

POU44271. RELIGION AND POLITICS

MT 2023-24

Seminars: Wednesdays 2-4pm, CG 2.04

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Office Hours: Thursdays 12-2pm

Module description

This module examines the relationship between religion and political outcomes from multiple perspectives. It surveys classical and recent approaches to the study of religion and social and political organization in different disciplines including sociology, psychology, economics, and political science to explain the recent trends in religious affiliation and the effect of religion on political life. Religion is often a double-edged sword: On the one hand, it is associated with pro-social and cooperative outcomes; on the other hand, religion often underlies prejudice, violence, and conflict. One major goal of the module is to explain the social, institutional, and psychological dynamics that explain why religion is associated with normatively positive outcomes in some instances and why it is associated with normatively negative outcomes in some others.

Learning aims

Critically evaluate the role of religion in public life using concepts and theories from multiple disciplines; assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of different approaches in the study of religion and politics; explain how and why religion often has contradictory effects on political outcomes.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of this module students should be able to:

- Discuss the main trends in religion and religiosity in the past decades,
- Explain and critically assess the major theoretical approaches in the study of religion,
- Critically assess the recent perspectives on religiosity and secularization,
- Discuss the institutional, social, and psychological dynamics linking religion to social and political outcomes.

Course organization

This is a seminar course, which relies heavily on active student participation. I generally open the class meetings by providing some background on the topic, connecting it to the broader literature, making clarifications about the concepts, theories, and methods and then open up the floor for discussion. It is therefore essential that students attend class having done the week's readings and ready to discuss them.

The Blackboard will present detailed information of each week's class organization, reading list, and response papers.

Office hours and contact with students

I will respond to your e-mails within 48 hours on weekdays during the teaching weeks and 24 hours (again, on weekdays) during the exam period. If you send an email during the weekend, do not expect to receive an immediate reply.

In case you have any questions about course content, readings, or class discussions, you can raise them during office hours.

Please note that I will not be able to answer substantive questions concerning course content via e-mail. In case you have such questions, please set up an appointment for office hours or raise them during class meetings. Please bear in mind that I will not cover the lecture material for you during office hours, as office hours are not intended to replace lectures.

Office hours are currently Thursdays 12-2pm. These are drop-in hours, meaning, students do not need to make an appointment with me to come and see me during this time slot.

In case the office hours clash with your other modules or responsibilities, please let me know and we can try to make an appointment for a different day and time.

Assessment details

5% Response papers and seminar participation

40% Mid-term essay

55% Final essay

Response papers and participation. 5% of your final mark comes from response papers and participation in seminar discussions.

Response papers will be submitted through the Blackboard system, under the assignment tab of the corresponding week. The due dates and times for the response papers are:

- **Tuesdays, 1 pm** of each week. **Late submissions are not accepted.**

To receive full points, you have to submit at least 1 of the response papers between Weeks 2-6 and at least 1 response paper between Weeks 8-11.

The response paper prompts are indicated under Seminar Schedule and Readings section below. These questions generally ask you to critically evaluate the required readings assigned for the week. You do not need to incorporate material from optional readings. Unless otherwise noted, response papers must be around 400 words (plus/minus 10%) and must respond to the prompt that is provided. Response papers should not be mere summaries of the material but should be critical assessment of the readings. Response papers will be graded on a P/F basis (1 points=Pass, 0 points=Fail).

I will assign the P/F grade based on whether the response paper responds to the discussion question directly and whether it engages in a critical discussion of the assigned material. Needless to say, all response papers submitted must be student's own work, and they must abide by the plagiarism policy of our university (please see below).

For the participation component, I will take note of your attendance in discussion sessions. At the end of some sessions, I may also ask you to submit a short summary of the discussion points or short reflective pieces.

In line with the Department of Political Science policy, the maximum grade you can receive for response papers and participation is capped at 80.

