POLS 221: Religion and Politics in the United States (Fall 2015)

Instructor: Andre P. Audette
Office: 421 Decio Hall
Office Hours: MWR 11:00-12:00, or by appointment
Email: aaudette@nd.edu
Meeting Schedule: TR 9:30-10:45
Classroom: DeBartolo Hall 316

“We have this idea in our minds that there’s this separation of church and state in America...and we extend that to our politics – not just church and state, but it’s also there’s a separation of religion and politics. But of course there isn’t.” – Stephen Colbert (2012)

Course Description

Despite a supposed constitutional principle of “separation of church and state,” religion has a long history of influence in American politics. In this course, we will critically examine the interrelationship of religion and politics beginning with the American Founding and continuing through the present day. We’ll begin with a discussion of how religion and politics are allowed to/should mix, then explore how various religious organizations have attempted to influence the political system. We’ll analyze survey research on the beliefs and behaviors of American religious groups and how they interact in an increasingly diverse religious and political environment, and conclude by discussing whether religion plays a supportive or damaging role in American democracy.

Prerequisite: one introductory course in American politics

Course Objectives

- Identify the major groups, events, and ideas that have defined U.S. religion and politics
- Explain how religion impacts mass-level political behavior and opinions
- Think critically about the role of religion in American democracy, both empirically and normatively
- Learn the basic methods and techniques of religion and politics research
- Leave this course better able to synthesize and intelligently express your own points of view, both orally and in writing
Required Texts

The following materials are available in the campus bookstore or through other online retailers. Please be sure to purchase the correct edition.


All other course materials will be available on the library reserves through the library website, unless otherwise indicated. I will also occasionally email short articles that are relevant to our class discussions.

Course Requirements

To help you achieve the course objectives, final grades will be assessed through the following evaluations:

- Religion and the candidates paper (15%)
- Faith tradition paper (15%)
- Religion and political attitudes/behavior paper (15%)
- Religion and democracy paper (20%)
- Final exam (20%)
- Participation (10%)

*Further information on these course requirements will be distributed in class*

*Religion and the candidates paper (Due: Sept. 27th):*

For this paper, you will select one of the many 2016 presidential candidates and write about the role religion has played or will likely play in their campaign. Among the topics you should cover include: the religious background of the candidate, their positions on issues related to religion, support or opposition from religious groups, and how religion might help or hinder the candidate’s presidential ambitions. Your paper should ultimately address why religion plays the role it does in the candidate’s campaign. The paper should be at least five pages (double-spaced) and turned in via email.
Faith tradition paper (Due: Nov. 1st):

To write this paper, you will research the history, beliefs, and political involvement of a faith tradition that is different from your own. You will also attend one off-campus worship service of this faith tradition and discuss whether what happened at this service could be considered “political” in any way. The paper should be at least five pages (double-spaced) and turned in via email.

Religion and political attitudes/behavior paper (Due: Nov. 22nd):

Over the course of the semester, you will learn how to conduct basic quantitative analyses using recent data on religion and politics. After you have seen the data available, you will select (and I will approve) a topic on religion and politics to research and statistically analyze. Your analyses should be supported with our readings from class and other pertinent sources in a paper of at least five pages (double-spaced) and turned in via email.

Religion and democracy paper (Due: Dec. 15th):

After spending the semester reading about religion and politics, you will write a paper that answers the question of whether religion plays a damaging or supportive role in American democracy. In this paper, you should synthesize the course readings and offer your own opinion on this question, supported by evidence. The paper should be at least five pages (double-spaced) and turned in via email.

Final exam:

The final exam will be cumulative and is closed-book. It will include multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. I will also give you one essay question right now: how should one’s faith (or lack of faith) inform their political activity? Discuss using our readings from class and your research for the religion and democracy paper.

Participation:

A large part of our class will be based on discussion; therefore, it is essential that you come to class ready to actively participate. This includes (but is not limited to): attending class regularly, carefully reading the assigned texts, sharing your thoughts, opinions, and insights in discussion, considering and raising opposing viewpoints, engaging in respectful dialogue with others, listening attentively to others’ perspectives, and following the discussion policies listed in this syllabus. You will receive an advisory midterm participation grade to help you assess where you are at halfway through the course.

An additional way of earning participation points is by participating in online discussion responses through Sakai. Every Monday I will post questions based on the readings to the “Forums” tab, found at sakai.nd.edu. Importantly, online discussion is not a substitute for
in-class attendance and participation, and will only count for partial credit. This is simply a way for you to increase your participation grade by discussing points you were unable to raise in class or had more time to think about after class or your own further research.

Grades will be calculated using the following scale:

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Course Policies

Academic Honor Code:

All students are expected to be familiar with and uphold the University of Notre Dame Academic Code of Honor (http://www.nd.edu/~hnrcode/). Any student found to have violated these policies of academic integrity will receive a failing grade on the assignment and may be subject to further penalties by the university. If you have any questions about avoiding plagiarism or any of the other policies, please do not hesitate to ask.

Late Work/Extra Credit:

An important part of career preparation is the ability to meet deadlines and fulfill the requirements of your work. Therefore, late assignments will be subject to a half-letter grade reduction for every 24 hour period that the assignment is late. Additionally, there will be no extra credit given on an individual basis.

