

Graduate Seminar in
Political Theories of Religion
JSISC 502
(Religion in Comparative Perspective)
Tuesdays 11:30-2:20
Thomson Hall 234

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Office Hours: W 2:30-4 or by appointment

Course Description

Religion is one of the key subjects of the political field and the public sphere, and this is true in the modern world as much as in the pre-modern period. Despite the inclination of the social sciences of the 19th and 20th centuries to declare the decline of religion in the modern world—and Orientalist associations with religion and the non-West—religion has not declined in modernity or in the West; by some measures, it has significantly increased in scope around the world. Given the centrality of religion to questions of political, cultural, and social life, it is striking to see that the social sciences have not produced a cohesive political theory of religion. In lieu of such a theory, most social scientists use ideas that assume a disjuncture between religion and modernity—a common idea in the works of founding figures of social science disciplines like Tylor, Frazier, Malinowski, Comte, Durkheim, Freud, Weber, Hegel, Marx, Ranke, Foucault, and Huntington. This course explores this lacuna in social scientific theory and seeks to equip students with the intellectual tools to fill this space by formulating their own approach to a political theory of religion.

Assignments: Your grade for this course will be distributed evenly among three components:

- **Participation**—As a graduate seminar, discussion is the core of our meeting. This is not a lecture class! Class participation is measured by active engagement with the readings and with each other's ideas, and generally positive investment in the learning environment of the class. *Actively and verbally engaging in class with the course material is essential for passing this class. Participation counts for a third of your grade.*
- **Weekly In-Class Critical Writing and One Short Paper Presentation**—We will begin each class with a **short in-class writing exercise**. This is usually, but not always, drawn from the readings. These are hand written and may be used in class for class discussion. The weekly in-class writing provides an opportunity for you to “think on your feet” and be creative. I will collect these after class each week. In

addition, each student will be assigned a given week in which they will help begin discussion by **writing a short analysis of the reading (not more than 3 pages, double spaced, 1” margins, 12 pt font), and presenting the paper to the class** (fifteen minutes). The paper and presentation should summarize the reading, position the readings within the aims of the class, within a field of literature, and an intellectual milieu. In order to prepare this paper and presentation, you will be expected to do a little extra research and reading on and around the subject of our week. *The in-class writing and the short paper together will account for a third of your grade.*

- **A Final Paper**— You will write a **final paper**, of 12-20 pages (double spaced, 12 point font, 1 inch margins). The subject of this paper is up to you, but please consider a paper in which you *formulate your own political theory of religion*. Whatever subject you choose, you must consult with me about your paper topic before beginning work on the paper. In deciding what to write about, consider a topic or project that serves your academic endeavors (requirements, exams, publication, etc.). Please email this paper to me on June 9, 2015, to be delivered in hard copy into my faculty mailbox (Thomson Hall, 4th Floor) by noon, and emailed by noon to me in electronic format. Please note that these two copies—hard copy and emailed copy—must be identical. *This final paper counts for a third of your grade.*

Grading: I use the standard 4.0 grading system in use at the University of Washington.

Syllabus: I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any point, including the readings and assignments, as required.

Etiquette: Please: do not use computers, iphones, mobile phones, ipods, gameboys, PS-whatevers, or other devices in class. Please come on time and stay for the entire class.

Academic Conduct: I will strictly enforce the University of Washington Student Conduct code, including the policy on plagiarism. For your reference, the entire code can be found at <http://www.washington.edu/students/handbook/conduct.html>. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, it is your responsibility to understand plagiarism. Ignorance of the definition of plagiarism will not excuse plagiarism in this class.

Disabled Students: If you would like to request accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz Hall, 543-8924 (V/TDD). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you require accommodations, please present the letter to me as soon as possible so that I can make necessary arrangements.

Readings:

Required Books: I have ordered the books below to be available at the UW Bookstore. The library will also have copies on reserve, but be aware the check out period is only four hours for reserve books.

- *A Secular Age*, by Charles Taylor, 2007.
- *Introducing Religion* by Daniel Pals, 2009.
- *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, Butler, Habermas, Taylor, et al. 2011.
- *Political Theology* by Paul Kahn, 2011.
- *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, by Jason Josephson, 2012.

Coursepack: All readings not in one of the four books above are available in a coursepack at Ram Copies on the Ave.

Please be sure to bring readings to class on the day that we discuss those readings.

Syllabus

Week One: Introduction | March 31

- Syllabus Review, introductory stuff

Week Two: What is religion? | April 7

- Read *Introducing Religion*, selections TBD.

Week Three: Religion, Secularism, and State-Effect | April 14

- Abrahms, “Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State.”
- Timothy Mitchell, “The Limits of the State.”
- Talal Asad. “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” 27–54, from *Genealogies of Religion*, 1983;
- Talal Asad “Secularism, Nation-State, Religion” from *Formations of the Secular*, 2003.

Week Four: An Ideal Genealogy of State and Religion: Hegel | April 21

- Hegel, selections from *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1821), “Preface” and “Introduction”, 9-65
- Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (1837), 1-103.

Week Five: Genealogies of State and Religion after Hegel: Marx and Weber | April 28

- Marx, “The Communist Manifesto,” entire (44 pages)
- Marx, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” Introduction.
- Marx, “The German Ideology—Ideology in General” (1844–46)
- Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach” (1845)
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* 1904 chapters 1, 2, and 3 (pgs 1-23 plus notes).

Week Six: Political Theology | May 5

- Carl Schmitt, “Political Theology” (1922), entire.
- *Political Theology: Four New Chapters on the Concept of the Sovereign* by Paul Kahn (2011), entire.

Week Seven: Secular Modernities | May 12

- Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 2007, selections.

Week Eight: Religion, Democracy, and the Public Sphere | May 19

- “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article” by Jurgen Habermas.
- Butler, Habermas, Taylor, et al. *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*, 2011, entire.

Week Nine: Religion, the State, and the non-West | May 26

- *The Invention of Religion in Japan*, by Jason Josephson, entire.

Week Ten: The Postsecular Between the Religion and the State | June 2

- McLennan, Gregor. 2010. "The Postsecular Turn". *Theory, Culture and Society*. 27 (4): 3-20.
- De Roover, Jakob, Sarah Claerhout, and S. N. Balagangadhara. 2011. “Liberal Political Theory and the Cultural Migration of Ideas: The Case of Secularism in India.” *Political Theory*. 39 (5): 571-599.
- “Freedom and Liberty: A Political Theory of Modern Religion and the State,” by Christian Lee Novetzke

Final Papers Due June 9, 2015