Note that it is not possible to get more than 80 points for the response paper by submitting more papers or attending more classes. However, students can submit an additional response paper in case they received an F for one.

Please note that late submissions for response papers will not be accepted. In case you unable to submit your response paper on time, you will need to make sure you submit another one in the upcoming weeks.

Mid-term essay (blog post). I will ask you to write a blog post (1,500 words +-10% NOT counting bibliography), which will count towards 40% of your final mark. The deadline for this assignment is:

- **3 November, Friday 5pm via Blackboard**

Blog posts are popular tools that enable scientists to communicate their research, ideas, and arguments to a public audience in an accessible manner. Blog posts present an argument and/or analyze an event or topic critically with a less formal language and a more flexible structure and in a more personal manner, if you choose to do so. You will of course be asked to build your arguments on scientific evidence and findings, include citations and analysis of evidence.

Blogs will encourage you to work on your digital communication skills by integrating visual content to support your arguments.

You will choose your own topic for the blog post, and submit it for review by me. The theme or topic should be relevant for or related to the themes and topics discussed in Weeks 1-6.

I will provide further guidelines and specific instructions later, but here are some examples that could help you get a sense of the expected output:

- [Is religion bad for democracy?](#)
- [Evangelicals in Brazil see abuse of God's earth as a sin – but will they fight to save the Amazon?](#)

Some practical guidelines from the author of the post, Dr. Amy Erica Smith [on writing blog posts](#) (ignore #3).

- [Rising religiosity as a global response to Covid-19 fear](#)

Final essay. You will pick and write an essay on one of the following topics. The final essay will count towards 55% of your final grade. The word count is (2,500 words +-10% NOT counting bibliography), and will be submitted on:

- **18 December, Monday 5pm via Blackboard**

The essay should have a clearly stated argument (a highly original one for a first class grade), discuss the evidence that supports your argument and discuss and refute the counter-arguments and counter-evidence. It is also essential that your essay is well-organized, efficiently structured, and shows evidence of a good and accurate grasp of the material. I will provide a grading rubric along with more detailed instructions throughout the semester. These will also be posted on Blackboard.

- Discuss the following statement with reference to major themes/theories we surveyed and evidence provided in the readings: “Religion brings us together, while also tearing us apart.”
- Discuss the following statement with reference to major themes/theories we surveyed, and evidence provided in the readings: “Religion is like a knife: you can either use it to cut bread or stick in someone's back.” (Desmond Tutu)

Before submitting any works, please read the [department's undergraduate handbook](#), which contains a lot of useful information about submission of written assignments and guidelines on writing essays.

Late submissions. All late work, unless excused in advance by the module lecturer, or justified by medical certificate or tutor's note, will be penalised at a rate of 5 marks per day. Under no circumstances will work be accepted after the set work has been marked and handed back to other students, or after the end of the second lecture term.

Make sure to save and back-up your work. Computer crashes or failure to back up your work will count as acceptable excuses for late work!

Academic integrity

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception. Academic dishonesty, including, but not limited to, cheating on an exam or assignment, plagiarizing, representing someone else's work as your own, submitting work previously used without the informing and taking the consent of the instructor, fabricating of information or citations, etc. will not be tolerated.

It is a student's responsibility to ensure that research sources are properly acknowledged. Plagiarism comes in many forms but it is mainly seen as stealing someone else's words or ideas and passing them off as your own. The key point is to be aware that all work that is submitted by students must be work that they have completed themselves, with any material that has not been produced by the student (e.g. ideas, quotations etc.) being clearly indicated through proper referencing.

Plagiarism is often not intentional –it happens because students are not fully aware of what counts as academic dishonesty. I strongly recommend that you familiarize yourselves with academic integrity and good research and writing practices to avoid plagiarism:

- Consult the TCD Library guide at: <https://libguides.tcd.ie/academic-integrity/>
- Please read pp. 45-47 of the [College Calendar](#) for University's plagiarism policy.

