

Political Science 351  
Seminar: Religion and Politics  
Fall 2008  
Professor Wolfe

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 in the first part of the course we will read texts in common and discuss them. As we do so, students should be thinking about the project in which they will be engaging themselves for the semester. As we move toward the latter part of the course, students will be expected to make presentations about the research in which they have engaged themselves.

Grades for the course will be determined on the basis of a mid-term examination, a final exam, class participation, and the student's oral project.

The following books have been ordered for this course:

1. Steve Bruce, Politics and Religion (Polity Press).
2. Kenneth Wald and Alison Calhoun-Brown, Religion and Politics in the United States (Rowman and Littlefield)
3. Clyde Wilcox and Carin Larson, Onward Christian Soldiers?: The Christian Right in American Politics (Westview Press).
4. Alan Wolfe, The Transformation of American Religion (Free Press).
5. Peter Steinfels, A People Adrift (Simon and Schuster).
6. Geneive Abdo, Mecca and Main Street (Oxford University Press).

Here are the reading assignments and topics for the semester.

September 8, 2008

Topic: Introduction: Religion and Politics in General I

Reading: Steve Bruce, Chaps 1-4

September 15, 2008

Topic: Religion and Politics in General II

Reading: Bruce, Chaps 5-7

September 22, 2008

Topic: Religion and Politics in America, I

Reading: Wald and Calhoun Brown, Chaps 1-6

September 29, 2008

Topic: Religion and Politics in America, II

Reading: Wald and Calhoun Brown, Chaps 7, 9, 10, 11, 12

October 6, 2008

Topic: The Christian Right

Reading: Wald and Calhoun Brown, Chapter 8  
Wilcox and Larson, whole book

October 20, 2008

Midterm exam

October 27, 2008

Topic: Catholics, I

Reading: Steinfels, Part I

November 3, 2008

Topic: Catholics II

Reading: Steinfelds, Part II

November 10, 2008

Topic: Islam

Reading: Abdo, whole book

November 17, 2008

Topic: Consequences for America, I

Reading: Wolfe, Chaps 1-5

November 24, 2008

Topic: Consequences for America, II

Reading: Wolfe, Chap 6 - Conclusion

December 1, 2008

Student Reports

December 8, 2008

Student Reports and conclusion

Final exam will be held on Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at 12:30 PM.