

Political Science 351
Seminar: Religion and Politics
Fall 2013
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 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:

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 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, 2103

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.