, a vital part of this class. Also, be sure to plan ahead. Because of scheduling constraints, reading assignments are not always evenly divided. The participation grade also includes active participation in the group project at the end of the semester.

Schedule of Discussion of Readings:

(Please note: This schedule is subject to revision)

For Examinations please see the "Assignment" or the "Modules" tabs.

January

Week 1 (1-11): In ZOOM introductions! Religion and Politics!

Week 2 (1-18): In ZOOM: Haynes Chapter 1

Week 3 (1-25): In PERSON: Haynes Chapters 2 and 3.

February

Week 4 (2-1): Haynes Chapters 4 and 5.

Week 5 (2-8): Haynes Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

Week 6 (2-15): Haynes Chapters 9 and 10.

Week 7 (2-22): Haynes Chapters 11 and 12.

March

Week 8 (3-1): MidTerm Examination

Week (3-7/3-12): Spring Break!

Week 9 (3-15): Haynes Chapter 13 and Southeast Asia.

Week 10 (3-22): Haynes Chapter 14 and 15.

Week 11 (3-29). Preston Parts I and II.

April

Week 12 (4-5): Preston Parts III and IV.

Week 13 (4-12): Preston Parts V and VI.

Week 14 (4-19): Preston Part VII.

Week 15 (4-26): Preston Part VIII.

Week 16 (4-27): Research Paper and Final Examination due on Friday, April 30.

[Student Resources](#)

[University Policies and Information](#)