

Religion and Politics

Michaelmas 2020

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Teaching pattern: Tuesday 10am-12pm starting on 13th October 2020

Assessment deadline: 4th December 2020

Course Description

Religion and politics are controversial topics, and the nature of their intersection has in recent decades become a hotly debated issue across the social sciences. What is the role of religion in shaping politically relevant ideas, actions, identities, and institutions? This is the overarching empirical question with which the course is concerned. We will explore it in relation to a variety of substantive topics, including regime legitimation, state formation, nation building, violent conflict, public policy making, electoral politics, and political mobilization. The course aims to provide students with conceptual and analytical tools for studying the role of religion in processes of political contestation, cooperation, and change.

The course reflects a commitment to the idea that the study of religion and politics is best informed by a broad interdisciplinary approach. It will therefore introduce students to a diversity of theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and an equally varied set of religious, regional, and historical contexts. The course is structured around different ways of conceptualizing religion. We will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of approaches that treat religion as (1) a byproduct of innate features of human cognition, (2) a social imaginary, (3) an identity marker, (4) a market, (5) discourse, (6) practices; and (7) a social field.

Throughout the term, we will explore the interactions between religious and political life in relation to three central theoretical and conceptual issues. The first concerns the relationship between top-down (elite) and bottom-up (popular) processes to reproduce or manipulate religious communities, discourses, and organizations—and their relationship to the polity. Religions can, like language and culture more broadly, for our purposes be thought of as “spontaneous orders” (Hayek). While rulers, groups, and organizations may try to fashion and refashion such orders, it is ultimately beyond their capacity to create or control them. The question is therefore: To what extent, and how successfully, do the theoretical frameworks we encounter in the readings integrate top-down (intentional) and bottom-up (mostly unintentional) drivers of religio-political change? The second issue is whether it might be possible to reconcile the different approaches and arguments we encounter into an integrated theoretical framework. If so, what might it look like? The third conceptual issue concerns the meaning and use of “religion” in social scientific explanations and arguments. As we will see, agreement on a universal, substantive definition has so far eluded scholars. Some, furthermore, argue that the

idea of religion as a distinct category, in contradistinction to “the secular,” reflects a modern and specifically Western and Protestant Christian understanding which resulted from historical experiences unique to Europe. If so, then it may in other cultural contexts be difficult to separate a religious sphere of activity from politics (and economy, science, etc.). In light of this critique, are social scientists nevertheless justified in using “religion” as a category of analysis? Can they, for instance, treat religion as a causal factor or explanatory variable, that, in conjunction with other factors (economic, social, historical, etc.), influences political behaviour and produces political outcomes?

Course Organisation and Expectations:

In the reading list below, readings are divided into three categories. *Required* readings are compulsory. *Recommended* readings may be helpful if you wish to explore a topic further or when you write your assessment essay. *Further* readings are primarily intended to serve as a resource if you are interested in writing a dissertation on some aspect of religion and politics.

Students are expected to participate actively in discussion. As you do the required readings in preparation for the seminar, please keep the following questions in mind:

- 1) What is the central argument of each reading?
- 2) What is the weakest point in the argument? Why?
- 3) To what extent and in what ways do the arguments in different readings diverge with respect to basic assumptions? Basic assumptions may pertain, for example, to (a) the meaning of religion and other key concepts, (b) the direction of the causal arrows, (c) the motivations of actors, and (d) the connection between different levels of analysis (such as individuals and social structures). As the term proceeds, we will also be able to look back and reflect on questions of divergence, and potential reconciliation, in relation to arguments encountered in previous weeks.
- 4) What questions would you like to bring up in the seminar? For example, was there anything in the readings that you found particularly provocative, creative, or confusing?

For assessment you are asked to write a 3,000-word essay which is due at the end of term.

Background Reading:

Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah, *God's century: Resurgent religion and global politics* (W. W. Norton, 2011).

Jonathan Haidt, *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion* (Penguin, 2013).

