

Religion and Politics/Rel 245/Spring 2013

M/W 8:55 – 10:05 am, Comenius 201

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Office Hours: Monday: 10:30 – 11:30; Wednesday: 2:30 – 3:30. You also may feel free to make an appt. to meet with me outside of these hours; please email, call or speak with me in class. Every student should plan on seeing me in my office at least once or twice this semester.

Course Description: In this course we focus on two of the three topics your parents told you never to bring up in polite company – politics and religion! ☺ We will dig into the complex relationship of religion and politics in the U.S. Our learning will involve historical study, analysis of U.S. foundational governmental documents, exploration of the role of religion in U.S. politics past and present, and exploration/research with respect to some key contemporary issues and debates. We will find that key terms and words signal the presence of religion in American culture/politics, such as “civil religion,” “chosenness,” “American exceptionalism,” “Manifest Destiny,” salvation/success and more, and will increase our awareness regarding both overt and covert ways that religious ideas, values and understandings influence political movements, mores and decisions. Finally, we will debate whether and/or how there may be an ethically viable role for religion in the political public square.

Course Objectives:

- 1) Students will build a rudimentary historical understanding of pluriform American religious experience. This is a very important objective of the course, especially given recent studies and books emphasizing the high level of ignorance among U.S. citizens regarding basic understanding of the religious traditions practiced by people of this nation, and the ways religious consciousness/practice informs culture and politics.
- 2) From the founding documents of the U.S. forward, students will practice skills of analysis to better understand the ways that religious understandings, assumptions, values and practices intersect with U.S. politics and governance.
- 3) Critical thinking, speaking, research and writing skills (as well as listening and collaborative skills) will be enhanced and challenged in this course, through in depth reading, class discussion of readings, small and large research assignments, short and longer papers and oral presentation.
- 4) Students will confront and overcome their fears, anxieties and dread of research. My hope is that this course will awaken student curiosity, wonder and (dare I say) *love* for the research process!
- 5) Students’ ethical awareness and skills for ethical deliberation will grow as we engage and explore the perennial question, “Is it possible to delineate an ethically viable role for religion in the U.S. political public square, and if so, how?”

Required Course Texts:

Catherine L. Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion*, Fifth Edition (Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2013).

Note: If you purchase this book somewhere other than the Moravian College Bookstore, it is imperative that you purchase this latest fifth edition, as it is very different from earlier editions.

Gary Laderman, *American Civil Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) e-book. *Important Note:* You will purchase this e-book through the publisher website:

<http://store.fortresspress.com/store/product/18130/American-Civil-Religion>

It must be used on a PC or MAC (it isn't compatible with tablets). Make sure you take care of this during the first week of class. You will need to download adobe editions in order to utilize this resource.

Martha C. Nussbaum, *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008)

Additional articles, chapters, films and other materials will be required as per the weekly assignments posted in your syllabus. Students are required to make their own copies of articles and chapters on reserve in Reeve's library or posted in our Blackboard site.

Please subscribe asap to the website: <http://www.faithinpubliclife.org/> "Faith in Public Life," a good source of articles and resources about the nexus of faith (mostly Christian) and politics. Scanning this a few times a week will help you to have a better idea of specific issues at play in our current context. In addition, your regular scanning of this website will give you ideas and resources for your research in this course.

Students also should get in the habit (if you aren't already) of scanning a reputable daily newspaper, such as the NY Times or Wall Street Journal (the Morning Call is a regional paper and not sufficient for the purposes of this course). Look for and pay special attention to articles engaging the intersection of religion and politics. Every student should ask for time at least once during the semester to call our attention to something you find. If you have an on-line news source that you find to be particularly helpful, bring it to our attention in class.

Required Extra-Class Events

Tuesday, Oct. 22, we all will attend the public lecture of the 7th Peace and Justice Scholar in Residence, Chris Hedges, whose talk is titled after his latest book, "Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt". Prosser, 7:30 pm; make sure to sign the attendance sheet.

Course Requirements

On How to Read the Texts for Our Course: Highlighters are banned from this course. Please use the margins in your texts to make your own copious notes. Always have a pen or pencil in hand as you read. Instead of merely underlining, stop and think about why you are about to underline a sentence or phrase: what is important about it? What part of the overall argument does it represent? Document this with shorthand in the margin. Use the margins to summarize the text, ask questions, agree or protest with the argument. Learn how to use the resources in Adobe Editions to make bookmarks and marginal notations in virtual format. From time to time I will ask to see your books and check your marginal notes. You will be given a check, check = or – depending upon your level of engagement you demonstrate.

