

Religion and Politics

Colgate University

Class

Semester: Spring 2020

Times: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:45-4

Room: Persson 109

Instructor

Kevin Walker, Ph.D.

Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9-12

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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:

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

Kosek, Joseph Kip. *American Religion, American Politics: An Anthology*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017.

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. Unexplained absences will result in the loss of a point. Not reading will result in a quiz.
- **Five Reading Reflections (10%, 2% each).** These are short reflections on the readings, based on certain disputed questions.
- **Midterm Exam (25%).** An exam on the terms, basic concepts, and readings on the first half of the course.
- **Final Exam (25%).** This is an exam on the terms, basic concepts, and readings on the second half of the course.
- **Research Essay (30%, 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 offense 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 Lynn Waldman, 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 lwaldman@colgate.edu, or call her at 315 228 7375.

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. Religion and the American Founding

Week 1 – The Social and Historical Framework

January 21

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 1 – Religion and Political Culture in America (1-19)

January 23

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 2 – Theories of Religion, Culture, and American Politics (24-43)

Week 2 –

January 28

Anthology – John Winthrop, Model of Christian Charity (1630); William Penn, Frame of Government (1682); James Madison, Memorial and Remonstrance (1785)

January 30

Anthology – Julia Ward Howe, Battle Hymn of the Republic (1863); Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (1865); Martin Luther King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail (1963)

Essay Topic Selected – January 30

II. Identities and Issues

Week 3 – Identifying Religious Groups

February 4

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 3 – Christianity and its Major Branches

February 6

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 4 – Judaism, Islam and Other Expressions of Religious Pluralism

Week 4 – Race and Ethnicity

February 11

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 5 – Latino and African-American Religion and Politics

February 13

Anthology – Frederick Douglass, *Love of God, Love of Man, Love of Country* (1847); George Armstrong, *The Christian Doctrine of Slavery* (1857); W.E.B. DuBois, “Of the Faith of our Fathers” (1903)

Week 5 – Women

February 18

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 6 – Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Politics

February 20

Anthology – Francis Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit* (1888); Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman’s Bible* (1895)

Research Essay Phase I Due – Friday February 21

Week 6 – Gender and Sexuality

February 25

Anthology – Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father* (1973); Phyllis Schlafly, *The Power of the Positive Woman* (1977)

February 27

Anthology – John Shelby Spong, *Blessing Gay and Lesbian Commitments* (1988); Handout: Michael Hannon, “Against Heterosexuality,” *First Things* (2014)

III. Participation

Week 7 – Voting

March 3

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 7 – Voting and Religion in American Politics

March 4

Exam on Weeks 1-6

Midterm Exam – March 4

Week 8 – Political Involvement

March 9

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 8 – The Politics of Organized Religious Groups

March 11

Anthology – Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907); Jerry Falwell, *Of Ministers and Marches* (1965); Wendell Berry, “Faustian Economics” (2008)

Week 9 – War

March 24

Anthology – Reinhold Niebuhr, “Why the Christian Church is Not Pacifist” (1940); Dorothy Day, “Wars are Caused by Man’s Loss of His Faith in Man” (1940)

March 26

Anthology – Abraham Heschel, “The Moral Outrage of Vietnam” (1965); George W. Bush, *Freedom at War with Fear* (2001)

Research Essay Phase II – Due Friday, March 27

Week 10 – Elites and Society

March 31

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 9 – Religion and Political and Cultural Elites

April 2

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 10 – Religion, Civil Society, and Culture

Week 11 – Culture

April 7

Anthology – William Jennings Bryan, Last Speech (1925); George Docherty, A New Birth of Freedom (1954)

April 9

Anthology – Francis Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (1981); Sam Harris, *The End of Faith* (2001)

IV. Law and Religion

Week 12 – Law

April 14

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 11 – The Politics of Religion in the Legal System; Chapter 12 – Church and State in the Courts

April 16

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 12 – Church and State in the Courts

Research Essay – Final Draft Due Friday, April 17

Week 13 – Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State

April 21

Anthology – *Reynolds v. U.S.* (1879); Jehovah's Witness Flag Salute Cases (1940-1943)

April 23

Anthology – *Engel v. Vitale* (1963); *Employment Division v. Smith* (1990)

Week 14 – The Future of Religion and Politics

April 28

Religion and Politics in America, Chapter 13 – Big Themes and Normative Concerns in Religion and Politics

May 1

Discussion and Review

Final Exam on Wednesday, May 5, 12-2pm