

PSC/RST 407K/607K Comparative Religion and Politics

Wintermester 2019

Number of Credits

3

Instructor

Dr. Ian M. Hartshorn

Catalog Description

Good etiquette encourages us not to discuss religion and politics. This course throws good etiquette out the window. What happens when God and politics mix? How do religious parties enter politics and shape democracy around the world? How do scholars of politics deal with religious life? What is “secularism” anyway? In this course we explore what happens when political life mixes with issues of ultimate concern. By exploring how states have used, abused, or controlled religion (and vice-versa) we will try to come to an understanding of how these two powerful forces shape our lives. Through theoretical readings, as well as two case studies—one majority Christian, one majority Muslim— students will come to a better understanding of why so much of world politics centers on “Church/Mosque/Temple/Shrine and State.” This course is reading intensive with discussion designed to supplement, not replace, reading.

Required Textbooks/Materials

None, all provided through WebCampus

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to

- in exams, classify some of the major theories explaining religion and politics by epistemology;
- in discussion and short writing assignments, apply theories to compare religious-based political parties;
- identify and distinguish religious-based political parties from alternative party bases;
- summarize the history of several successful religious-based political parties;
- analyze the origins and motives of religious-based political parties; and
- appraise and argue for political methods for managing religious-based political parties in the context of diversity and equity.

For Graduate Students

- Synthesize course material with their own research agenda to gain a deeper understanding of the course material by applying theories to their research; and
- Demonstrate in a research paper their ability to formulate research questions following one-on-one meetings with the instructor

First Week of Materials/Assignments

The following schedule is subject to change:

- January 2:* How Social Scientists Approach Religion
Selections From: *Nine Theories of Religion* Daniel L. Pals
- January 3:* Modernization Theory and Its Discontents
Religion and Modernization Steve Bruce, ed. Chapters 1 and 2
The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics
Chapter 1
- January 4:* Secularism and Religion in the Public Sphere
Routledge Handbook of Religion and Politics Chapter 12 "Religion and the State"
"World Separation of Religion and State Into the 21st Century" Jonathan Fox
Comparative Political Studies
"Contemporary Secularity and Secularism" Barry A. Kosmin
"Religion in the Public Sphere" Jurgen Habermas *European Journal of Philosophy*
- January 7:* Critiques of Secularism
"The Evolution of Secularism in France: Between Two Civil Religions" Jean Bauberot in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*
"What Might an Anthropology of Secularism Look Like?" Talal Asad in *Formations of the Secular*
"Islam and Secularism" Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im in *Comparative Secularism in a Global Age*

Course Details

This class is an introduction to comparative studies of religion and politics. No prior knowledge of religion is necessary. The course looks at religion from sociological, political, historical, and cultural perspectives. It combines rigorous readings, lively discussion, documentaries and films, and in-class writing to help students better understand these fundamental forces that shape our world.

Grade Breakdown

The point distribution for the course is:

Assignment	Percentage
Midterm	20
Discussion Leading	15
Participation/Attendance	15
Short Paper	15
Final Exam	25
Quizzes	10
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>

The percentage distribution for the course is:

Letter	Percentage
A	94–100
A-	90–93
B+	87–89
B	84–86
B-	80–83
C+	77–79
C	74–76
C-	70–73
D+	67–69
D	65–66
D-	62–64
F	below 62