

Religion & Politics

POLS/RELI 4388/3350.001

Fall 2021 – Arts & Sciences Room 257

Professor: Robert Sterken

Office: Arts & Sciences 116

Phone: 903.566.6279

Email: rsterken@uttyler.edu

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

Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10:50 to 12:30 and by appointment.

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

~ Mahatma Gandhi

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 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 and Videos:

An Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice 2nd Edition by Jonathan Fox.

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 14-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.

This class will meet face-to-face on Tuesdays from 12:30 to 1:50p and online on Thursdays. Thursday's class will be video viewing.

Assignments and weights/point values:

1. God in America Reflection Worksheets	30%
2. Analytical Paper	20%
3. Midterm Examination	20%
4. Participation & Attendance	10%
5. Final Examination	20%

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 400 words and should be written in a single paragraph.

Religion and Politics Analytical Paper: During the semester, students will write an analytical, five-to-seven-page paper, double-spaced, 12-point font, type-written essay with 1-inch margins. In this paper, the student will be asked to explore and discuss aspects of the readings, videos, and class discussions. This paper must have and support a thesis.

Examinations: There will two examinations in this course. The midterm and the 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				
Week #	Date	Class Topic	Readings	Date Due
Week 1	8/24	Introductions & The Study of Religion & Politics	Fox Chapter 1	
Week 2	8/31	Secularization and Functionalism	Fox Chapter 2	
	9/5	A New Adam Reflection Note	God in America 1	Sep 5 at 11:50p
Week 3	9/7	Religious Identity	Fox Chapter 3	
Week 4	9/14	Religious Beliefs, Doctrines, and Theologies	Fox Chapter 4	
	9/12	A New Eden Reflection Note	God in America 2	Sep 12 at 11:59p
Week 5	9/21	Religious Legitimacy	Fox Chapter 5	
Week 6	9/28	Religious Institutions & Political Mobilization	Fox Chapter 6	
		A Nation Reborn Reflection Note	God in America 3	Sep 26 at 11:59p
Week 7	10/5	Rational Religion	Fox Chapter 7	
		Midterm Examination		Oct 10 at 11:59p
Week 8	10/12	Religious Fundamentalism	Fox Chapter 8	
		A New Light Reflection Note	God in America. 4	Oct 17 at 11:59p
Week 9	10/19	Religion and Conflict	Fox Chapter 9	
Week 10	10/26	Government Religion Policy 1	Fox Chapter 10	
		The Soul of a Nation Reflection Note	God in America 5	Oct 24 at 11:59p
Week 11	11/2	Government Religion Policy 2	Fox Chapter 11	
Week 12	11/9	Political Secularism	Fox Chapter 12	
Week 13	11/16	Religious Freedom	Fox Chapter 13	
		Of God and Caesar Reflection Note	God in America 6	Nov 14 at 11:59p
Week 14	11/30	Religious Freedom	Sterken Chapter 2	
		Religion and Politics Analytical Paper		Dec 5 at 11:59p
Week 15	12/7-10	Final Examination		Dec 10 at 11:59p