First Session: The Evolutionary Origins of Religion and Politics

Discussion questions:

In this first seminar, we explore the cognitive basis of human religiousness and the demographic forces that underpin the evolution of religious and political orders. One of the fundamental puzzles in human evolution concerns the emergence of large-scale societies. The human brain is adapted to a manageable group size of around 150 people (Dunbar's number), but today most of us live in societies where membership is counted in the millions. What enabled us to make the leap from small-scale groups such as family and clan to larger-scale social groups? The answer may, as Norenzayan argues, lie in cognitive features of the human brain that allowed for the emergence of prosocial religions which in turn conferred groups who adopted such religions with a competitive advantage in the struggle for survival. This suggests that belief in a moralizing "big god" is a cultural adaptation that evolved through group selection. If religion played a key role in making large-scale cooperation possible, what is its role today? Can advanced capitalist social orders be sustained if they, as argued by Norris and Inglehart, become more secularized as a consequence of their prosperity? And what are the implications of the continuing demographic advantage of highly religious groups for the future trajectory of political orders?

Required readings:

Ara Norenzayan, *Big gods: How religion transformed cooperation and conflict* (Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 1-32, 118-192.

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and secular: Religion and politics worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3-32, 53-82.

Eric P. Kaufman, *Shall the religious inherit the earth? Demography and politics in the twenty-first century* (Profile Books, 2010), pp. ix-xxi.

Recommended:

Scott Atran, "The devoted actor: Unconditional commitment and intractable conflict across cultures" *Current Anthropology* 57:S13 (2016): S192-S203.

Maurice Bloch, "Why religion is nothing special but is central," in *In and out of each other's bodies: Theory of mind, evolution, truth, and the nature of the social* (Routledge, 2016), pp. 23-40.

Jack Goody, "The word of God," in *The logic of writing and the organization of society* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 1-44.

Further readings:

- Pascal Boyer and Nicolas Baumard, “The diversity of religious systems across history: An evolutionary cognitive approach,” in James R. Liddle and Todd K. Shackelford (eds.), *Oxford handbook of evolutionary psychology and religion* (Oxford University Press, 2016).
- Jared Diamond, *Guns, germs, and steel: The fates of human societies* (W. W. Norton, 1997), pp. 265-292.
- Mircea Eliade, *The sacred and the profane: The nature of religion* (Harcourt, 1959).
- Jonathan Haidt, *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion* (Penguin, 2013).
- Friedrich A. von Hayek, *Law, legislation and liberty* Vol. 1: Rules and order (Routledge, 2012), pp. 9-52.
- Friedrich A. von Hayek, “Religion and the guardians of tradition,” in *The fatal conceit: The errors of socialism* (Routledge, 1988), pp. 135-140.
- David Hume, “The natural history of religion” in A. Wayne Colver and John Valdimir Price (eds.), *David Hume: The Natural History of Religion and Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 25-95.
- Alex Mesoudi, *Cultural evolution: How Darwinian theory can explain human culture and synthesize the social sciences* (University of Chicago Press, 2011).
- Olivier Morin, *How traditions live and die* (Oxford University Press, 2015).
- Marshall Sahlins, “The original political society,” *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7:2 (2017): 91-128.
- Jonathan F. Shulz, Duman Bahrami-rad, Jonathan P. Beauchamp, and Joseph Henrich, “The church, intensive kinship, and global psychological variation” *Science* 366: eaau5141 (8 November 2019).
- Rodney Stark, *For the glory of God: How monotheism led to reformations, science, witch-hunts, and the end of slavery* (Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 1-13, 367-376.
- Konrad Talmont-Kaminski, *Religion as magical ideology: How the supernatural reflects rationality* (Routledge, 2014).
- Jonathan H. Turner, Alexandra Maryanski, Anders Klostergaard Petersen, and Armin W. Geertz, *The emergence and evolution of religion: By means of natural selection* (Routledge, 2018).

Second Session: Religious and Political Imaginaries

Discussion questions:

The readings for this week are concerned with the emergence and transformation of what Taylor refers to as social imaginaries: frames of imagination and interpretation. A clue to the role of religion in relation to the foundations of political order, and the generation of individual preferences, social expectations, and repertoires of collective action, can perhaps be found in the original meaning of hier-archy: sacred rule.