Additional Notes: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Students are advised to review the Academic Honesty Policy (available in the Student Handbook posted on the Moravian College Website) and are required to follow the guidelines therein.

Our syllabus will be posted on Blackboard, and updated periodically with any changes we find we need to make as we progress throughout the semester. You also may find your grades posted on the Blackboard gradebook. Please consult this throughout the semester to view and monitor your progress. If you don't know how to use googledocs, please find out and familiarize yourself with this online tool, since we also will be drawing on this during our work.

Research Project

Research Areas: Abortion, Islamophobia, Marriage Rights, Evolution, The Pledge of Allegiance, Aid to Sectarian Schools/Faith-based non-profits, Memorials and Public Displays, Religion and War-culture, School Prayer, technology and biology, climate change, ~ and more!

Evaluation of Student Engagement in the Course

Your performance in the course will be evaluated as follows:

- 1) Engagement in every class session, with materials ready to go, assignments thoroughly and thoughtfully completed, pushing the whole class forward with your questions, support of peers, and ready involvement. Please note that most of your writing assignments require you to do two things: bring your hardcopy to class AND submit your virtual copy to the BB assignment link: 40%
- 2) Midterm Exam: 30%
- 3) Research Paper, including everything leading up to the final product: 30%

Schedule of Classes

Introduction to Our Theme

8/26 Introduction to our course/test on religious literacy from Prothero/rationale for plan of course

(No Class Sept. 2, Memorial Day)

8/28 Why bother studying religion and politics?

Read: Stephen Prothero, *Religious Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know – And Doesn't* (Harper, 2007), pp 3-18. (on BB)

Writing Assignment: For the reading selections above, write a paragraph that accomplishes two tasks: First, include a one-sentence thesis statement that summarizes the authors' answer to the question: why bother studying religion and politics? In other words, how is each of these books an answer to that question? Second, briefly summarize three distinct and significant pieces of evidence each author uses to support his thesis. Hardcopy due in class/ submit to BB assignment link by midnight, 8/27.

9/4 David Domke and Kevin Coe, *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America* (Oxford, 2008), pp 3-27. (on BB)

Writing Assignment: *For the reading selections above, write a paragraph that accomplishes two tasks: First, include a one-sentence thesis statement that summarizes the authors' answer to the question: why bother studying religion and politics? In other words, how is each of these books an answer to that question? Second, briefly summarize three distinct and significant pieces of evidence each author uses to support his thesis. Hardcopy due in class/submit to BB assignment link by 9/3 midnight.*

Unit One: Getting a Grasp on U.S. Religious History

Note: During this first unit of our study, students should use the study guide in BB provided to them as they quickly work their way through Albanese' text. Each of the terms included should be accompanied by a short paragraph, or a one-to-two-sentence definition. Use the study guide to help you prepare for our first exam. You also will be graded on how thoroughly you complete your study guide as part of this unit.

9/9

Read: America Religions, pp 1-41; complete study guide for this section (bring it with you to class)

Also read: The Declaration of Independence: What religious themes, symbols, values do you see present? Download from the internet and bring with you to class.

9/11

Read: America Religions, pp 42-84; complete study guide for this section (bring it with you to class)

Assignment: *Choose two different religious identities in America as outlined by Albanese, and write a dialogue between two fictional characters representing each identity. Your dialogue should focus on how each character identifies his/her religious background, values and practices in an attempt to explain him/herself to the other. It should also explore possible areas of conflict and/or misunderstanding that might arise as a result of these same differences; or your dialogue might imaginatively reconceive actual conflicts explored by Albanese related to these religious identities. 2 pages double-spaced. Your dialogue should reveal your careful and thoughtful reading of this text, as well as your imagination! Hardcopy due in class.*

9/16 **Read:** America Religions, pp 85 – 112; complete study guide for this section (bring it with you to class)

Also skim: The Constitution: What religious themes, symbols, values do you see present? Underline them and make notes in the margin regarding your questions and reflections. Download from the computer and bring with you to class, along with your marginal notations.