Plagiarism will lead to automatic failure and the matter will be reported to the student's tutor and the dean of the faculty; severe penalties are likely to ensue, including possible exclusion from the exam or even the College, in accordance with College policy.

Please be aware that the **use of Artificial Intelligence tools can also give rise to cases of plagiarism**, since the text/materials produced by them are not created by the student in question. It is the responsibility of students to stay up-to-date about College policies around plagiarism.

Disability policy

Students with a disability are encouraged to register with the [Disability Service](#) to seek supports where the disability could affect their ability to participate fully in all aspects of the course.

Mental Health

If you have any concerns or are experiencing personal and interpersonal difficulties, you can contact the Student Counselling Services and get some support and resources to help you: https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/

Seminar Schedule and Readings

The first set of readings is the required readings of the week. There are also optional/further readings for each week for students who would like to read more about the topic. You are not required to incorporate material from optional readings to your response papers although you are welcome to do so.

Week 1: Religion and politics – The state of the discipline

**No response paper this week*

Kettell, Steven. 2023. Is Political Science (Still) Ignoring Religion? An Analysis of Journal Publications, 2011–2020. *PS: Political Science and Politics*. First View. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096523000598>

Grzymala-Busse, Anna. 2012. Why Comparative Politics should Take Religion (More) Seriously. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15: 421-442.

Optional:

Fox, Jonathan and Shmuel Sandler. 2004. *Bringing Religion into International Relations*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan. Chapter 2.

Kettell, Steven. 2016. Do We Need a “Political Science of Religion”? *Political Studies Review* 14(2): 210-222.

Week 2: Is religion declining? How do define and measure religion and religiosity.

Response paper question: What is your take on the debate concerning whether religion is declining or not? Which author’s (Fox or Inglehart) argument is more convincing? Why?

Inglehart, Ronald. 2021. *Religion’s Sudden Decline: What’s Causing It and What Comes Next?* Oxford University Press. Chapter 1.

(SKIM) Pew Research Center. 2022. Key Findings from the Global Religious Futures Project. [Link](#)

(SKIM) The Irish Times. 2023. Census 2022: Catholicism declines, ‘no religion’ and Hinduism climb in latest data. [Link](#)

Fox, Jonathan. 2006. World separation of religion and state into the 21st century. *Comparative Political Studies* 39(5): 537-569.

Pew Research Center. 2019. A Closer Look at How Religious Restrictions Have Risen Around the World. [Link](#)

Optional

Pew Research. 2022. How COVID-19 Restrictions Affected Religious Groups Around the World in 2020. [Link](#)

Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tBuL419JxEo>

Week 3: Secularization theory and the decline of religion

Response paper question: To what extent is the argument that pro-fertility norms are responsible for the decline of religion compelling?

Inglehart, Ronald. 2021. *Religion's Sudden Decline*. Chapters 3, 5-7.

Optional

Dhima, Kostanca, and Matt Golder. 2021. Secularization Theory and Religion. *Politics and Religion* 14(1): 37-53.

Chaves, Mark and Philip S. Gorski. 2001. Religious Pluralism and Religious Participation. *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 261–281.

Krech, Volkhard et al. 2013. Religious Diversity and Religious Vitality: New Measuring Strategies and Empirical Evidence. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion* 9(3): 2-21.

Week 4: Supply-side explanations and religious vitality

Response paper question: How persuasive are the supply-side perspectives on religiosity and secularization? Are there any examples or counter-examples that you can think of to back up your stance?

Stark, Roger and Laurance R. Iannaccone (1994). A Supply-side Reinterpretation of the “Secularization” of Europe. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 33: 230-252.

Fox, Jonathan and Ephraim Tabory. 2008. Contemporary Evidence regarding the Impact of State Regulation of Religion on Religious Participation and Belief. *Sociology of Religion* 69(3): 245-271.

