

Religion and Politics

Colgate University

Class

Semester: Spring 2022

Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:45-4

Room: Persson 109

Instructor

Kevin Walker, Ph.D.

Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9-11

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Course Description

The First Amendment of the Constitution states: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting free exercise thereof.” With that simple phrase, the Constitution disestablished religion in the United States, ending the centuries-old policy of making religion the business of government, and erecting what many view as a “separation of church and state” – but it also began an extraordinary new story for the complex and fascinating relationship between religion and politics. Religious groups would no longer be protected and maintained by government, but by the voluntary associations of members; religious doctrines would no longer be mandated by law, but subject to open conversation and persuasion; and dissenters would not be viewed as traitors, but as those who savor the full extent of religious freedom – and sometimes become heroes. We have certainly seen religion and politics corrupted, to be sure: they have been mixed together in uncomfortable ways; rigid ideologies often exploit religion as a political tool; and religion itself has been a source of intolerance and exclusion. But more often, the relationship between American religion and politics, the extraordinary tension between them, and the ability of one to season and enrich the other, have all been the main dynamic force of American life. Religion, for all its faults, has enriched American politics with a sense of higher purpose, and ensured a much more vibrant democracy than we would otherwise have.

This course is a study of the various interactions between the spiritual and temporal sides of our national life. We will study the topic from both the outside and the inside – i.e., we will consider the social science of religion and its role in American politics, but we will also examine the arguments and views of religious believers (and some non-believers) themselves, the insights of sacred writings, and the deepest convictions of individual citizens. Throughout, we will approach the topic in the spirit of Thomas Jefferson, author of the Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, who wrote: “I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend” (Letter to William Hamilton, April 22, 1800).

Required Texts

Students are required to own the following texts:

Kidd, Thomas S. *America’s Religious History: Faith, Politics, and the Shaping of a Nation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019.

Hertzke, Allen D., et al. *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*, Sixth Edition. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Course Requirements

Grades will be based on the following:

- **Participation (10%).** Come to class every day, do the assigned readings, and contribute to the conversation. There will be occasional reading quizzes on Moodle.
- **Midterm Exam (25%).** An exam on the terms, basic concepts, and readings on the first half of the course.
- **Final Exam (30%).** This is an exam on the terms, basic concepts, and readings on the second half of the course.
- **Research Essay (35%, Phase I 5%, Phase II 5%).** This is a 12-14+ page research essay on a topic of your choice related to religion and politics. There will be a prompt, and the essay will be due in two phases. Late essays will receive no higher than a B+.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism, or the use of someone else's text without quotes and proper citation, is considered a violation of the university's standards of academic integrity and will be grounds for serious disciplinary action. A first offense will be an F on the assignment; a second offence will be an F in the class and a referral to the Dean.

Learning Services

If you have a disability that prevents you from doing as well as you could in this class, be sure to contact Evelyn Lester, Director of Academic Support and Disability Services, to discuss your specific needs and set up arrangements with the professor. Lynn's office is in the Center for Learning, Teaching and Research, and you can email her at elester@colgate.edu, or call her at 315 228 7375.

The Writing and Speaking Center

All writers and public speakers can benefit from constructive feedback on their essays or presentations. At the Writing and Speaking Center, a free service for all students, peer writing consultants can help you with a draft's focus, organization, grammar, style, citations, and many other aspects. If you're preparing a speech or oral presentation, peer speaking consultants can help you organize your content or practice your delivery to an audience. All meetings are private, and you may visit at any stage of your process, from clarifying your initial ideas to reviewing a final draft or practicing a presentation. See <http://www.colgate.edu/writingcenter> for more information or to reserve an appointment. The center is located in 208 Lathrop Hall. Phone: (315) 228-6085.

Course Outline

Students are required to read the following readings for each day of class. Discussion of each reading may vary depending on the pacing of the class.