Be prepared to share in class from your marginal notes in your text.

9/18 **Read:** America Religions, pp 138 – 156; 237 – 271; complete study guide for this section (bring it with you to class)

9/23 In Class: We will divide up the remaining chapters of Albanese for our small group projects, and use class time to begin strategizing for our flowcharts/diagrams.

Assignment: Working with one or two other class members, create a google docs one-page flowchart or a diagram that maps out the main events/happenings and markers of identity as they are explored within your section of the text. Your flowchart/diagram should show your creativity, engagement with the text and should also show your critical thinking and questions. Download your google doc to the assignment link in BB by midnight, 10/1. Be prepared to present your document to the class with a 10 minute presentation –each member should take a short part; also be prepared to lead Q and A following your presentation.

Due 10/2, midnight: your completed study guide for Albanese must be downloaded into the Assignment link in BB. Use this to study for your midterm exam.

9/25: Group presentations

9/30: Group presentations

Read: Selection from Chris Hedges, *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt*

10/2: Prep for in-class exam

10/7 First in-class exam

Unit Two: A Historical Survey Through U.S. Politics and Religion: Laderman and Nussbaum

10/9 Read: Laderman, pp 1-28 (make sure that you click on all the various elements within the chapter to engage the various illustrations) Quiz on reading at beginning of class.

October Recess: October 12, Saturday noon – Oct. 16, Wed., 7:30 am.

10/16 Read: Nussbaum, pp 1-33

Writing Assignment: Bring to class with you a list of the key concepts and the key principles that are outlined by Nussbaum in this book, with a one sentence definition for each. Then write one paragraph to answer the following: What is the “tradition” being referred to by Nussbaum, and why does she think it is “under threat”? Hardcopy due in class; submit virtual copy to BB by midnight 5/6.

10/21 Read: Nussbaum, pp 34 – 70 “Living Together”

Writing Assignment: Nussbaum, at the end of this chapter, claims that there are at least two reasons why Roger Williams’ life and writing remain valuable for our thinking today about the complexity of the relationship between religion and politics. Summarize these two reasons, and include two quotes from earlier in the chapter that help to illuminate each reason. Then, react to this claim from Nussbaum. What do you think about it? Do you agree, disagree – and why? 2 pages, due in hardcopy at beginning of class; submit virtual copy by 10/20 midnight.

***“Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt” – Chris Hedges, 7th Peace and Justice Scholar in Residence
Prosser Auditorium, 7:30 pm, Tuesday, Oct. 22***

All students will attend the lecture, make sure you sign the attendance sheet

Assignment: Take at least 2 complete pages of notes on Hedges' lecture; then, think of three substantive questions you would like to ask him, and write them down (as you listen). Try to pose at least one during the Q and A time. Bring your notes and your questions to class on 10/23; submit virtual copy by 10/23 9am.

10/23 Debriefing the lecture and facetime with Hedges: the relationship between this lecture and our study; **Important note!** Our class will meet for today at the seminary across the street, in the SAAL (please look this up on the campus map if you don't know where it is).

10/28 Read: Laderman, pp 28-48 (make sure you also engage all the additional material by clicking on the links embedded in the chapters)

Writing Assignment: Working with one of your peers in class, develop three substantive questions for use in class discussion about these pages you studied in Laderman. Then, each of you write one solid paragraph about why you think these are the questions we should use to focus our discussion in class (use googledocs, so that you can do this assignment virtually together; bring one hardcopy to present in class; virtual copy due to BB link by 10/27 midnight). 350 words total, make sure both names are on the hardcopy.

10/30 Read: Nussbaum, pp 72-114

Writing Assignment: Write 2 pages to address the following, and bring it with you to class. In this chapter, what do you learn about the complexity of trying to hold together equality and religious freedom and/or establishment? Include at least two questions that you have at the end of studying and thinking about this chapter. Bring hardcopy to class; submit virtual copy to BB by 10/29 midnight.

Unit Three: Exploring Contemporary Issues in U.S. Religion and Politics

11/4 Gearing Up for our Research Projects

BB Discussion Board Assignment:

Look over the possible research areas in the syllabus, and either choose one of these or another (make sure you choose something that interests and piques you!).

