

Religion & Politics

POLS 4388.001

Fall 2023 – Arts & Sciences Room 257

Those who say religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion is. ~ Mahatma Gandhi

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(The best way to contact me is via email.)

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:50 to 2:00 and by appointment.

This course takes a panoramic view of religion and politics, focusing on several historical periods and world regions. More than an emphasis on theologies or beliefs, we will examine religious organizations and how they interact with state structures. This course explores the role religion plays in politics and its implication for civil life. As such, the more appropriate title for the course might be "Church & State in World History," with "church" being a generic simplifying term that includes a synagogue, mosque, temple, etc.

Our goal is to understand how various religious institutions, actors and values affect political behavior, and, conversely, how the political actors and institutions affect religious practice. This course will also take a "rational choice" perspective to the study of religion, religious institutions, politics, and governments. The emphasis will be on how humans interact with the incentive structures in their environment.

Required Readings:

American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation
by Jon Meacham: ISBN 9780812976663.

The Kings o Buddhism by Robert Edward Sterken Jr: ISBN 9781538177945.

We will also be viewing and discussing an excellent documentary. **God in America**: PBS Documentary- available online (<https://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>). We will watch and write about all six episodes.

Recommended Readings:

Witham, Larry. 2010. Marketplace of the Gods: How Economics Explains Religion. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Koesel, Karrie. 2014. Religion and Authoritarianism: Cooperation, Conflict, and the Consequences. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gill, Anthony. 2007. The Political Origins of Religious Liberty. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kuran, Timur. 2004. Islam & Mammon: The Economic Predicaments of Islamism. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Special Course Note:

Given the time limitations of the 15-week semester, we will not be able to cover all the important questions raised in the study of religion and politics around the world, nor will we cover all religious traditions equally. Readings and lectures will be drawn largely from the Buddhist and Christian experience, though we will touch upon Animism and Islam at points in the class. The intention of the professor is to provide you with a basic familiarity with the literature and, more importantly, the intellectual tools to pursue your own studies of the subject matter.

Assessment of Learning:

1. God in America Reflection Notes	15%
2. American Gospel Assignments	20%
3. Kings of Buddhism Assignments	20%
4. Midterm Examination	15%
4. Participation & Attendance	15%
5. Final Examination	15%

Grading Scale:

A	93% or greater
B	83 – 92%
C	73 – 82%
D	63 – 72%
F	below 63%

Late Work and Make-Up Exams: Assignments may be turned in late. We all encounter unexpected events in our lives. I encourage you to turn in assignments – even if late! Late assignments will not be penalized if the assignment is late for University approved events, activities, and reasons (<https://catalogs.utt Tyler.edu/en/2020-2021/Catalog/Undergraduate-Academic-Policies/Class-Attendance-Excused-Absences>). Unexcused late assignments will be docked one letter grade. Please pay attention to the due dates in Canvas.

Participation & Attendance Policy: Class attendance is the responsibility of the student. The University expects students to attend and actively participate in all activities for a course. Regular attendance and engagement in class activities/assignments contribute to learning the content. Your participation and attendance in this course make up a full letter grade of your final course grade.

Graded Course Requirements Information:

God in America Reflection Notes: There will be six reflection worksheets due throughout the semester. These are meant to help students think carefully and critically about the readings and video. Each worksheet will consist of two or three guided questions. Answers to each question should be approximately 300 words and should be written in a single paragraph.

American Gospel and Kings of Buddhism Assignments: Students must carefully read and write a short essay on each chapter of each book. Students will write six short (300-500 words) essays for *American Gospel* and eight essays for *Kings of Buddhism*.

Examinations: There will be two examinations in this course. The midterm and final examinations will be drawn from required readings, videos, and in-class discussions. You must be in class to answer questions about our in-class discussions.

Calendar of Topics, Readings, and Due Dates:

Religion & Politics Schedule

<i>Week #</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Class Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
Week 1	8/22	Introductions & The Study of Religion & Politics	American Gospel: Faith and Freedom
Week 2	8/29	Secularization and Functionalism A New Adam: God in America 1	God and Mamon
Week 3	9/5	Religious Identity A New Eden: God in America 2	And None Shall Be Afraid

Week 4	9/12	Religious Beliefs, Doctrines, and Theologies A Nation Reborn: God in America 3	Let Us Die to Make Men Free
Week 5	9/21	Religious Legitimacy A New Light: God in America. 4	Imperfect Though We Are
Week 6	9/28	Religious Institutions & Political Mobilization The Soul of a Nation: God in America 5	The Fight Was On!
Week 7	10/5	Rational Religion Of God and Caesar: God in America 6	Our Hope for Years to Come
		Midterm Examination	
Week 8	10/12	Religious Fundamentalism	Nats, Kings, and Governement Monks
Week 9	10/19	Religion and Conflict	The Golden Shore
Week 10	10/26	Government Religion Policy 1	To Be Burmese is to Be Buddhist
Week 11	11/2	Government Religion Policy 2	Saturday's Son
Week 12	11/9	Political Secularism	Going to Moscow

Week 13 11/16	Religious Convictions	Buddhism, Nat Spirit Wives, and Christian Clerics
Week 14 11/30	Religious Freedom	The Ashokan Road
Week 15 12/7-10	Final Examination	A Different Ashokan Road

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