Strathern seeks to provide an answer for the triumph, in the pre-modern world, of sacred kingship linked to what is now conventionally referred to as the world religions. Continuing where Strathern's narrative stops, Gregory traces the roots of contemporary secular modernity in the West, finding them in medieval Christianity. With Jory we go full circle, exploring how a Buddhist ideal of righteous kingship has been revived in Thailand since the 1960s.

These momentous changes in religio-political imaginaries raise a number of questions. To what extent can the transformations of these ideational constructs, and the social and political consequences that flow from them, be viewed as the result of rational action by powerful social actors in pursuit of well-defined goals? How are the abstract ideas and ideals expressed in religio-political texts, usually written and reproduced by elites, connected to politically relevant beliefs and practices in wider society? Do religiously grounded worldviews make certain political orders and forms of political action effectively unthinkable? How relevant is the religio-political imaginary that dominates in the West to the rest of the world? Are all dominant political imaginaries—including modern and secular ones—in some sense religious? Finally: What can be done when dominant imaginaries are perceived to be failing?

Required readings:

Charles Taylor, "What is a 'social imaginary,'" in *Modern social imaginaries* (Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 23-30.

Alan Strathern, *Unearthly powers: Religious and political change in world history* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 1-26, 155-218, 318-321.

Brad S. Gregory, *The unintended reformation: How a religious revolution secularized society* (Harvard University Press, 2012), pp. 1-73, 180-234.

Patrick Jory, *Thailand's theory of monarchy: The Vessantara Jātaka and the idea of the perfect man* (SUNY Press, 2016), pp. 1-22, 173-188.

Recommended:

Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a cultural system," in *The interpretation of cultures* (Basic Books, 2000), pp. 87-125.

Mirjam Künkler, John Madeley, and Shylashri Shankar (eds.), *A secular age beyond the West: Religion, law and the state in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 1-32, 342-394.

James C. Scott, *Decoding subaltern politics: Ideology, disguise, and resistance* (Routledge, 2013), pp. 7-63.

Further readings:

Jóhann Páll Árnason, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, and Bjorn Wittrock (eds.), *Axial civilizations and world history* (Brill, 2004).

Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, violence, and democracy in South Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 1-19, 311-318.

Lisa Blaydes, Justin Grimmer, and Alison McQueen, "Mirrors for princes and sultans: Advice on the art of governance in the medieval Christian and Islamic worlds" *Journal of Politics* 80:4 (2018): 1150-67.

Randall Collins, *The sociology of philosophies: A global theory of intellectual change* (Harvard University Press, 1998).

Steven Collins, *Nirvana and other Buddhist felicities: Utopias of the Pali imaginaire* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 1-117, 414-496.

S. N. Eisenstadt, "Religion and the civilizational dimensions of politics," in Said Amir Arjomand, *The political dimensions of religion* (State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 13-41.

Ernest Gellner, *Muslim society* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

Emilio Gentile, *Politics as religion* (Princeton University Press, 2006).

Carlo Ginzburg, *The cheese and the worms: The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

Philip S. Gorski, *The disciplinary revolution: Calvinism and the rise of the state in early modern Europe* (University of Chicago Press, 2003).

Philip S. Gorski, *American covenant: A history of civil religion from the Puritans to the present* (Princeton University Press, 2017).

