



RELIGION & POLITICS

IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Washington University in St. Louis

Fall 2015 :: RelPol 225

IT'S HARD TO TURN ON THE TV, LOOK AT A NEWSPAPER, OR LISTEN TO THE RADIO WITHOUT CONFRONTING THE ENTANGLEMENT OF RELIGION AND POLITICS IN THE US AND ABROAD. THIS CLASS PROVIDES HISTORICAL DEPTH AND CRITICAL NUANCE TO TODAY'S SOUNDBITES AND CLICKBAIT, EXPLORING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE FROM THE STEPS OF THE SUPREME COURT TO THE SET OF *THE WEST WING*.

Professor Rachel McBride Lindsey

rmlindsey@wustl.edu

Lecture: MW 1-2pm

+ Discussion A or B

“Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

US Bill of Rights (1791)

“Since its inception, the Christian Coalition has worked to provide critical education and political training . . . in order to challenge and equip individuals and churches to make a difference at all levels of government.”

“About Us,” *Christian Coalition* (www.cc.org) 2014

“Here's what our -- our country promises, our Constitution promises. It's that, however we worship, we're all equal and full citizens. And I think we can all agree on that. And that means that when we approach the government, when we petition the government, we do so not as a Christian, not as a Jew, not as a Muslim, not as a nonbeliever, only as an American.”

Associate Justice Elena Kagan, November 6, 2013

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The above quotes—from the US Constitution, a present day political lobby, and a recent Supreme Court oral argument—provide only a glimmer of the complexity of religion and politics in American history. As a constitutional category, “religion” affords protections to American citizens—but both the designation of “religion” and “citizen” have been contested throughout the nation’s history. The promise of the Constitution has been equally fraught, as different constituencies vie for the authority of interpretation and its relation to policy and law—be it antebellum Massachusetts, Progressive Era San Francisco, Civil Rights Alabama, or present day Kentucky. This course equips you with tools for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting the cultural, political, and religious history of American public life as students and as citizens.

The course is structured around four main themes—**Constitution, Citizenship, Policy, and Public History**—that will provide both narrative continuity throughout the semester and interpretive depth to key issues that have surfaced over the course of the nation’s history.

OBJECTIVES

- Identify and demonstrate disciplinary approaches to the study of religion and politics
- Recognize the interconnections between religious, social, political, and intellectual contexts that inform definitions and practices of citizenship in the United States
- Learn to engage critically with primary documents (sermons, legislation, court decisions, missives, policy briefs, etc.) and secondary literature
- Demonstrate academic writing competency through required written assignments

REQUIRED TEXTS

The Penguin Guide to the United States Constitution, Richard Beeman (Penguin Books, 2010).

Michael Corbett, Julia Corbett-Heymer, and J. Matthew Wilson, *Politics and Religion in the United States*, 2d edition (Routledge, 2014). Make sure you have the second edition of this text. Noted in syllabus as “CCHW.”

All other readings are on Blackboard. These are required (unless otherwise noted) and should be read in advance and brought to lectures and discussions.

GRADING

Grades are calculated out of a semester total of 100 POINTS.

1) **Attendance and Participation.** 10 points.

Punctual attendance and engaged participation in both lectures and discussion sections is required. All readings are to be completed by the start of class on the dates published in the syllabus. If you are sick, please don't come to class but do notify me promptly. Exceptions are granted only on the basis of illness (yours or your dependent's) and official University business the latter of which must be granted in advance.

Each student will be responsible for leading the discussion section one time during the semester.

It is my policy to award you the benefit of the doubt of the beginning of the semester. Unexcused absences will result in the loss of 2 points per instance. More than three unexcused absences will result in the loss of all 10 attendance and participation points.

2) **Policy Issue + Letter to the Editor.** 200-300 words. 15 points.

For this assignment, you will select a policy issue (either contemporary or historical) and write a persuasive letter to the editor of a newspaper that supports your position. Please see the guidelines on Blackboard for further information. **DUE THURSDAY, September 24, by 5pm.**

3) **Self-Directed Learning Assignment.** 15 points.

This assignment enables you to tailor your learning in this class to your broader academic and personal interests. For example, you may choose to watch a film or television series and write a short paper on it; interview a local politician, faith leader, or community activist; conduct a micro-ethnography of a public event or religious service; or compose a policy brief or amicus curiae. Schedule a meeting with Dr. Lindsey before October 1 to discuss your assignment. **DUE THURSDAY, October 29 by 5pm.**

4) **Midterm Exam.** 10 points.

This examination assesses material from the first half of the course and consists of definitions, identifications (IDs), and short essays. **In class, Wednesday, October 21, 2015.**

5) **Section Project.** 20 (individ.) + 10 (group) points.

Section projects will constitute a significant percentage of your final grade and will require both individual and group work. Each discussion section will collectively choose a policy issue, legal case, or cultural event to investigate from a variety of angles and sources. Individuals will be tasked with primary research (project reports) and the group will decide how best to present the research to the class—examples may include a website, short film, policy brief, or podcast.

