

GVPT289L: RELIGIONS, BELIEFS, AND WORLD AFFAIRS (I-SERIES)

**University of Maryland
Fall 2017**

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Mon/Wed 10:00-10:50am
Jimenez 0220
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OVERVIEW

This course is intended to introduce students to an increasingly important question: what is the relationship between religion and politics around the world? For a long period in the 20th Century, religion seemed to be decreasing in importance. Eventually, it was thought, religion would simply go away and secularism, development, and rationality would rule the day. In the last generation, however, events like the Iranian Revolution, the rise of the Christian Right, 9/11, the Tibetan monks' protest, the spread of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, and numerous wars fought in the name of God have brought religion back to prominence in world affairs. In this course, we will explore the contemporary impact of religions on politics around the world, through four broad themes: how to understand religion in politics, the relationship between religion and the state, religious groups as sources of conflict and peace, and contemporary religio-political challenges.

The course will be taught from a political science perspective, so students will understand how political science can account for the power of religions. It is not a course on theology or belief systems; instead, we will treat religion as a key identity type and as an important informal institution in shaping power and political outcomes. It is intended, however, for an audience of diverse interests. The overarching goals of the course are that students 1) engage in broad and creative thinking regarding this topic of significant contemporary importance, and 2) develop intellectual tools for tackling challenging topics and big questions.

This course is not designed as a study of individual countries or religions; it is a theme-based course. Nevertheless, in exploring the themes and trends that link religion and politics around the world, we will draw empirical evidence and examples from countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East, as well as the U.S. In addition, you will have opportunities to explore the details of specific countries and/or religions in your own research.

REQUIREMENTS

The course is taught in two lectures per week, on Mondays and Wednesdays from 10:00 – 10:50am in Jimenez Hall 0220, and in Friday discussion sections. In registering for the course, you are making a commitment to attend all of these meetings.

There are four requirements for this course. First, students are expected to come to every meeting and to participate actively in discussions. Second, there will be an in-class midterm exam. Third, you will have the opportunity to research and write on a substantive topic of interest related to religion and politics in a country or part of the world that you choose. Finally, students will take a second exam at the end of the semester. The relative weights accorded to each of these requirements are as follows:

- Midterm Exam (October 11) 25 percent
- Final Exam (Dec 11) 30 percent (no final during exam week)
- Research Paper (Part I Dec 1; Part II Dec 18) 25 percent
- Participation (divided into two parts) 20 percent

READINGS

The readings for this course are essential for understanding the themes and controversies discussed in class; to do well and to get as much as possible out of the course, you will have to do all of them. All readings will be provided via the course website at www.elms.umd.edu. Select GVPT 289L and you'll find the readings for each meeting under the Files tab.

ABSENCE & OTHER POLICIES

If you would like your absence to be excused, you are required to email me regarding your absence, **in advance** of the class if at all possible, and to bring documentation supporting your excused absence when you return. Late papers will be penalized.

Use of computers is prohibited in class. Any student who wishes to receive special permission to use a computer (solely for the purpose of note-taking) must see the professor. Inappropriate or unauthorized use of computers will count as an absence.

Exam grades cannot be changed except in the case of a tabulating mistake. To contest an exam grade, you must inform the professor in writing. The professor will re-grade the entire exam.

Any evidence of academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Dean's office. If you require special assistance or face any extenuating circumstances that could affect your performance in class, please come see me right away. For information on UMD course policies: <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

Given the nature of both religion and politics, we are likely to have lively discussions, to disagree with some of the things we hear and read, and to feel passionately about our own positions. It is critical that we treat our classmates with the utmost respect, while also sharing our own honest views. It is a great skill to be able to listen carefully to opposing arguments and to treat topics of passion with honest analysis. Let's do that during our semester together.

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Aug 28: Introduction – Bringing religion and politics together

- Read this syllabus.
- NPR. 2016. “Attention Students: Put Your Laptops Away.” April 16.
<http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>.

Aug 30: What makes religion different from other political groups and identities?

- Sonu Bedi. 2007. “What is So Special about Religion? The Dilemma of the Religious Exception.” *Journal of Political Philosophy* 15, 2: 235-249.
- D.F. Swaab. 2014. “This is Your Brain on Religion.” *Salon*. Jan 4: 1-7.

Sept 4: Labor Day – No Class

Sept 6: Measuring and testing our ideas about religion and politics

- Esteban, Joan and Laura Mayoral. 2011. “Ethnic and Religious Polarization and Social Conflict.” Working Paper 857.11, *Institut d’Analisi Economica* (CSIC).
- OKCupid. 2014. “The How Religious Are You? Test.”
<http://www.okcupid.com/tests/the-how-religious-are-you-test2>. [Take the paper-version test included in your reading files].
- Winston, Diane. 2010. “What Americans Really Need to Know about Religion.” *Huffington Post*, October 6.