- Jürgen Habermas, “Religion in the public sphere” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14:1 (2006): 1-25.
- Ian Harris, “Buddhism and politics in Asia: The textual and historical roots,” in Ian Harris (ed.), *Buddhism and politics in twentieth century Asia* (Bloomsbury, 2010), pp. 1-25.
- Andrew Huxley, “Rajadhamma confronts Leviathan: Burmese political theory in the 1870s,” in Ian Harris (ed.), *Buddhism, power and political order* (Routledge, 2007), pp. 26-51.
- Albert O. Hirschman, *The passions and the interests: Political arguments for capitalism before its triumph* (Princeton University Press, 1977).
- Reynaldo Clemeña Ileta, *Pasyon and revolution: Popular movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Ateneo de Manila Press, 1979).
- Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *Religion and the political imagination* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).
- Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall, and Helen Hardacre, “Contested visions of community in East and South East Asia,” in Charles F. Keyes, Laurel Kendall, and Helen Hardacre (eds.) *Asian visions of authority: Religion and the modern states of East and South East Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 1994), pp. 1-16.
- Eric Kurlander, *Hitler’s monsters: A supernatural history of the Third Reich* (Yale University Press, 2017).
- Karl Marx, “A contribution to the critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*: Introduction” and “On Feuerbach,” in Joseph J. O’Malley (ed.), *Marx: Early political writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 57-70, 116-118.
- Andrew Phillips, *War, religion and empire: The transformation of international orders* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).
- Charles Taylor, *A secular age* (Harvard University Press, 2007).
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (English edition edited by Eduardo Nolla, translated from the French by James T. Schleifer, Vol. 1, Liberty Fund, 2012), pp. 466-488.
- Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, politics, and political thought in Myanmar* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).
- Max Weber, *Sociology of religion* (Beacon Press, 1993).
- Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* (Routledge, 2001).
- Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of discourse: Ideology and social structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment, and European socialism* (Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 14-35.

Third Session: Religious Identity and Politics

Discussion questions:

Religion is a multidimensional phenomenon. In comparative politics and international relations, the greatest attention has probably been paid to religion as a marker of social identity. By some accounts, religion is functionally equivalent to other possible markers of identity, such as language, race, caste, tribe, kinship, region, indigeneity, and nation. The specifically religious aspects of identity can therefore be abstracted from, folded in under the rubric of ethnicity and nation, and given no further analytical attention. The central questions for this week are therefore whether and how religious belonging matters in processes of social and political change, whether and why it may do so in ways that are distinct from other forms of belonging, and how religious belonging interacts with other aspects of religion (such as belief and organization). While reflecting on these questions, keep in mind Brubaker's distinction between religion as a category of analysis and as a category of practice. What challenges does that doubleness present us with?

Required readings:

Rogers Brubaker, "Categories of analysis and categories of practice: A note on the study of Muslims in European countries of immigration" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36:1 (2013): 1-8.

Rogers Brubaker, "Language, religion and the politics of difference" *Nations and Nationalism* 19:1 (2013): 1-20.

Monica Duffy Toft, Daniel Philpott, and Timothy Samuel Shah, "Religious civil wars: Nasty, brutish, and long," in *God's century: Resurgent religion and global politics* (W. W. Norton, 2011), pp. 147-173.

Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Nations under God: How churches use moral authority to influence policy* (Princeton University Press, 2015), pp. 22-61.

Jose Pedro Zúquete, "Populism and religion," in Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of populism* (Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 445-466.

Recommended readings:

Catarina Kinnvall, "Globalization and religious nationalism: Self, identity, and the search for ontological security" *Political Psychology* 25:5 (2004): 741-767.

Anthony W. Marx, *Faith in nation: Exclusionary origins of nationalism* (Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-32, 73-164.

Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, "The role of religion in American politics: Explanatory theories and associated analytical and measurement issues," in James L. Guth, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and Corwin E. Smidt (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of religion and American politics* (Oxford University Press, 2009), 3-42.

Further readings:

Robert N. Bellah, "Civil religion in America" *Daedalus* 96:1 (1967): 1-21.

John R. Bowen, *Can Islam be French? Pluralism and pragmatism in a secularist state* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and nationalism: Four approaches" *Nations and Nationalism* 18:1 (2012): 2-20.

Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'identity'" *Theory and Society* 29:1 (2000): 1-47.

Rafaela M. Dancygier, *Dilemmas of inclusion: Muslims in European politics* (Princeton University Press, 2017).

Émile Durkheim, *Elementary forms of religious life*, translated by Carol Cosman (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 25-46.

Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper, *Muslims and the state in Britain, France, and Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Philip S. Gorski and Gülay Türkmen-Derivoğlu, "Religion, nationalism, and violence: An integrated approach" *Annual Review of Sociology* 39 (2013): 193-210.

Samuel P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order* (Simon & Schuster, 1997).

Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global rebellion: Religious challenges to the secular state, from Christian militias to Al Qaeda* (University of California Press, 2008).

David D. Laitin, *Hegemony and culture: Politics and religious change among the Yoruba* (University of Chicago Press, 1986).