Section Project reports **DUE THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19 by 5pm. EMAIL YOUR REPORTS with the subject line: RP225 Section Report / [LAST NAME]**

Section Project group presentations WEDNESDAY December 2.

6) **Media Analysis.** 5 points.

Select a popular source for exploring religion and politics in American culture today. This could be a novel, television show, film, song, comic, poster, newscast, or other form of mass media. Your assignment is to observe and analyze the source, reporting your findings in 400-500 words. Why did you select this source? What questions does it open up about religion and politics in the United States? What insights does it yield? **DUE SUNDAY, November 29, by 5pm.**

7) **Final Exam.** 15 points.

This examination primarily assesses material from the second half of the course and consists of definitions, identifications, and short essays. Essay prompts may be comprehensive.

Final Exam Period: DECEMBER 16, 1-3pm, Location TBD

8) **Extra Credit.**

You may receive 1 extra credit point for attending events sponsored by the Center on Religion and Politics and writing a one-page summary and reflection, not to exceed 3 points cumulatively.

CIVILITY STATEMENT

The subjects of this course have historically been deemed “unfit” for “polite” conversation. One of our chief objectives this semester is to counter the assumption that subjects of conviction and consequence cannot be discussed without resulting in discord and/or animus. You are not expected to discard your views but are expected to communicate in a civil manner in academic interactions at all times, both in and out of the classroom. This means that interactions are to be carried out in a polite, courteous, and dignified—if also spirited—manner. Whether in regard to sources, the professor, or classmates, the golden rule will be to engage statements and ideas rather than people.

A word about religion: the academic study of religion focuses on understanding and explanation. Our objectives in this class are academic and not ideological—in other words, the goal is to gain insight into recurring trends and the history of ideas and practices shaping American public life. It is not to persuade anyone to join a particular religious group or political ideology. Students may not proselytize in class.

And finally, gender inclusive language is expected in both writing and class discussion. “Mankind” or “man” does not refer to all people. The issue at stake here is not one of political correctness but of historical and analytical accuracy. In every instance you should work to identify as clearly as possible the people, artifacts, events, or figures you are describing or interpreting.

TECHNOLOGY STATEMENT

I love technology. I rely on it for my coffee in the morning, connection with friends abroad, writing and revising my research, and getting my kids to slow the heck down. But despite our daily reliance on it, technology breaks. Servers go down. Transfers time out. Files become corrupt. The list goes on and on.

These are not considered emergencies. They are part of the production process in our digital world. Any issue you may have with technology is no excuse for late work. You need to protect yourself by managing your time and backing up your work. WUSTL Box comes with unlimited cloud storage, though I recommend backing up all of your work in more than one place.

Turn your cell phone on silent when you come into class. Do not text/tweet/Yik Yak/etc. in class.

Laptops are permitted in lecture—though I reserve the right to revise this if they become a hindrance to your learning or your classmates’—they are NOT permitted in discussion sections.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

RELIGION, POLITICS, AMERICA

M 8/24: What do they mean and how do we study them?

W 8/26: Presidents, Pollsters, and Pundits: Where do we begin?

“Religion in Public Life: The Contemporary Debate,” CCHW, 304-329.

Discussion: “Politics and Religion: An Overview,” in CCHW, 1-20.

CCHW Appendices A and B

Recommended: “Theories of Religion, Culture, and American Politics,” *Religion and Politics in America*, 319-342.

CHURCH AND STATE from COLONIES to REPUBLIC

M 8/31: John Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity” (1630)

John Cotton, *Discourse about Civil Government* (1663)

Recommended: John Locke, “A Letter Concerning Toleration,” (1689; repr. 1765)

W 9/2: James Madison, “Memorial and Remonstrance” (1785)

Thomas Jefferson, “Virginia Act to Establish Religious Freedom” (1786)

Discussion: “The Colonial and Founding Eras,” CCHW, 39-63.

CONSTITUTION

Foundations: Eighteenth Century

M 9/7: LABOR DAY NO CLASSES

United States Constitution (1789) and Bill of Rights (1791)

W 9/9: “Religion and the First Amendment,” CCHW, 123-177.

“House and Senate Debates” readings (1789)

Discussion: NO DISCUSSION THIS WEEK

Interpretations: Nineteenth Century

M 9/14: Joseph Story, *Commentaries on the Constitution*, 3 vols. (1833), §1863-§1871

Lyman Beecher, *Autobiography, Correspondence, etc. of Lyman Beecher, D.D.* (1865), 342-349

W 9/16: 14th Amendment (1868)

"Opinion of the Supreme Court [in *Reynolds v. United States*] on the Meaning of Religious Liberty," in Schaff, *Church and State in the United States* (1888)

Discussion: "Religion and Politics in American History 1800-1960," CCHW 64-89.

