Course title: Politics of Religion
Course code: (GI) RELI 2001 CTSA / (GI) POLI 2001 CTSA
Programs offering course: Cape Town Open Campus Block
Open Campus Track: International Relations and Political Science
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring Block II 2021

Course Description

This course examines contemporary public discourses suggesting that Northern Hemisphere societies are moving towards secular and presumably progressive positions, whilst North Africa and the Middle East are portrayed as sites of virtually eternal religious conflict. In exploring the relationship between church, religion and state, this course will evaluate a comprehensive range of thematic approaches in the politics of religion. Where evidence, both current and historical, suggests a relationship between religion and morality, this course will review how religious morality informs the politics of the state, and how some societies are moving towards popular and populist notions of civic morality. Through the contrast between civic and religious morality, students will explore case studies in different countries on issues such as homosexuality, contraceptives, abortion, legitimate and illegitimate violence, the role of women in society, and the significance of rational thought in the sciences.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Critically evaluate readings from the course
- Develop and deliver complex arguments on highly sensitive issues
- Articulate the distinction between morality and religion
- Improve academic writing and presentation skills
- Enhance intercultural awareness and communication competencies

Course Prerequisites

None.

Methods of Instruction

Among other techniques, the methodology used throughout this course will include: teacher presentations with student-teacher dialogue and discussion; active discussion in which students will be expected to prepare presentations to argue a specific case and defend it to an opponent and the class. Students will also attend site visits, special events, and guest lectures. They are expected to take copious notes of readings, lectures and out-of-class activities to be potentially used for course submissions. Rules for citation and referencing apply.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Case Studies Debate 10%
2. Presentation 20%
3. Midterm Exam 25%
4. Final Paper 25%
5. Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Case Studies Debate
Each student is required to participate in a prepared debate on the role of politics in religion, based on selected case studies. The debate will be in groups with each assigned a given topic. Grading will be based on knowledge and preparation demonstrated in the in-class debate.

Presentation

Students will be required to deliver a presentation during the course. Each presentation should be about 10 minutes (excluding opponent and class discussion) and it should show a good understanding of a selected topic and the ability to put it in perspective. The topic should be presented in a concise yet comprehensive manner.

Midterm Exam

The midterm exam will consist of multiple-choice and short answer / paragraph questions to measure the students' progress halfway through the course.

Final Paper

A 2000-word discussion paper will be required. This paper will cover a specific topic and needs to show a solid understanding of and reflection on the topic assigned. The topic cannot be the same as the presentation topic.

Participation

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution in the digital and tangible classroom, utilizing the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities.

Attendance

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1
Class: 1.1 Introduction: Religion in Our Societies

This module of the course introduces students to the role of religions as social systems which structure societies. Attention will be paid to how religion intersects with political, social and cultural contexts in both Western and on-Western societies, and the impact of religion as a social system on everyday life. Guest speaker: Dan-Erik Andersson, Researcher at the Department of Human Rights, Lund University.

Reading:
Bruce, S. Politics and Religion, pp. 1-14.

Debate questions will be assigned

Week 2
Class: 2.1 Religion, Empires, and Colonialism

This module of the course examines the role of the Christian churches during the development of European empires in the American, Asian, and African continents. The module will explore the Crusades, and the fermenting of a violent relationship between faiths in the Middle East, whilst also exploring how religious obligation was used as the justification of colonization in the Americas and Africa.

Reading:
Bruce, S. Politics and Religion, pp. 15-40.
Carson, P. “An imperial dilemma: The propagation of Christianity in early colonial India”.
Chevedden, Paul E. “The Islamic view and the Christian view of the Crusades: A new synthesis.”
Porter, A. “Religion and Empire: British Expansion in the Long Nineteenth Century, 1780–1914”.
Optional:
Jotischky, Andrew. Crusading and the Crusader States.