Arend Lijphart, "Religious vs. linguistic vs. class voting: The 'crucial experiment' of comparing Belgium, Canada, South Africa, and Switzerland" *American Political Science Review* 73:2 (1979): 442-458.

John F. McCauley and Daniel N. Posner, "The political sources of religious identification: Evidence from the Burkina Faso-Côte d'Ivoire border" *British Journal of Political Science* 49:2 (2017):421-444.

Stein Rokkan, "Nation-building, cleavage formation and the structuring of mass politics," in *Citizens, elections, parties* (David McKay, 1970), pp. 72-142.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Of the social contract," in Victor Gourevich (ed.), *Rousseau: The Social Contract and other later writings* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 146-155.

Olivier Roy, *Holy ignorance: When religion and culture part ways* (Oxford University Press, 2013).

Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen peoples: Sacred sources of national identity* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

J. Christopher Soper and Joel S. Fetzer, *Religion and nationalism in global perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Peter van der Veer, *Religious nationalism: Hindus and Muslims in India* (University of California Press, 1994).

Fourth Session: Religious Markets and Politics

Discussion questions:

Modern economics has for the most part been happy to leave the study of religion to theologians, sociologists, and anthropologists. Since the 1990s, however, a growing number of economists have turned their attention to religion. Many political scientists have also found the economic (or rational choice) approach to religion productive in their quest to better understand how the interactions of religious and political actors generate important political outcomes.

Among the questions we may want to discuss this week are the following: Can the behaviour of religious actors really be explained with reference simply to mundane costs and benefits? Are religious doctrines and ideas best thought of as epiphenomena? In what ways are markets for religious goods different from markets for widgets? What *is* a religious good? Would increased supply and consumption of such religious goods be a good thing, from a societal point of view (analogous to GDP growth or the supply of public goods)?

Required readings:

Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of faith: Explaining the human side of religion* (University of California Press, 2000), pp. 171-227.

Guillermo Trejo, "Religious competition and ethnic mobilization in Latin America: Why the Catholic Church promotes indigenous movements in Mexico" *American Political Science Review*, 103:3 (2009): 323-342.

Laurence R. Iannaccone and Eli Berman, "Religious extremism: The good, the bad, and the deadly" *Public Choice* 128:1/2 (2006): 109-129.

Noel D. Johnson and Mark Koyama, *Persecution and toleration: The long road to religious freedom* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 25-93, 123-152, 245-261.

Recommended readings:

Anthony Gill, *The political origins of religious liberty* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 26-59.

Amy Erica Smith, *Religion and Brazilian democracy: Mobilizing the people of God* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 26-45.

Robert D. Woodberry, "The missionary roots of liberal democracy" *American Political Science Review* 106:2 (2012): 244-274.

Further readings:

- Robert J. Barro and Rachel M. McCleary, “Which countries have state religions?” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120:4 (2005): 1331-1370.
- Eli Berman, *Radical, religious, and violent: The new economics of terrorism* (MIT Press, 2009).
- Lisa Blaydes and Drew A. Linzer, “The political economy of women’s support for fundamentalist Islam” *World Politics* 60:4 (2008): 576-609.
- Steve Bruce, *Choice and religion: A critique of rational choice theory* (Oxford University Press, 1999).
- Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, “Popes, kings, and endogenous institutions: The Concordat of Worms and the origins of sovereignty” *International Studies Review* 2:2 (2000): 93-118.
- Eric Chaney, “Revolt on the Nile: Economic shocks, religion and political power” *Econometrica* 81:5 (2013): 2033-2053.
- Paul Froese, *The plot to kill God: Findings from the Soviet experiment in secularization* (University of California Press, 2008).
- Anthony Gill, *Rendering unto Caesar: The Catholic church and the state in Latin America* (University of Chicago Press, 1998).
- Sriya Iyer, “The new economics of religion” *Journal of Economic Literature* 54:2 (2016): 395-441.
- Saumitra Jha, “Trade, institutions and ethnic tolerance: Evidence from South Asia” *American Political Science Review* 107:4 (2013): 806-832.
- David Lehmann, “Rational choice and the sociology of religion,” in Bryan S. Turner, *The new Blackwell companion to the sociology of religion* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp. 181-200.
- Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The rise of Christian democracy in Europe* (Cornell University Press, 1996).
- Karrie Koesel, *Religion and authoritarianism: Cooperation, conflict, and the consequences* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- Timur Kuran, *The long divergence: How Islamic law held back the Middle East* (Princeton University Press, 2011).
- Tomas Larsson, “The political economy of state patronage of religion: Evidence from Thailand” *International Political Science Review* 40:4 (2019), pp. 576–590.
- Rachel M. McCleary and Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, “The market approach to the rise of the Geluk School, 1419-1642” *Journal of Asian Studies* 69:1 (2010): 149-180.
- Richard A. Nielsen, *Deadly clerics: Blocked ambition and the paths to Jihad* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp 1-26.