Recommended: Sarah Barringer Gordon, "Law and Religion, 1790-1920," *Cambridge History of Law in America*, 417-448

Interpretations: Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries

M 9/21: *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990)

W 9/23: *Greece v. Galloway* oral arguments (October 2013) and decision (May 2014)

Discussion: "Public Opinions about Religion and Politics," CCHW 181-206.

DUE Thursday 9/24: Policy Issue + Letter to the Editor by 5 pm

CITIZENSHIP

Immigration

M 9/28: Naturalization Acts of 1790 and 1795

Foreign Conspiracy Against the Liberties of the United States: The Numbers of Brutus (Read: Recommendations, Table of Contents, Prefatory Remarks, Chapters V, VI, XII)

<https://archive.org/stream/foreignconspiracy00morsrich#page/12/mode/2up>

W 9/30: Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)
National Origins Act (1924)

Discussion: Jennifer Snow, "The Civilization of White Men: The Race of the Hindu in *United States v. Bhagat Singh Thind*"

Nation

M 10/5: Angelina Grimke, "Appeal to Christian Women of the South" (1836)

W 10/7: Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852)
Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural Address" (1865)
James Baldwin, "The White Man's Guilt" (1965)

Discussion: Henry Goldschmidt, "Race, Nation, and Religion"
"Is America a Secular or a Religious Nation?," CCHW 220-336

Gender, Sexuality, and the Body Politic

M 10/12: John Humphrey Noyes, *Male Continence* (1872)

W 10/14: Margaret Sanger, "Birth Control in America" (July 1915) and "Church" (n.d.)
"Homosexuality and the Church" readings

Hobby Lobby v. Burwell (2014) syllabus (Opinion pp. 1-6)

Obergefell v. Hodges (2015) syllabus (Opinion pp. 1-5)

Discussion: Midterm Review

Performance

- M 10/19: *Kloran*, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (1916)
https://archive.org/details/KloranOfTheKKK_201404
 "How to Get Arrested on Moral Monday: A North Carolina Minister's Protest," *The Atlantic*, June 24, 2013.
- W 10/21: **Midterm**
- Discussion: *Wednesday, 10/21, 4-6pm, Religious Freedom and Civil Rights in America, Roundtable Discussion, Umrath Lounge.*

FOREIGN and DOMESTIC POLICYThe American Century

- M 10/26: Lyman Abbott, "The New National Policy," *Outlook* (June 1898)
 John Lancaster Spalding, "Empire or Republic" (1899)
 Franklin Delano Roosevelt, State of the Union (1941)
- W 10/28: Barack Obama, "A New Beginning" (Cairo, 2009)
- Discussion: Leo Ribuffo, "Religion and American Foreign Policy: The Story of a Complex Relationship," *National Interest* (Summer 1998), 36-51.
 Andrew Preston, *Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy* (New York: Anchor Books, 2012), 3-16.

DUE Thursday 10/29: Self-Directed Learning AssignmentCivil Rights

- M 11/2: Martin Luther King, Jr. "Give Us the Ballot" (1957) and "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" (1963)
- W 11/4: John C. Bennett, "A Roman Catholic for President?" (1960)
 Watch: John F. Kennedy, "Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association" (1960)
 "Religion and the Ballot, 1996" and "Religion and the Ballot, 2000" readings
- Discussion: "Religion and Politics since 1960," CCHW, 90-119.

Religious Freedom

- M 11/9: Religious Freedom Restoration Act 1993
 Missouri Religious Freedom Restoration Act 2003
- W 11/11: John Kerry, Shaun Casey, Melissa Rogers, "Remarks at the [State Department] Launch of the Office of Faith-Based Initiatives" (2013)
 International Religious Freedom Report, 2013, U.S. Department of State
<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>
- Discussion: "Religion and Interest Group Activity," CCHW 269-303

PUBLIC HISTORY

Ritual

M 11/16: Carol Duncan, "Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship"

W 11/18: Meet at St. Louis Art Museum

Discussion: Section Projects

DUE Friday 11/20: Section Project reports by 5pm

Media

M 11/23 – W 11/27: NO CLASS

Assignment: Select a popular source for exploring religion and politics in American culture today. This could be a novel, television show, film, song, comic, poster, newscast, or other form of mass media. Your assignment is to observe and analyze the source, reporting your findings in 400-500 words. Why did you select this source? What questions does it open up about religion and politics in the United States? What insights does it yield?

DUE Sunday 11/29

Sanctuaries

M 11/30: ***Visit Bellefontaine Cemetery, either on your own or as a group***

Sally Promey, "The Public Display of Religion" (2001)

Colleen McDannell, "The Religious Symbolism of Laurel Hill Cemetery" (1995)

W 12/2: **Section Project Group Presentations**

Discussion: No additional readings.

Finals Week

December 16, 1-3pm TBD