POLITICS 314 -- Politics and Religion in United States
Fall 2015
Ford 224, MWF 10:20-11:20
Prof. David Gutterman
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SML 322, X6716
Office Hours: TTH 1:00-3:00, by appointment

Course Description
In this course we will be examining some of the most vital and contentious issues in politics: What is the foundation of political society? How should the obligations of citizens be ordered? What is the relationship between politics, religion, and morality? What is the relationship between toleration and freedom? What are the implications of the self-conception of the United States as a “Christian nation” or as a “chosen nation?” What role should religious voices have in shaping public policy in the United States?

To explore these concerns we will begin the semester with a “crash course” in the history of religion and politics in the United States. Our reading in this section of the class will largely consist of primary source documents: sermons, speeches, letters, trial transcriptions, laws, and essays. This first section of the class will provide us with a foundation for our study of religion and politics in the contemporary United States. In the second section of the course, our reading will primarily consist of two recent books: 1) an examination of the development of what has become a dominant stream of contemporary American Christianity – “Christian libertarianism, and 2) a historical account of the Catholic Church and abortion politics in the United States over the last thirty years. Moreover, because of the subject of our analysis – and because of our commitment to participating in the analysis of an emerging and ongoing phenomenon – we will be keeping close eye on current events and on new scholarship. Accordingly, our reading list is subject to change – generally by addition rather than subtraction. There are only two books that must be purchased for this course:


All other texts will be available through the course WISE site or through links provided throughout the semester.

Student Learning Objectives
In this course, students will:
• think critically and creatively about politics and religion
• examine the relationship between religious identity and political identity
• draw connections between political theory and political practice and behavior
• develop understanding of the intersection of culture and power
Furthermore, as a course designated as fulfilling the MOI “Analyzing Arguments, Reasons, and Values,” students in this course should:

- understand the nature and structure of arguments
- know how to apply various criteria of evaluation to arguments
- recognize that it is possible to reason and draw meaningful conclusions about matters of ethical or aesthetic value.

Course Requirements

Reading and Participation Assignments:

This is a seminar class, not a lecture course. We are going to be talking and listening to one another, engaging in a collective enterprise of exploration. The realms of politics and religion are the sources of meaning in many of our lives. The issues touched by these realms accordingly get to the very heart of how we understand ourselves and the world we share. Accordingly, we can and should expect that we will not all agree with one another regarding the topics we will be discussing. Indeed, there may well be moments in this course that some people will find deeply upsetting. This course should neither be seen as an opportunity to preach to the choir, nor as a space for proselytizing. Vital to the success of this class is the commitment we make to listening and speaking with one another with respect and thoughtfulness.

The reading assignments for this course are rigorous and challenging. You are required to thoughtfully read every assignment. When I say that you are required to read, I do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but that you should grapple with the ideas. Mark up your text, read with a pen and paper, and write down ideas, questions, quotations, and points of confusion or contention. Read for comprehension rather than completion, pondering every idea rather than looking at every word. This means that you may need to read a section, think about it, read it again, write about it, discuss it, and then read it again. So, “do the reading” means “engage yourself with the ideas of the texts.”

The reading load will be quite heavy at times. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment, and read aggressively. Remember to make use of your resources. Come to my office hours and form reading groups with your classmates. Reading in this way will assist you in the second requirement: Your regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Come prepared to participate by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course material, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

If you miss a class, whether excused or unexcused, you must write a 500 word paper analyzing the reading that was assigned for the day you miss. Your participation grade in the course will be lowered by half a grade for every short paper you do not turn in within a week of your return to class. More than two unexcused absences will result in a full grade deduction from your final course grade; each additional absence will result in an additional deduction of one full grade from your final grade. Persistent lateness or failure to prepare adequately for class discussions can also result in deductions from the final grade.
There is one more crucial facet of class participation. Throughout the semester students will be asked to not simply participate in class discussions, but also to lead and facilitate class discussions. We will be talking more about how to prepare for this responsibility.

One more note about reading and participation: Throughout the semester, I will be distributing additional articles, essays, poems, biblical passages, and other texts for us to read and discuss. I will also be sending out links to websites, screening short videos, and podcasts. These additional readings are not listed on the schedule of events below, but will be designed to complement the major reading assignments, pick up on themes from our class discussions, and keep us in touch with ongoing developments in American political culture. These supplemental texts and resources will contribute to the dynamism of the class, and let me add that you are each strongly encouraged to suggest texts and resources that we can discuss as a class.

**Writing Assignments:**

There are three major writing/presentation assignments in this course.

1. I will divide the class into two groups. During the first section of the course, each week one group will be responsible for submitting short essays analyzing the texts. Each student will submit two of these short essays during our opening “crash course.”

2. Throughout this semester we are going to dedicate most of our class meetings on Friday to an ongoing discussion of current events focusing, of course on religion and politics. Our goal in these Friday discussions is to keep our study of religion and politics in the United States tethered to the many ways these forces define or inform contemporary political controversies. But in addition to simply identifying and describing these contemporary controversies, we are also going to address how we might examine these issues as subject of academic research. We are going commit ourselves to developing our skills in research design – a process that is going to directly inform the research projects that will conclude this course. And what, you wonder, is your role in these CERP&D discussions going to be? In addition to actively participating in these discussions each Friday, each student will be assigned one Friday on which they will be in charge of choosing an issue for the class to discuss, assigning a text for everyone to study in anticipation of the class meeting, developing possible approaches to researching this issue further, and leading the class discussion. Typically, we will have two students facilitate these discussions each Friday. Finally, every student will write a short paper (800-1000 words) about the chosen issue, possible research designs, and connections between our broader class discussions and the specific analysis of this issue.

