Religion in U.S. Public Life

Dept. of Religious Studies
Dr. Jonathan Moore
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REL 241-01 — Spring 2006
Steiner 202
Phone: 269-4352
MWF 11:00am-11:50am
8:30am-10am
Steiner Hall, Room 306
Office hours: W
Tu/Th 2:30pm-4pm, or by appt.

NOTE: If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know during the first week of class so that your needs can be appropriately addressed. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to Joyce Stern, the Associate Dean and Director of Academic Advising, who can be found in the lower level of the Forum (x3702)
Religion in U.S. Public Life

Course description
Religion remains critically important to an overwhelming majority of Americans: ninety percent believe in God and around forty percent claim to attend some form of worship each week. These religious believers find themselves to be citizens of a democratic republic which, by original design, makes it challenging to negotiate boundaries between matters of faith and matters of state.

This course will acquaint you with the complex interrelationship of religion and politics in the United States. Our questions will be historical: How has religious faith impacted American public life? How has the American democratic experiment shaped American religion? In what ways do religion and politics continue to affect each other? Our questions will also be constructive: How should religion and politics interact? What does the American experience tell us about the possibilities, and limitations, of allowing these spheres to overlap? Our questions will also be personal: How should individual beliefs about reality and human purpose—whether religious or irreligious—inform one’s citizenship in diverse republic? How should the government treat those whose religious tenets and practices compete with democratic values?

In asking — and venturing to answer — these questions, our sessions together will blend lecture and discussion. In order for our conversations to be productive, students need to complete assigned readings before class and should be prepared to both answer and raise appropriate questions. Your participation grade will reflect both your willingness and your ability to engage the assigned materials and your peers.

Required readings


James W. Fraser, Between Church and State: Religion and Public Education in a Multicultural America (Palgrave Macmillan, )


Online readings / class handouts

**Evaluation**

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<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest group journal</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Issue papers</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Final paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**On participation:**

In order to participate, it seems reasonable to assume that you must be in class. Attendance will be taken at each session. More than two unexcused absences will hurt your participation grade. If you are absent, you are responsible any information, materials, and assignments for that day.

Our time together will be most productive, and most enjoyable, when everyone is well prepared. Students must read and reflect upon assigned materials ahead of time, and come to class ready to engage one another in conversation. You will sometimes be called upon to deliver questions or comments about the materials in advance of class. And at least once, each of you will be officially designated as the discussion leader for that day’s session.

The percentage of your final grade assigned to “participation” places a substantial responsibility upon your shoulders, but this also true for me. Assessing a student’s participation can be an inexact science, but I will try to dispel whatever aura of mystery customarily attaches to such judgments. At least twice during the semester, I will not only tell you what your participation grade is to that point, I will also provide you with concrete feedback on what you might do to improve it (should this be necessary). You may also request a status report on your participation at any time during the semester. By the time May arrives, in other words, there should be little confusion about either what your participation grade will be or how it got that way.
Generally speaking, here is how I will evaluate your participation:

A - Students demonstrate that they have read and reflected upon the assigned materials. Students consistently offer insightful comments, questions, and evaluations of the readings, and also respond thoughtfully to their peers in class discussions.

B - Students demonstrate they have read and reflected upon the materials. Students occasionally provide comments, raise questions, and engage peers in class discussions.

C - Students demonstrate at least a nodding acquaintance with the assigned materials, and infrequently offer questions or join in class discussions.

D - Students are unfamiliar with assigned materials, do not respond adequately to questions, and customarily ignore class discussions.

F - Students seem to have stumbled into the wrong class, demonstrating a willful ignorance of assigned materials and an unjust desire to merely borrow the precious oxygen of their peers during class discussions.

Instructions for Issue Papers

Religion in U.S. Public Life

To more fully understand how religion shapes American public culture, students will write five short papers analyzing a contemporary issue. Each paper will briefly summarize the issue and then creatively analyze the subject in light of course readings and themes.

Each paper must be grounded in a contemporary example involving religion in public life. This means that national newspapers and magazines are good places to look for material. Other acceptable alternatives include television news segments, documentaries, feature films, and web sites. I encourage you to be creative in selecting your resources, but if you choose something not on this list, please consult with the instructor for prior approval.

After summarizing the material, address the issues raised. How does the story relate (or not relate) to course readings and themes? How is the issue covered? Is your resource biased toward a particular view of how religion and politics should (not) interact? How do the issues raised relate to other church-state concerns? What does the story reveal about a particular religious community’s understanding of political activism? Are there any gaps in the coverage of the issue? Are you left with any unanswered questions? These sorts of inquiries should guide your analysis.
Some further details to keep in mind:

- **Resources**: Each paper must rely upon a different source. You must use something from television for one of your papers; you may use a class assignment for one — and only one — of your papers. Please cite your source at the end of each paper.

- **Length**: Papers should run from three to four pages in length. Excess exuberance will be penalized less than having nothing to say, but try to keep within the suggested boundaries.

- **Content**: Your summary of the material(s) should be no more than one-third of your paper. This is an analysis, not merely a summary of the news. I’m most interested in what you think, how you see things, so make sure you provide me with a heavy dose of your own perspective.

- **Deadlines**: Papers are due at the beginning of class on the day of the deadline. If you’re absent on the day when a paper is due, it is your responsibility to email your paper to me by noon. Anything received after this time will be unceremoniously ignored.