Jared Rubin, *Rulers, religion, and riches: Why the West got rich and the Middle East did not* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Julie Taylor, "Prophet sharing: Strategic interaction between Muslim clerics and Middle Eastern regimes" *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 10:1 (2008): 41-62.

Fifth Session: “Religion” and Politics

Discussion questions:

This week introduces a deconstructionist approach which offers a challenge to social scientists who deploy “religion” and religions (“Islam,” “Buddhism,” etc.) as universal, reified categories. Genealogies which historicise these categories, predominantly tracing their origins to Christian contexts and European colonial endeavours, demonstrate, it is argued, the implausibility and inappropriateness of such a treatment.

One of the questions we may reflect on this week is whether and if so how the scholarship on religion and politics that is influenced by the genealogical turn is internally consistent. If we abandon reified notions of “religion” and associated categories, how do we know what to study? Hurd (2017: 13), referring to precisely this problem, speaks of a “productive paradox.” Does this save religion from the more radical interpretation of the implications of deconstructionist scholarship, which would be that it should be abandoned altogether? In short, can “religion,” “Christianity,” “secular,” etc., be studied and understood in any other way than as discourse?

Required readings:

William T. Cavanaugh, *The myth of religious violence: Secular ideology and the roots of modern conflict* (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 15-122, 181-230.

Elisabeth Shakman Hurd, *Beyond religious freedom: The new global politics of religion* (Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 1-64, 109-127.

Martin Riesebrodt, “Religion as discourse: On the critique of the concept of religion,” in *The promise of salvation: A theory of religion* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), pp. 1-20.

Recommended:

Talal Asad, “The construction of religion as an anthropological category,” in *Genealogies of religion: Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. 27-54.

Talal Asad, “What might an anthropology of secularism look like?” in *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity* (Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 21-66.

Jean L. Cohen, “On the genealogy and legitimacy of the secular state: Böckenförde and the Asadians” *Constellations* 25:2 (2018): 207-224.

Further readings:

- William Arnal and Russell T. McCutcheon, *The sacred is the profane: The political nature of 'religion'* (Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 1-30.
- Talal Asad, "The idea of an anthropology of Islam" *Qui Parle* 17:2 (2009): 1-30.
- Émile Benveniste, "Religion and superstition," in *Dictionary of Indo-European concepts and society* (HAU Books, 2016), pp. 525-537.
- Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière, "About Buddhist Burma: *Thathana*, or 'religion' as social space," in Michel Picard, *The appropriation of religion in Southeast Asia and beyond* (Palgrave, 2017), pp. 39-66.
- Robert Ford Company, "'Religious' as a category: A comparative case study" *Numen* 65:4 (2018): 333-376.
- David Chidester, *Empire of religion: Imperialism and comparative religion* (University of Chicago Press, 2014).
- Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western construction of religion: Myths, knowledge, and ideology*, translated by William Sayers (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).
- Hadi Enayat, *Islam and secularism in post-colonial thought: A cartography of Asadian genealogies* (Palgrave, 2017).
- Timothy Fitzgerald, *The ideology of religious studies* (Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-32, 159-180.
- W. B. Gallie, "Essentially contested concepts" *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society of London* 56 (1955-1956): 167-198.
- Richard King, *Orientalism and religion: Post-colonial theory, India, and 'the mystic East'* (Routledge, 1999).
- Saba Mahmood, *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject* (Princeton University Press, 2005).
- Saba Mahmood, *Religious difference in a secular age: A minority report* (Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 31-65.
- Tomoko Mazuzawa, *The invention of world religions: Or, how European universalism was preserved in the language of pluralism* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).
- Robert A. Orsi, *Between heaven and earth: The religious world people make and the scholars who study them* (Princeton University Press, 2004).
- Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (University of Chicago Press, 1982).