Ridge, Hannah M. 2020. State Regulation of Religion: The Effect of Religious Freedom on Muslims' Religiosity. *Religion, State & Society* 48(4): 256-275.

Optional:

Stolz, Jörg and David Voas. 2023. Explaining Religious Revival in the Context of Long-Term Secularization. *Religions* 14: 723. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14060723>

Week 5: The interplay of religion and politics

Response paper question: How persuasive do you find the arguments and evidence put forth by Margolis and Campbell et al. on the effect of partisanship and religiosity?

Margolis, Michele. 2018. *From Politics to the Pews: How Partisanship and Political Environment Shape Religious Identity*. Chapters 1-3.

Campbell, David E., Geoffrey C. Layman, John C. Green, and Nathanael G. Sumaktoyo. 2018. Putting Politics First: The Impact of Politics on American Religious and Secular Orientations. *American Journal of Political Science* 62 (3): 551-565.

Optional:

Torrekens, Corinne, Nawal Bensaïd and Dimokritos Kavadias. 2021. Young Belgian Muslims: Between Religious Reactivity and Individualization. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 45(11): 2049-2068.

Week 6: Religion and its influence: The Weberian tradition

Response paper question: How convincing is the Weberian approach in explaining religion's effect on political or economic outcomes?

(SKIM) Weber, Max. [1930] 2001. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Routledge. Chapters 1, 2, 5.

Woodberry, Robert D. 2012. The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy. *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 244-274.

Nikolova, Elena, and Jakub Polansky. 2021. Conversionary Protestants Do Not Cause Democracy. *British Journal of Political Science*, 51: 1723–1733.

Optional:

Cantoni, Davide. 2015. The Economic Effects of the Protestant Reformation: Testing the Weber Hypothesis in the German Lands. *Journal of the European Economic Association* 13(4): 561-598.

Becker, Sasha O. and Lidger Woessmann. 2009. Was Weber Wrong? A Human Capital Theory of Protestant Economic History. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 124 (2): 531-596.

Guiso Luigi, Paola Sapienza, and Luigi Zingales. 2003. People's opium? Religion and Economic Attitudes. *Journal of Monetary Economics* 50(1):225-282.

Week 7: Reading week. *No response paper

Week 8: The social function of religion

Response paper question: How convincing is the argument that religious communities are associated with positive social outcomes such as happiness, life satisfaction or political engagement?

(SKIM) Durkheim, Emile. [1912]1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. The Free Press. Chapter 1 and Conclusion.

Putnam, Robert and David E. Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. New York: Simon & Schuster. Chapter 13.

Fleischmann, Fenella, Borja Martinovic and Magdalena Böhm. 2016. Mobilising Mosques? The Role of Service Attendance for Political Participation of Turkish and Moroccan Minorities in the Netherlands. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39(5): 746-763.

McKenzie, Brian D. 2004. Religious Social Networks, Indirect Mobilization, and African-American Political Participation. *Political Research Quarterly* 57(4): 621–632.

Optional:

Lim, Chaeyoon and Robert D. Putnam. 2010. Religion, Social Networks, and Life Satisfaction. *American Sociological Review* 75(6): 914-933.

Becker, Sascha and Ludger Woessmann. 2018. Social Cohesion, Religious Beliefs, and the Effect of Protestantism on Suicide. *The Review of Economics and Statistics* 100(3): 377-391.

Campante, Filipe and David Yanagizawa-Drott. 2015. Does Religion Affect Economic Growth and Happiness? Evidence from Ramadan. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 130(2): 615-658.

Week 9: The ‘dark side’ of the social dimension of religion?

Response paper question: Would you agree that it is mostly the social (communal) rather than private (belief) dimension of religion that is responsible for prejudice, intolerance or support for violence?

Norenzayan, Ara. 2013. *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 9.

Ginges, Jeremy, Ian Hansen, and Ara Norenzayan. 2009. Religion and Support for Suicide Attacks. *Psychological Science* 20(2): 224-230.

