Syllabus
REL 241: Religion in U.S. Public Life

Spring 2007
MWF 1:15-2:05
Steiner 306

Prof. Tyler Roberts Steiner Hall 203
Office Hours: T, Th 1-3 x-4472; robertst@grinnell.edu

Course Description
This course will explore historical and contemporary debates in the United States over the place of religion in public life. We will examine the Constitutional clauses on religious liberty and establishment, discuss the role of legislatures and courts with respect to these clauses, and explore contemporary social, ethical and political issues where questions about the links between religion and politics are particularly pressing.

Course Requirements and Grading
1) Class Participation (25% of final grade):
Your attendance and your active participation in class discussion are essential. You are expected to have done all the assigned reading for each class session and to come to class (with the readings in hand) having formulated and ready to discuss specific questions and/or observations about the reading. You also are expected to contribute to the Blackboard discussion forum once per week.

2) Group Work (25%)
You will be responsible for two group projects. First, groups of 2-3 students will lead eight designated “Friday discussions.” The groups will be responsible for preparing and posting a reading guide for the day’s assignment, discussing with me an agenda for the class discussion, and delivering a short presentation at the beginning of the class. Second, groups of 3-4 students will identify and research a contemporary issue in which significant questions of the role of religion with respect to social, political and/or ethical discourse are being raised in the U.S. today. Groups will present on this work during the last two weeks of the semester. The presentations will involve assigning readings on the issue and leading a class discussion.

3) Papers (25%)
Two papers will be assigned during the course of the semester. A five-page paper on Stephen Carter’s The Culture of Disbelief will be due on March 7. A 12 pp. paper will be due on May 14 and will examine the intelligent design controversy and the court case Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District (2005). The final paper will require that you read the Kitzmiller decision, which has been assigned for April 27. Since the decision is 139 pages long it should be started well in advance of this date. The decision can be found at http://www.pamd.uscourts.gov/kitzmiller/kitzmiller_342.pdf.

4) Final Exam (25%): The exam is scheduled for 2:00 pm, Thursday, May 17.

Reading and Assignment Schedule
Week 1:
Jan 22: Introduction
Jan 26: Carter, 67-101

Week 2:
Jan 29: James A. Morone, Hellfire Nation, skim Introduction, read pp. 31-74, 100-116
Library of Congress, “Religion and the Founding of the American Republic”: I-III
Jan 31: Adams and Emmerich, A Nation Dedicated to Religious Liberty: Forward, Introduction and pp. 3-20, 97-102
Feb 2: Adams and Emmerich, 21-42, 102-121
Library of Congress, IV

Week 3:
Feb 5: Adams and Emmerich, 32-72
Library of Congress, V-VII
Feb 7: Carter, 105-123
Feb 9: Friday Discussion: Lemon vs. Kurtzman
(http://www.findlaw.com/casecode/supreme.html)

Week 4:
Feb 12: Adams and Emmerich, 74-96
Feb 14: Carter, 124-155
Feb 16: Friday Discussion: Employment Division vs. Smith
(http://www.findlaw.com/casecode/supreme.html)

Week 5:
Feb 19: Carter, 156-210
Feb 21: Carter, 213-262
Feb 23: Friday Discussion: Carter, 263-277

Week 6:
Feb 26: Marone, 123-168
Feb 28: Marone, 169-221
Mar 2: Friday Discussion: Frederic Douglass, "What to the Slave is the 4th of July"
(http://douglassarchives.org/doug_a10.htm)
Martin Luther King, "Letter from the Birmingham Jail"
Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"

Week 7:
Mar 5: Eyes on the Prize
Mar 7: Eyes on the Prize
Paper #1 Due
Mar 9: Eyes on the Prize

Week 8:
Mar 12: James W. Fraser, Between Church and State, 1-65
Mar 14: Fraser, 67-126
Mar 16: Friday Discussion: Re-read Carter on Scopes

Week 9:
Apr 2: Marone, 318-406
Apr 4: Marone, 407-497
Apr 6: Friday Discussion: Fraser, 127-153

Week 10:
Apr 9: Christian Smith, Christian America?: 1-60
Ralph Reed, “Separation of Church and State”
Mark Noll, “Evangelicals in the American Founding”
Apr 11: Smith, 61-91
Graham Walker, “Illusory Pluralism”

Week 11:
Apr 16: Smith, 92-128
Apr 18: Rorty, “Religion as a Conversations Stopper”
Michael McConnell, “Believers as Equal Citizens”
Apr 20: No Class
Week 12:
Apr 23: Smith, 129-159
Fraser, 155-182
Apr 25: Fraser, 183-215
Apr 27: Friday Discussion: Kitzmiller vs. Dover Area School District

Week 13: Group Presentations
April 30:
May 2:
May 4:

Week 14: Group Presentations and Conclusion
May 7:
May 9: Smith, 160-197
May 11:

*reserve readings

Texts for purchase at the Bookstore.
Adams and Emmerich, A Nation Dedicated to Liberty
Stephen Carter, The Culture of Disbelief
James W. Fraser, Between Church and State
James A. Marone, Hellfire Nation
Christian Smith, Christian America?