Gregory Starrett, "The varieties of secular experience" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52:3 (2010): 626-651.

John Obert Voll, "Islam as a community of discourse and a world-system," in Akbar S. Ahmed and Tamara Sonn (eds.), *The SAGE handbook of Islamic studies* (Sage, 2010), pp. 3-16.

Thongchai Winichakul, "Buddhist apologetics and a genealogy of comparative religion in Siam" *Numen* 62:1 (2015): 76-99.

Sixth Session: Religious Practices and Politics

Discussion questions:

Religious traditions offer rich menus of practices, such as prayer, pilgrimage, preaching, prostration, possession, procession, and penance. Dissatisfied with the emphasis, in much of the literature, on religion as belief and identity, a growing number of scholars in comparative politics and international relations have turned their attention to the political significance of these and similar religious practices. What happens when people “do” religion and how does it matter for politics?

Hassner argues that everyday religious practices such as prayers and rituals influence how, and how effectively, militaries fight wars. In McClendon and Riedl we return to the second week’s theme: religious ideas and how they influence how people think about and engage in politics. But they take the challenge of establishing causality seriously, studying contemporary Christian sermons in sub-Saharan Africa to establish how and to what extent religious teachings influence citizens’ political attitudes and participation. Chibber, on the other hand, takes religious teachings out of the picture entirely. Focusing on contemporary India, he argues that the performance of rituals, pilgrimages, visits to temples and shrines, and similar, mostly local and communal religious practices in and of themselves have political salience, influencing what citizens think and feel about the political system.

The fundamental methodological challenge for these studies is to connect the “micropolitics” of everyday religious life with macro-level political outcomes. How, and how successfully, do they go about doing that?

Required readings:

Ron E. Hassner, *Religion on the battlefield* (Cornell University Press, 2016), pp. 1-28, 110-134.

Gwyneth H. McClendon and Rachel Beatty Riedl, *From pews to politics: Religious sermons and political participation in Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 1-38, 137-176, 231-250.

Pradeep K. Chhibber, *Religious practice and democracy in India* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1-58, 141-184.

Recommended:

Mikhail A. Alexev and Sufian N. Zhemukhov, *Mass religious ritual and intergroup tolerance* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 1-10, 95-144, 184-189.

Tanya Schwartz, "Challenging the ontological boundaries of religious practices in international relations scholarship" *International Studies Review* 20:1 (2018): 30-54.

Further readings:

Randall Collins, *Ritual interaction chains* (Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 3-46, 102-140.

Joel Day, "Everyday practices of toleration: The interfaith foundations of peace accords in Sierra Leone" *Politics and Religion* (2020), First View, doi:10.1017/S1755048319000555.

David B. Edwards, *Caravan of martyrs: Sacrifice and suicide bombing in Afghanistan* (University of California Press, 2017).

Iselin Frydenlund, "Buddhist militarism beyond texts: The importance of ritual during the Sri Lankan civil war" *Journal of Religion and Violence* 5:1 (2017): 27-48.

Anne T. Mocko, *Demoting Vishnu: Ritual, politics, and the unraveling of Nepal's Hindu monarchy* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

David Siddhartha Patel, "Concealing to reveal: The informational role of Islamic dress" *Rationality and Society* 24:3 (2012): 295-323.

Katarina Plank, "Living torches of Tibet: Religious and political implications of the recent self-immolations" *Journal of Religion and Violence* 1:3 (2013): 343-362.

Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community* (Simon and Schuster, 2000), pp. 65-79.

Ananda Rajah, "Political assassination by other means: Public protest, sorcery and morality in Thailand" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 36:1 (2005): 111-129.

Erik Ringmar, "Muslim calls to prayer in the Swedish welfare state" *Review of Faith and International Affairs* 17:1 (2019): 104-116.