Fair, C. Christine, Neil Malhotra, and Jacob N. Shapiro. 2012. Faith or Doctrine? Religion and Support for Political Violence in Pakistan. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 76(4): 688-720.

Ben-Nun Bloom, Pazit, Gizem Arikan, and Marie Courtemanche. 2015. Religious Social Identity, Religious Belief, and Anti-Immigration Sentiment. *American Political Science Review* 109(2): 203-221.

Optional:

Atran, Scott. 2016. The Devoted Actor: Unconditional Commitment and Intractable Conflict across Cultures. *Current Anthropology* 57(13): 192-203.

Hoffman, Michael. 2020. Religion, Sectarianism, and Democracy: Theory and Evidence from Lebanon. *Political Behavior* 42: 1169–1200.

Hadjar, Andreas, et al. Devoutness to Islam and the Attitudinal Acceptance of Political Violence Among Young Muslims in Germany. *Political Psychology* 40(2): 205–222.

Week 10: Religious regulation, religious institutions, and political conflict

Response paper question: In what ways does a focus on state-religion relations enhance our understanding of religion's influence on conflict and violence compared to some other approaches that we studied?

Grim, Brian J. and Roger Finke. 2011. *The Price of Freedom Denied: Religious Persecution and Conflict in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge. Chapter 3.

Akbaba, Yasemin and Zeynep Taydas. 2011. Does Religious Discrimination Promote Dissent? A Quantitative Analysis. *Ethnopolitics* 10 (3-4): 271-295.

Basedau, Matthias, Jonathan Fox, Jan H. Pierskalla, Georg Strüver, and Johannes Vüllers. 2017. "Does discrimination breed grievances—and do grievances breed violence? New evidence from an analysis of religious minorities in developing countries. *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 34(3): 217-239.

De Juan et al., 2015. The Pacifying Effects of Local Religious Institutions: An Analysis of Communal Violence in Indonesia. *Political Research Quarterly* 68(2): 211-224.

Optional

Helbling, Marc and Richard Traunmüller. 2016. How State Support of Religion Shapes Attitudes toward Muslim Immigrants: New Evidence from a Sub-national Comparison. *Comparative Political Studies* 49(3): 391-424.

Isaacs, Matthew. 2017. Faith in Contention: Explaining the Salience of Religion in Ethnic Conflict. *Comparative Political Studies* 50(2): 200-231.

Week 11: Religion and elite influence

Response paper question: To what extent religious competition and religious threat perspectives explain the motivations and behavior of religious elites?

Smith, Amy Erica. 2016. When Clergy are Threatened: Catholic and Protestant Leaders and Political Activism in Brazil. *Politics and Religion* 431-455.

Trejo, Guillermo. 2009. Religious Competition and Ethnic Mobilization in Latin America: Why the Catholic Church Promotes Indigenous Movements in Mexico. *American Political Science Review* 103(3): 323-342.

Armaly, Miles T., David T. Buckley, and Adam M. Enders. 2022. Christian Nationalism and Political Violence: Victimhood, Racial Identity, Conspiracy, and Support for the Capitol Attacks. *Political Behavior* 44(2): 937-960.

Optional

Philpott, Daniel. 2007. Explaining the Political Ambivalence of Religion. *American Political Science Review* 101(3): 505-525.

McCauley, John F. 2014. The Political Mobilization of Ethnic and Religious Identities in Africa. *American Political Science Review* 108(4): 801-816.

Toft, Monica Duffy; Daniel Philpott & Timothy Samuel Shah. 2011. *God's Century: Resurgent Religion and Global Politics*. New York: WW Norton. Chapter 7.

Ganiel, Gladys and Paul Dixon. 2008. Religion, Pragmatic Fundamentalism and the Transformation of the Northern Ireland Conflict. *Journal of Peace Research* 45(3): 419-436.

Week 12: Revision and essay discussion. *No response paper