Sept 11: Secularization around the World

- Bruce, Steve. 2002. *God is Dead*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers. Ch. 1.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 2004. “Why didn’t Religion Disappear? Re-examining the Secularization Thesis.” *WZB-Mitteilungen Heft* 105: 7-10.

Sept 13: Reversing Secularization: the Return of Religion

- Shah, Timothy Samuel and Monica Toft. 2006. “Why God is Winning.” *Foreign Policy*, July/Aug. pp. 38-43.
- Miller, Donald. 2014. “Religion Faces an Unrecognizable Future.” In *What is the Future of Religion?* Slate.com Big Ideas Series. <http://www.slate.com/bigideas/what-is-the-future-of-religion>.
- Economist. 2012. “Talmud and Cheesecake: Israel is Moving towards a More Pluralistic Judaism.” July 28.

Sept 18: Classic views on the political importance of religion

- Max Weber. 1904 [1958]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. New York: Scribner’s Sons Press: Ch. 5, 155-183.
- Karl Marx. 1843 [2009]. “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right: Introduction.” *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* [translated], pp. 1-5.

Sept 20: Religion and the State: State-sponsored Religions

- Fazili, Yousra. 2010. “Between Mullah’s Robes and Absolutism: Conservatism in Iran.” *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 30, 1: 39-55.
- Madsen, Richard. 2007. “China’s Confounding Religious Revival.” *Current History* 16, 701: 188-295.

Sept 25: Religion and the State: State-sponsored Restrictions of Religion

- Asad, Talal. 2006. “French Secularism and the Islamic Veil Affair.” *Hedgehog Review* (Spring & Summer): 93-106.
- Economist. 2014. “The State and Islam: Converting the Preachers.” December 13.

Sept 27: Religion and the State: Public vs. Private, Separation of Religion & State

- Casanova, Jose. 1992. “Public and Private Religions.” *Social Research* 59, 1: 17-57. [Skim; read for a grasp of the public vs. private distinction]
- Washington Post. 2015. “Muslim Community Wins Day Off of School on Major Holiday Next Year.” Nov 10.

- Charlton, Angela. 2016. "AP Explains: Why burkini swimsuits are causing controversy." Associated Press via StarTribune. August 25.

Oct 2: Religion and Democracy

- Stepan, Alfred. 2000. "Religion, Democracy, and the Twin Tolerations." *Journal of Democracy* 11, 4: 37-57.
- Caryl, Christian. "Want to Beat the Islamic State? Help Tunisia." *Foreign Policy* Nov 21.

Oct 4: Religion and Social Movements

- King, Sallie B. 2009. "Socially Engaged Buddhism: Introduction." In King, ed. *Socially Engaged Buddhism*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press: 1-13.
- Caryl, Christian. 2014. "Hong Kong's Religious Revolutionaries: Do Christians Make Good Rebels?" *Foreign Policy*, Oct 4.

Oct 9: Religion and Party Politics

- Kalyvas, Stathis. 2000. "Commitment Problems in Emerging Democracies: The Case of Religious Parties." *Comparative Politics* 32, 4: 379-398.
- US News & World Report. 2011. "Religion and Party Affiliation Go Hand In Hand." April 20.

Oct 11: ** MIDTERM **

Oct 16: The Clash of Civilizations

- Huntington, Samuel P. 1993. "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72, 3: 22-49.
- Said, Edward. 2001. "The Clash of Ignorance." *The Nation*, Oct 22.

Oct 18: Fundamentalisms

- Armstrong, Karen. 2006. "Resisting Modernity: The Backlash Against Secularism." *Harvard International Review*: 40-45.

- Cox, Harvey. 2009. “Why Fundamentalism Will Fail.” *Boston Globe*. 2008.

Oct 23: Religion and Conflict

- Toft, Monica, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Shah. 2009. “Religious Civil Wars: Nasty, Brutish, and Long.” In *God’s Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. New York: Norton & Company. Ch. 6.
- Longman, Timothy. 2001. “Church Politics and the Genocide in Rwanda.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 31, 2: 163-186.

Oct 25: Religion and Terrorism

- Berman, Eli. 2009. “Why Are Religious Terrorists So Lethal?” In *Radical, Religious, and Violent: The New Economics of Religious Terrorism*, Boston: MIT Press. Ch. 1.
- Washington Post. 2014. “How the Islamic State Evolved in an American Prison.” Nov 4.
- Bin Uzayr, Sufyan. 2014. “Buddhism and Ethnic Cleansing in Myanmar.” *Foreign Policy in Focus*. Aug 19.

Oct 30: Religion and Conflict Resolution

- Nepstad, Sharon Erickson. 2004. “Religion, Violence, and Peacemaking,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 43(3): 297-301.
- Ouellet, Julie X. 2013. “Women and Religion in Liberia’s Peace and Reconciliation.” *Critical Intersections in Education* 1, 1: 12-20.