I. History

Week 1 – Early America

January 24

Defining Terms; *America's Religious History*, Chapter 1; Readings, John Winthrop, Model of Christian Charity (1631); Cotton Mather, A Man of Reason (1718)

January 26

America's Religious History, Chapter 2; Reading, Laws, Rights and Liberties Relating to Religion in Early America

Week 2 – Revolution and the Founding

February 1

America's Religious History, Chapter 3; Readings, Jonathan Mayhew, *A Discourse Concerning Unlimited Submission* (1750); Samuel West, *The Right to Rebel Against Governors* (1776)

February 3

Reader, Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Query XVII (1781); James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments* (1785); A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom (1786); George Washington, *Letters to Quakers, Jews and Catholics* (1789-1790)

Essay Topic Selected with Bibliography – February 4

Week 3 – Jacksonian America

February 8

America's Religious History, Chapters 4; Readings, *People v. Ruggles* (1811); Lyman Beecher, *A Plea for the West* (1835)

February 10

America's Religious History, Chapter 5; Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1840); Orestes Brownson, *Catholicity Necessary to Sustain Popular Liberty* (1845)

Week 4 – Slavery and the Civil War

February 15

America's Religious History, Chapter 6; Readings, Abraham Lincoln, *Fragments on Slavery and Pro-Slavery Theology* (c. 1854)

February 17

America's Religious History, Chapter 7; Readings, Fredrick A. Ross, *Slavery Ordained by God* (1853); Abraham Lincoln, *Second Inaugural Address* (1865)

Essay Phase I Due Friday, February 18

Week 5 – Confronting Modernity

February 22

America's Religious History, Chapter 8; Readings, Pittsburgh Platform on Reformed Judaism (1885); Solomon Schechter, *Alter-Building in America* (1904); Louis Brandeis, *The Jewish Problem* (1915)

February 24

America's Religious History, Chapter 9; Readings, G. Stanley Hall, *Philosophy in the United States* (1879); Richard Ely, *The Social Law of Service* (1896); Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907)

Week 6 – Modern America

March 1

Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Shall the Fundamentalists Win?* (1922); J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (1923)

March 3

America's Religious History, Chapters 10-11; Readings, Sayyid Qutb, *The America I Have Seen* (1951)

Week 7 – Civil Rights and Religious Conservatives

March 8

America's Religious History, Chapter 12; Readings, Martin Luther King, *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (1963); Malcolm X, *Letters from Abroad* (1964)

March 10

America's Religious History, Chapter 13-14; Readings, Frances Schaefer, *A Christian Manifesto* (1981)

II. Politics

Week 8 – Social Theory

March 22

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 2

March 24

Exam on Weeks 1-7

Midterm Exam – March 24

Week 9 – Religious Groups

March 29

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 3

March 31

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 4

Week 10 – Race

April 5

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 5; W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*, Chapter X (1903)

April 7

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 5

Essay Phase II Due Friday, April 8

Week 11 – Gender and Sexuality

April 12

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 6; Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (1898); Phyllis Schlafly, *Power of the Positive Woman* (1977)

April 14

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 6; David Gushee, *Changing our Minds* (2015); Michael Hannon, "Against Heterosexuality," *First Things* (March, 2014)

Week 12 – Political Participation

April 19

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 7

April 21

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 8

Week 13 – Elites and Society

April 26

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 9; Reader, Alfred Smith, "Catholic and Patriot," *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1927; John F. Kennedy, Speech on Religion (1960)

April 28

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 10; William Jennings Bryan, Last Speech (1925); Sam Harris, *An Atheist Manifesto* (2005)

Week 14 – Religion and Law

May 3

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 11; Reader, *Reynolds v. U.S.* (1879); *West Virginia v. Barnett* (1943); *Employment Division, Department of Human Resources v. Smith* (1990)

May 5

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 12; Reader, *Engel v. Vitale* (1963); *Edwards v. Aguillard* (1987); *Van Orden v. Perry* (2005); *Lee v. Weisman* (1992)

Final Exam on Monday, May 9, 12-2