Christian Smith, *Religion: What it is, how it works, and why it matters* (Princeton University Press, 2017) pp. 20-76.

Matthew J. Walton and Michael Jerryson, "The authorization of religio-political discourse: Monks and Buddhist activism in contemporary Myanmar and beyond" *Politics and Religion* 9:4 (2016): 794-814.

Erin K. Wilson, "Theorizing religion as politics in postsecular International Relations" *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 15:3 (2014): 347-365.

Seventh Session: Political Power and the Religious Field

Discussion questions:

We conclude the course by exploring the religio-political boundary struggles in two superpowers: China and the United States. Goossaert and Palmer frame their study in relation to Bourdieu's notion of a "religious field." They provide a sweeping narrative of the political struggles involved first in the creation of such a field in China and secondly the efforts by a militantly anti-religious political party to suppress it and replace it with a cult of the party's leader. The former as much as the latter involved the Chinese authorities deciding which practices were "religious" and which were not. Lewis, on the other hand, does not frame his argument in relation to the concept of a religious field. But could his argument about the changing political strategies and coalitions of the conservative right in the United States be reconciled with such an approach?

Bourdieu's notion of social fields plays a central role in Gorski's outline of an integrated theoretical framework. Does it manage to capture the dynamics described in this week's readings on China and the United States, as well as those we have encountered in previous weeks? What, if anything, is missing from it?

Required readings:

Vincent Goossaert and David A. Palmer, *The religious question in modern China* (University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. TBA.

Andrew R. Lewis, *The rights turn in conservative Christian politics: How abortion transformed the culture wars* (University of Cambridge Press, 2017), pp. 1-28, 164-175.

Philip S. Gorski, "Secularity I: Varieties and dilemmas," in Mirjam Künkler, John Madeley, and Shylashri Shankar (eds.), *A secular age beyond the West: Religion, law and the state in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 33-60.

Recommended readings:

José Casanova, *Public religions in the modern world* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Mara Loveman, "The modern state and the primitive accumulation of symbolic power" *American Journal of Sociology* 110:6 (2005): 1651-1683.

Further readings:

Peter Beyer, "The modern emergence of religions and a global social system for religion" *International Sociology* 13:2 (1998): 151-172.

Pierre Bourdieu, "Legitimation and structured interests in Weber's sociology of religion," in Sam Whimster and Scott Lash (eds.), *Max Weber: Rationality and modernity* (Allen and Unwin, 1987), pp. 119-36.

Pierre Bourdieu, "Genesis and structure of the religious field" *Comparative Social Research* 13:1 (1991): 1-44.

Rogers Brubaker, "Religious dimensions of political conflict and violence" *Sociological Theory* 33:1 (2015): 1-19.

N. J. Demerath, "Secularization and sacralization deconstructed and reconstructed," in James A. Beckford and Jay Demerath (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of the sociology of religion* (SAGE Publications, 2007), 57-80.

Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori, *Muslim politics* (Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 3-45.

Ran Hirschl, *Constitutional theocracy* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

Stéphane Lacroix, *Awakening Islam: The politics of religious dissent in contemporary Saudi Arabia* (Yale University Press, 2011).

Tomas Larsson, "Monkish politics in Southeast Asia: Religious disenfranchisement in comparative and theoretical perspective" *Modern Asian Studies* 49:1 (2015): 40-82.

David Martin, *A general theory of secularization* (Blackwell, 1978).

John T. Sidel, *Riots, pogroms, Jihad: Religious violence in Indonesia* (Cornell University Press, 2006).

Victoria Smolkin, *A sacred space is never empty: A history of Soviet atheism* (Princeton University Press, 2018).

David L. Swartz, *Symbolic power, politics, and intellectuals: The political sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 47-78, 123-153.

Alicia Turner, *Saving Buddhism: The impermanence of religion in colonial Burma* (University of Hawaii Press, 2014).

Bradford Verter, "Spiritual capital: Theorizing religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu" *Theory and Society* 21:2 (2003): 150-174.

Todd H. Weir, *Secularism and religion in nineteenth-century Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 1-28.