Laptops and Electronic Devices:

You are permitted to use laptops in class for note-taking purposes only. Cell phones and other electronics should put away during class. To do otherwise detracts not only from your learning, but from other students’ as well.
Attendance:

Class attendance is expected, but not required, in this course. However, keep in mind that it is impossible to participate if you do not attend class. Furthermore, you are responsible for all of the material covered in class, and it is thus in your best interest to attend every class. If you must miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from another student or to contact the instructor before the next class to discuss the material you missed.

Discussion Policies:

The goal of discussion is to understand and learn from the viewpoints and experiences of others in order to better understand our own opinions and the functioning of the world around us. Specifically, our goal in this course is to consider various components of and to think critically about American democracy. Just as multiple voices are necessary for a healthy democracy, your participation is important for the learning experiences of your fellow classmates and your instructor. Therefore, participation will be graded on the quality, and not just quantity, of your contribution to this endeavor. To create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to participate, respect for individual differences and viewpoints will be maintained at all times. In sum, you are allowed and encouraged to disagree with other students, the professor, or the texts, but disagreement should always be expressed in a respectful manner inside and outside of the classroom.

Exceptions, Extensions, and Exemptions:

Exceptions to the policies and schedule on this syllabus are granted only in the cases of a true emergency. Please make arrangements with your instructor if an emergency arises.

Disability Statement:

If you have a disability, I am happy to work with you and the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to provide the appropriate accommodations. At the beginning of the semester, please contact the ODS (disabilityservices.nd.edu) to make the necessary arrangements.

Syllabus Changes:

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus or the course schedule. Advance notice will be provided for any changes.

Questions, Concerns, Comments

If you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to contact me. I encourage you to come to my office hours even if you just want to discuss politics or some other subject, and I can set up appointments if you are unable to meet during the scheduled times. (Please try to give me at least 24 hours notice if you’d like to make an appointment.)
Other Resources

As your instructor, I am happy to assist you in meeting your goals for this semester. Notre Dame also has a number of other resources to assist you with this process. I will highlight a few here, and am willing to discuss any additional concerns you may have in my office hours or via email.

Writing Center: Schedule appointments online at writingcenter.nd.edu

Library System: library.nd.edu or political science librarian Pix Fleming (kflemin4@nd.edu)

University Counseling Center: (574) 631-7336 or ucc.nd.edu

Campus Ministry: 114 Coleman-Morse Center or campusministry.nd.edu

Career Center: 248 Flanner Hall or careercenter.nd.edu

Course Outline and Schedule

*Reading assignments are to be completed before the date they are listed.

*Please bring all assigned readings to class (paper or electronic).

Tuesday, Aug. 25th – Introduction and What You Know

Thursday, Aug. 27th – Religion in American Society

Tuesday, Sept. 1st – Religion in Early America

Thursday, Sept. 3rd – Big Changes
Tuesday, Sept. 8th – The Current Religious Landscape

- Skim the 2015 Pew Research report on “America’s Changing Religious Landscape” [link on Sakai]

Thursday, Sept. 10th – Theories, Definitions, and Measurement


Tuesday, Sept. 15th – Religion and Political Campaigns


Thursday, Sept. 17th – The God Gap


Tuesday, Sept. 22nd – Culture Wars: A Divided America?


Thursday, Sept. 24th – Culture Wars: Myth or Reality?

- **Religion and the candidates paper due Sunday by 11:59pm**
Tuesday, Sept. 29th – The Christian Right I
- WR. Chapters 1-2. pp. 3-73.

Thursday, Oct. 1st – The Christian Right II
- WR. Chapters 3-5. pp. 77-205.

Tuesday, Oct. 6th – The Christian Left (?)

Thursday, Oct. 8th – Mainline Protestants
- WCB. pp. 263-270.

Tuesday, Oct. 13th – Politics in/of Churches

Thursday, Oct. 15th – Civic Engagement

Tuesday, Oct. 20th – Thursday, Oct. 22nd NO CLASS – FALL BREAK

Tuesday, Oct. 27th – Jews in American Politics
- WCB. pp. 270-278.
Thursday, Oct. 29th – Muslims in American Politics

- WCB. pp. 297-304.
- **Faith tradition paper due Sunday by 11:59pm**

Tuesday, Nov. 3rd – Mormons in American Politics

- WCB. pp. 205-311.

Thursday, Nov. 5th – Religion and Public Opinion


Tuesday, Nov. 10th – Fun Math Class (In Computer Lab)

- Audette, Andre. “Quantitative Methods Guide.” [on Sakai]

Thursday, Nov. 12th – Catholics in American Politics

- WCB. pp. 243-263.

Tuesday, Nov. 17th – Latino Religions and American Politics

- Audette, Andre. “Charisma and Conservatism: Charismatic Catholics in Latino Politics” [on Sakai]
Thursday, Nov. 19th – African-American Religions and American Politics

- WCB. pp. 280-290.
  Introduction. pp. 3-11.
- **Religion and political attitudes/behavior paper due Sunday by 11:59pm**

Tuesday, Nov. 24th – The “Nones”


Thursday, Nov. 26th **NO CLASS – HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

Tuesday, Dec. 1st – Religious Switching

  Chapter 4. pp. 56-64.

Thursday, Dec. 3rd – Religion and Gender

- WCB. pp. 318-331.
- Audette, Andre et al. “Reconciling the God and Gender Gaps: The Influence of Women in Church Politics.” [on Sakai]
Tuesday, Dec. 8th – Religion and Tolerance


Thursday, Dec. 10th – Religion and Democracy: The Verdict


Tuesday, Dec. 15th – Eschatology

- FINAL EXAM (10:30AM-12:30PM)
- Religion and democracy paper due by 11:59pm