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](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.

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


Sept 4: Labor Day – No Class

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


Sept 11: Secularization around the World


Sept 13: Reversing Secularization: the Return of Religion


Sept 18: Classic views on the political importance of religion


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


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


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


**Oct 2: Religion and Democracy**


**Oct 4: Religion and Social Movements**


**Oct 9: Religion and Party Politics**


**Oct 11: **MIDTERM** **

**Oct 16: The Clash of Civilizations**


**Oct 18: Fundamentalisms**


**Oct 23: Religion and Conflict**


**Oct 25: Religion and Terrorism**


**Oct 30: Religion and Conflict Resolution**


**Nov 1: Religion, Cooperation, and Peace**


**Nov 6: Religion and Positive Social Outcomes**


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


**Nov 13: Religion and Civil Liberties**

- Foreign Policy. 2014. “Why Is It So Easy to Arrest a Person for Blasphemy in Pakistan?” July 1.

**Nov 15: Religion, Humanitarianism, and Foreign Policy Interventions**


**Nov 20: Religion and Gender**


**Nov 22: No Class – Happy Thanksgiving**
**Nov 27: Religion and Development**


**Nov 29: Religion, Geography, and the Environment**


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

**Dec 4: Religion and Globalization**


**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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93 – 100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90 – 93</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87 – 90</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 – 87</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80 – 83</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 – 80</td>
<td>C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73 – 77</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70 – 73</td>
<td>C-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67 – 70</td>
<td>D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 – 67</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 – 63</td>
<td>D-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 60</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 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. \( 4 + 10 + \frac{5}{6} = 19 \text{ or } 20 \)  
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. \( 4 + 10 + 0/1 = 14 \text{ or } 15 \)  
\[ C \]

A student comes to every lecture but doesn’t go to sections. \( 4 + 0 + 0/1 = 4 \text{ or } 5 \)  
\[ F \]

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 are offer thoughtful insights. \( 3 + 8 + \frac{2}{3}/4 = \) 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. \( 4 + 10 + \frac{3}{4} = 17 \text{ or } 18 \)  
\[ B \]