Nov 1: Religion, Cooperation, and Peace

- Smock, David R., ed. 2006. “Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War.” *United States Institute of Peace, PeaceWorks Series*. pp. 1-20.
- Obama’s Speech in Cairo. June 4, 2009. Printed in the New York Times.

Nov 6: Religion and Positive Social Outcomes

- Washington Post. 2014. “Religion is a Sure Route to Happiness.” January 24.

- Bulbulia, Joseph and Andrew Mahoney. 2008. "Religious Solidarity: The Hand Grenade Experiment." *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 8: 295-320.

Nov 8: Religion as an Alternative to Danger, Instability, and Violence

- Bazan, Louis E. et al. 2010. "Migrant Gangs, Religion, and Tattoo Removal." *Peace Review: a Journal of Social Justice* 14, 4: 379-383.
- Cammett, Melanie. 2014. "How Hezbollah Helps (and What they Get out of It)." *Washington Post*. Oct 2.

Nov 13: Religion and Civil Liberties

- *Washington Post*. 2014. "How Ebola is Fueling Prejudice Against Gays." Oct 24.
- *Foreign Policy*. 2014. "Why Is It So Easy to Arrest a Person for Blasphemy in Pakistan?" July 1.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. 1963. Letter from Birmingham Jail.

Nov 15: Religion, Humanitarianism, and Foreign Policy Interventions

- Preston, Andrew. 2012. "Why Is American Foreign Policy So Religious?" *Religion & Politics*. May 7.
- Perry, Michael. 2000. "The Idea of Human Rights." *Oxford University Press*. pp. 11-42.

Nov 20: Religion and Gender

- Blaydes, Lisa and Drew Linzer. 2008. "The Political Economy of Women's Support for Fundamentalist Islam." *World Politics* 60, 4: 576-609
- Marshall, Katherine. "Faith, Gender, and International Relations." In Timothy Shah et al, eds. *Rethinking Religion*, Oxford, Ch. 11.

Nov 22: No Class – Happy Thanksgiving

Nov 27: Religion and Development

- Thomas, Scott. 2004. "Faith and Foreign Aid: How the World Bank Got Religion and Why it Matters." *The Brandywine Review of Faith and International Affairs*: 21-29.
- Economist. 2011. "Holy Relevance: Faith Can Influence Economic Behavior, but Not Always Directly." Oct 29.

Nov 29: Religion, Geography, and the Environment

- Wihbey, John. 2012. "Green Muslims, Eco-Islam, and Evolving Climate Change Consciousness." Yale Climate Connections, April 11.
- Washington Post. 2015. "Why Pope Francis is About to Make a Dramatic Wave in the Climate Change Debate." April 28.

***** RESEARCH PAPER PART I DUE ON FRIDAY, DEC 1.**

Dec 4: Religion and Globalization

- Furet, Francois. 2015. "How to be Both Under God and Under the European Union." In *Nations Under God: The Geopolitics of Faith in the 21st Century*. pp. 192-202.
- Ferrer, Jorge N. 2012. "The Future of World Religion: Four Scenarios, One Dream." *Tikkun Magazine* (Winter): 14-16, 63-64.
- Economist. 2007. "A Modern Prophet Goes Global: The Mormon Faith is Spreading, but is it a World Religion?" Jan 4.

Dec 6: Conclusion – Summarizing Religion's Place in World Politics

- No Reading.

Dec 11: *** FINAL ***

***** RESEARCH PAPER PART II DUE ON MONDAY, DEC 18**

Grading Scale

93 – 100	A
90 – 93	A-
87 – 90	B+
83 – 87	B
80 – 83	B-
77 – 80	C+
73 – 77	C
70 – 73	C-
67 – 70	D+
63 – 67	D
60 – 63	D-
< 60	F

Calculation of Participation Grades

Participation grades will be assigned twice, once at the midpoint of the semester and once again at the end of the semester (each time worth 10 percentage points of the total grade). The 20 percentage points for participation will be distributed as follows:

- 4 points for lecture attendance
- 10 points for section attendance
- 6 points for section contributions, attentiveness, and engagement

Example Participation Grades

A student comes to every lecture, every section, listens, shares her/his views, responds to questions, and demonstrates familiarity with the readings. $4 + 10 + 5/6 = 19$ or 20 A

A student comes to every lecture and section but never engages, responds to questions, shows attentiveness to others, or demonstrates familiarity with the readings. $4 + 10 + 0/1 = 14$ or 15 C

A student comes to every lecture but doesn't go to sections. $4 + 0 + 0/1 = 4$ or 5 F

A student comes to most lectures and she/he has two unexcused absences from sections. He/she contributes occasionally but doesn't show familiarity with readings or offer thoughtful insights. $3 + 8 + 2/3/4 =$ between 13 and 15 C

A student comes to every lecture, every section, and occasionally responds to questions, shows attentiveness, and once in a while comments on a reading. $4 + 10 + 3/4 = 17$ or 18 B