Class: 2.2 Migration and Faith
This module explores the history of migration based upon religious conflict, social subjugation, and pilgrimage. Examples for analysis will be historical and current, and present examples from throughout the world focusing on the impact on communities and economies at the departure and arrival stages of religious migration.

Reading:

Levitt, Peggy. “Redefining the Boundaries of Belonging: The Institutional Character of Transnational Religious Life.”

Stamatov, P. "Activist Religion, Empire, and the Emergence of Modern Long-Distance Advocacy Networks."

Yang, F. & Ebaugh, H.R. “Transformations in New Immigrant Religions and Their Global Implications” Site Visit: Islamisk-Kristent Studiecenter, København, Denmark

Optional:

Garnett, Jane and Alana Harris, eds. Rescripting religion in the city: Migration and religious identity in the modern metropolis.

Class: 2.3 Debates

Students participate in the group debates in this class.

Week 3

Class: 3.1 Religion and the Nation-State

In this module students will explore the relationship between religion and the nation-state through a historical examination of the connections between church and state in Europe and beyond.

Reading:

Bruce, S. Politics and Religion, pp. 41-93.

Furseth Inger. “Secularization, Deprivatization, or Religious Complexity?”

Ibenwa, C.N. Religion and Nation Building: A Critical Analysis

Class: 3.2 Religion, Ritual, and Society

Following from the previous module, this module deconstructs ritual in contemporary societies, with particular emphasis on religious-inferred rituals surrounding public commemorations, and the operating religious-inspired rituals of modern governments and parliaments. Site Visit: The Danish Humanist Society (Humanistisk Samfund).

Reading:

Kühle Lene et al. “Religion and State: Complexity in Change.”


Turner, V. The Forest of Symbols, Cornell University Press (selected readings)

Optional:

Gordon-Lennox, Jeltje et al. “Case Study: A Nordic Rite of Passage Comes of Age”, pp. 87-103.

Class: 3.3 Midterm Exam

Week 4

Class: 4.1 Religious Politics

In this module students will examine case studies from throughout the world, wherein political systems engage in support or opposition (or a blend of both) with religious dogma. Students will also examine case studies where the private lives of politicians impacted how the public viewed the moral standing of the public representative, and consider what impact religious dogma had in these
circumstances. Site Visit: Visit to local organization

Reading:

Tessler, M. “Islam and Democracy in the Middle East: The Impact of Religious Orientations on Attitudes toward Democracy in Four Arab Countries”

Class: 4.2 Religion and Representation

In this module students will discuss the representation of religions in the public sphere. Representation analyses will evaluate concurrently the level and impact of the political representation of religions, both predominant and minority religions, in society whilst also examining the public representation of religions in the mediascape and social media.

Reading:


Herbert, David. Religion and Civil Society: Rethinking Public Religion in the Contemporary World.

Optional:


Class: 4.3 Presentations

Week 5

Class: 5.1 Religion and Public Morality

This module examines case studies of key debates surrounding a number of sensitive issues in contemporary society, including abortion rights, contraceptives, and state-sanctioned executions.

Reading:


Optional:


Class: 5.2 Religion and Violence

This module explores historical and contemporary examples wherein violence was legitimized through the invocation of religious dogma.

Reading:

Bruce, S. Politics and Religion, pp. 127-160.

Maguire, D. (ed.) Sacred Rights

Optional:


Film: “Jihad: A Story of the Others”
Week 6
Class: 6.1 Religion and Gender

This module evaluates how religious dogma influences and informs public and political discourses throughout the world in relation to the role of women.

Reading:


Optional:

Marler, Penny Long. “Religious Change in the West: Watch the Women.”

Class: 6.2 Religion and Sex

This module evaluates how religious dogma influences and informs public and political discourses throughout the world in relation to homosexuality, civil liberties and marriage equality.

Reading:

Bruce, S. Politics and Religion, pp. 161-204.

Johnston, C. “Ireland becomes first country to legalise same-sex marriage by popular vote – as it happened”, The Guardian

Final Discussion Paper Due

Course Materials
Readings