- A. On Discussion Board, by 11/2, midnight, write a paragraph that includes the following:
 - 1) Within this broad research area, what is the research problem or question you intend to address? 2) Why does it interest you? What do you think is problematic and significant about it?
- B. Return to BB after 11/2 midnight, and BEFORE OUR CLASS on 11/4, comment on *at least two* of your peers with respect to their posting (if someone already has 2 comments, then choose someone else). Your comment should raise a question or issue you think your peer should consider, help your peer to reframe or refocus so as to more specifically address a question or problem, or in some other way assist your peer in taking his/her initial thoughts to a deeper level.

11/6 Library Research Workshop (in class)

11/11 Read: Nussbaum, pp 115-174 "The Struggle Over Accommodation"

Accommodation at the Founding: Incorporation: Establishment Clause: Free Exercise Clause: Sherbert test: Should religion be “special”?

In class: We will divide up into groups to begin our study of this material in preparation for our class debate on 11/18.

11/13 Read: Nussbaum “Fearing Strangers” pp 175-223

Due in class: Prospectus for research project: In this 2 page paper a) identify the research problem or question you intend to address; b) think about and explore why this is an interesting question; what is problematic about it? Why is it significant? c) What research strategies will you need to utilize in your work? What databases, terms, questions, references, and other do you think will be helpful? Why? 350 words; submit virtual copy to BB by 11/12 midnight

11/18 Class Debate: Should religion be “special”?

11/20 Read: Laderman, pp 48 – 70 Blood, Religion and the Nation

In class: U.S. War-Culture and Religious norms of sacrifice

Due in class: Annotated bibliography: Your annotated bibliography should have at a minimum 5 different resources (an academic journal article of 7+ pages, a book chapter, or something equivalent – please do not use popular resources, or web resources that you have accumulated outside of the library databases). Include the full citation according to MLA format, and below each citation write 3 sentences or so that indicate the precise way you believe this article will help you in your project. What aspect of the problem you are exploring does it address? How does it address it? You will need to have skimmed all your sources in order to thoughtfully and intelligently compile your annotations. Please also indicate how you located each item. Submit virtual copy to BB by 10/19 midnight.

Thanksgiving Recess: Nov. 23, Saturday – Dec. 2, Monday, 7:30 am

12/2 Read: Laderman, 70 to the end of the book. Quiz on material at beginning of class.

Exploratory essay: By this point you are at an intermediate stage in your research project. You should by now have read widely and have confronted the complexity of your problem. In this essay, narrate the evolving process of your own thinking. Include the external details (the research you have found, how you found it, who you talked to) and internal mental details (what you were thinking and how your ideas have been evolving). Your essay might include how some of the original resources you compiled for your annotated bibliography turned out to be less helpful than you imagined, necessitating further searching on your part; and/or the way in which certain research resources raised new questions that you needed further research to explore further. For this essay you need not arrive at a specific final position or solve the problem; your reader is interested in your process, not final product. For instance, show your frustration when a promising source turned out to be useless, and how new ideas led to the reformulation of your problem in some way. Make your exploratory essay an interesting intellectual detective story – something your readers will enjoy. 4-5 double-spaced pages; virtual BB copy due by midnight 12/1.

12/4 ***Peer Review workshop on completed rough draft of your research Paper***

Each student will come with a rough draft of the first 7 pages of their 10 – 12 page research paper, plus their bibliography. We will use class time to work in pairs to review, evaluate and support one another's work.

In class: Students will compose their "abstract" of their research: in 200 – 250 words, compose a summary of your paper, including 1) the problem you attempted to unravel and address; 2) your one-sentence thesis; and 3) the main evidentiary supports you must. Include your title – a) restate the question your project addresses; b) restate the thesis or purpose; c) two-part title with colon (right hand side: key words from thesis; left hand side: restate key issue or thesis, i.e. "Money and Growth: An Alternative Approach").

12/9 Hard copy submission of final research paper, to be placed in Dr. DB's door box:

- 10 – 12 double-spaced pages;
- MLA format;
- footnotes or endnotes;
- attach the latest version of your annotated bibliography, plus your rough draft from 12/4
- Your abstract from 12/4 should also be included as the front page of your work.

Final Exam: Our Final exam time will consist of a research roundtable, in which each student will have about 7 minutes to orally present their research to their peers, and receive questions and comments. This activity will contribute to your final research paper grade.