This course is meant to introduce students to some of the major ways in which religion and politics influence each other in contemporary American life. We will be especially concerned with these developments: (1) the increasing influence of conservative Protestantism on issues of major national importance, which will include an examination of who conservative Protestants are and what they actually believe; (2) the role that religion plays in America’s two party system and whether contemporary issues such as faith-based initiatives or school choice can be understood as a product of partisan differences shaped by different religious outlooks; (3) the transformation of American Catholicism since the 1950s and its implications for American politics; and (4) the importance of Islam in the United States in the aftermath of September 11.

The course will meet once a week and will function as a seminar. This means that students are expected to attend each and every class, to read the assignment for each class before coming, and to participate actively in class discussions. The final grade will be based upon performance in a mid-term exam, a final exam, class participation, and a short oral presentation to be described during the term.

The following books have been ordered for this course:

2. Kenneth Wald and Alison Calhoun-Brown, Religion and Politics in the United States (Rowman and Littlefield)
5. Peter Steinfels, A People Adrift (Simon and Schuster).
6. Geneive Abdo, Mecca on Main Street (Oxford University Press).

Here are the reading assignments and topics for the semester.

September 9, 2013

Topic: Introduction: Religion and Politics in General I
Reading: Steve Bruce, Chaps 1-4
September 16, 2013

   Topic: Religion and Politics in General II  
   Reading: Bruce, Chaps 5-7

September 23, 2013

   Topic: Religion and Politics in America, I  
   Reading: Wald and Calhoun Brown, Chaps 1-6

September 30, 2013

   Topic: Religion and Politics in America, II  
   Reading: Wald and Calhoun Brown, Chaps 7-12

October 7, 2013

   Topic: The Christian Right  
   Reading: Wilcox and Larson, whole book

October 21, 2013

   Midterm exam

October 28, 2013

   Topic: Catholics  
   Reading: Steinfels, whole book

November 4, 2013

   Topic: Islam  
   Reading: Abdo, whole book

November 11, 2013

   Student Reports
November 18, 2013
Student Reports

November 25, 2013
Student Reports

December 2, 2013
Trends in American Religion
Wolfe, whole book

December 9, 2013
Conclusion and summary
Readings to be assigned

Final Exam is scheduled for Tuesday, December 17, 2013 at 9AM.

If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, dugganka@bc.edu, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, paulette.durrett@bc.edu, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities, including temporary disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.