- **Evaluation**: Although you are being asked to think on paper, these are not breezy email ramblings — please edit them carefully. You will get better at this as the course goes on, and I will grade accordingly.

### Course Schedule

**Jan. 23 (M)**  
Introduction

**Jan. 25 (W)**  
Overview

  Read:  Wald 1-22

**Jan. 27 (F)**  
Colonial DNA

  Read:  LofC I:  America as a Religious Refuge: The 17th Century  
         LofC II:  Religion in 18th-Century America  
         LofC III:  Religion and the American Revolution
Jan. 30 (M) Colonial DNA
Read: Morone, 1-122

Feb. 1 (W) The Real American Revolution I
Read: LofC IV: Religion & the Congress of the Confederation, 1774-1789
LofC V: Religion and the State Governments
LofC VI: Religion and the Federal Government
LofC VII: Religion and the New Republic

Feb. 3 (F) The Real American Revolution II
Read: Wald 55-90

ISSUE PAPER #1 DUE

PART 2:
AFRICAN-AMERICAN RELIGION IN PUBLIC LIFE

Feb. 6 (M) Whose Bible? Slavery and Abolition
Read: Morone, 123-221

Feb. 8 (W) Whose Bible? Slavery and Abolition
Read: Douglass, What to the Slave is the 4th of July? *
Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address *

Feb. 10 (F) Civil Rights I: Martin
Read: King, Letter from Birmingham Jail *

Feb. 13 (M) Civil Rights II: Malcolm
Read: The Ballot or the Bullet *

ISSUE PAPER #2 DUE

Feb. 15 (W) Civil Rights III: Mass Movement
No reading (in-class screening: “Eyes on the Prize”)
**Evening screening: “Eyes on the Prize” (TBA)**
Feb. 16 (Th)  **Evening screening: “Eyes on the Prize” (TBA)**

Feb. 17 (F)  Civil Rights IV: Beyond the 1960s

  Read:  Wald, 276-285

**PART 3: THE VICTORIAN QUEST FOR VIRTUE**

Feb. 20 (M)  Whose Virtue? The Challenge of Polygamy

  Read:  Reynolds v. United States (1878) *
         Davis v. Beason (1890) *
         Woodruff Manifesto *

Feb. 22 (W)  Gendered Purity

  Read:  Morone, 222-280

Feb. 24 (F)  Temperance and Prohibition

  Read:  Morone, 281-349

Feb. 27 (M)  NO CLASS — Interest Group updates

Mar. 1 (W)  NO CLASS — Research paper consultations

**PART 4: COMMITTING CATHOLICISM IN PUBLIC**

Mar. 3 (F)  Cold War Morality

  Read:  Morone, 378-406

**ISSUE PAPER #3 DUE**

Mar. 6 (M)  A Papist for President?!

  Read:  Kennedy speech *
         Wald, 246-68

Mar. 8 (W)  Catholicism III: Faith-full Politics, and Heresy

  Read:  Cuomo speech *
PART 5: RELIGION AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mar. 10 (F) Dis- and Re-Establishment

Read: Fraser, 1-48

Mar. 13 (M) Common and Uncommon Schools

Read: Fraser, 49-66, 83-126

Mar. 15 (W) Uncommon People: Immigration and Nativism

Read: Fraser, 105-126

Mar. 17 (F) Religious Pluralism + Big Govt. = Big Problems

Read: Fraser, 127-154

ISSUE PAPER #4 DUE

MARCH 18–APRIL 2 SPRING BREAK

April 3 (M) Culture Wars in the Schools

Read: Fraser, 155-182

April 5 (W) Culture Wars in the Schools

Read: Fraser, 183-215

April 7 (F) Culture Wars in the Schools

Read: Fraser, 217-240

April 10 (M) Scientists, Creationists, and the Politics of Religious Knowledge

Read: handouts *

April 12 (W) no class
PART 6: THE “CHRISTIAN RIGHT”

April 14 (F)  Context
Read: Wacker, “The Christian Right” *

ISSUE PAPER #5 DUE

April 17 (M)  Beginnings of Mobilization
Read: McGirr, 1-146

April 19 (W)  Birth of a Movement
Read: McGirr, 147-216

April 21 (F)  Moral Majority?
Read: McGirr, 217-274

**Evening Screening: “With God on Our Side”** (TBA)

April 24 (M)  Moral Majority?

**Evening screening: “With God on Our Side”** (TBA)

April 26 (W)  Foreign Policy
Read: Weber, “How Evangelicals Became Israel’s Best Friends” *
Wald 102-08

DOES RELIGION BELONG IN POLITICS?

April 28 (F)  Religion in Public Life: Problems and Possibilities
Read: Wald, 294-319

May 1 (M)  Religion in Public Life: Problems and Possibilities
Read: McConnell, “Believers as Equal Citizens” *
May 3 (W)  How Should We Argue?

Read:  Greenawalt, Part I: Liberal Democracy and Publicly Accessible Reasons

May 5 (F)  How Should We Argue?

Read: Greenawalt, Part II: Political Choices and Religious Convictions

May 8 (M)  How Should We Argue?

Read: Greenawalt, Part III: Dialogue, Official Action, and Constitutionality

May 10 (W)  Contemporary Snapshot

Read: Morone, 450-498

May 12 (F)  Conclusion

MAY 15-19 Final Exam Week

May 19 (F)  FINAL PAPER DUE AT NOON