3. The ultimate aim of this course is not simply to gain a richer understanding of politics and religion in the United States, but to prepare you for the Politics Department senior thesis by prompting you for the Politics Department senior thesis by prompting you to think about political research in terms of puzzles to be posed and answered. The final project is explicitly designed as a stepping stone to the senior thesis. It will be different from the papers you are used to writing because rather than write a complete research paper you will assemble the building blocks of what could subsequently be developed into a longer research paper. This exercise will provide you with the experience of what it is like
to begin to put together a thesis. If you select a topic you like, you may even want to develop the work in your senior thesis. Even if you choose not to pursue the topic further, you will still have had valuable practice in the skills you will need to compose a senior thesis or conduct advanced academic research in other disciplines.

The final paper—4,500 to 5,000 words in total—will consist of the following parts:
1. A one sentence statement of the puzzle that animates your research project.
2. An annotated bibliography of between 6 and 8 sources. Each annotation should summarize the argument and evidence of the book/article/chapter/report/document in no more than 250 words. Total length of the annotated bibliography should be between 1500 and 2000 words.
3. A 1000 word description of research puzzle you have identified.
4. A 1500 word section that a) identifies and describes at least three possible theories or explanations that might account for different answers to your research puzzle; b) discusses the implications of each of these different answers; and c) identifies the explanation that you think provides the best fit with the data you have gathered, and explain why you find it the most satisfactory explanation.
5. A 200-250 word abstract of your thesis

Finally, let me add that periodic, short writing assignments may also be assigned as a way of focusing reading and stimulating discussion; these will be part of your participation grade.

* A crucial note about writing, editing, and rewriting: I strive to encourage all students in advanced classes to become careful and conscientious writers. My policy is simple: I can’t take your work seriously if you don’t. If, in reading your paper, I see multiple instances in which the work seems sloppy, or hasty, or lacking evidence of careful review and revision, I will have little incentive to keep reading, and it will be reflected in your grade. Like many of you, I have been guilty of not editing, proofreading, and revising my work carefully enough, and as such have submitted work that is sloppy. Falling into bad patterns is all too easy when so much of the writing we do is informal; this policy should make clear that written work for a class should be approached differently than email, texts, or tweets. I also know that editing one’s own work can be very difficult – the words on the page can seem so familiar that it is easy to start skipping sentences and paragraphs when reviewing one’s own work. Accordingly, I strongly encourage you to work with a partner in this editing and proofreading process.

** Note: A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day’s lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). I generally do not grant extensions, but if extraordinary circumstances arise, please consult with me as soon as possible -- and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.

*** Another note: I fully appreciate that students like fast and thorough comments on their writing assignments. Unfortunately “fast” and “thorough” do not often go together well. I will strive to return your final papers in a timely fashion. As a general rule, you should receive your papers back within two weeks of turning them in.
**** Of Special Note: I take plagiarism and cheating very seriously. Willamette’s policy on cheating and plagiarism states:

Cheating is any form of intellectual dishonesty or misrepresentation of one’s knowledge. Plagiarism, a form of cheating, consists of intentionally or unintentionally representing someone else’s work as one’s own. All members of the Willamette University community are expected to be aware of the serious breach of principles involved in plagiarism. Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism shall not be considered a valid defense. If students are uncertain as to what constitutes plagiarism for a particular assignment, they should consult the instructor for clarification.

Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment AND WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN. [http://www.willamette.edu/cla/dean/policies/plagiarism.html](http://www.willamette.edu/cla/dean/policies/plagiarism.html)

****** Statement Concerning Disabilities: Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term.

******* Willamette’s Credit Hour Policy holds that for every hour of class time there is an expectation of 2-3 hours work outside of class. Thus, you should anticipate spending 6-9 hours outside of class engaged in course-related activities. Examples include study time, reading and homework assignments, research projects, and group work. And the reality is that for you to succeed in this course, you should expect to dedicate much more than this required 6-9 hours per week.

******* Willamette University recognizes the value of religious practice and strives to accommodate students’ commitment to their religious traditions whenever possible. When conflicts between holy days or other religious practice and academic scheduling arise, every effort should be made to allow students to adhere to their tradition, including, when possible, excusing class absences and allowing make-up work. A student anticipating the need to miss a class for religious reasons should alert the faculty member within the first two weeks of the semester, and the two of them should determine the next course of action. Any unresolved difficulty should be referred to the Office of the Chaplains.

******* A final note about email and communication. I will often communicate with the class through email. I will try to respond to your messages as quickly as I can. However, I will only on the rarest of occasions respond after 9:00PM. In addition, I am planning on dedicating Tuesday and Thursday mornings this semester to my own writing and research. I will likely be email-free during these times.
Grading

“Crash Course” Essays (2X/10% each) 20%
Current Events Research Presentation & Design 20%
Research Project, Prospectus, and Presentation 40%
Class Participation 20%

Total 100%

Schedule of Events

1. W 8/26: Syllabus and Introduction


5. F 9/4: CERP&D

M 9/7: LABOR DAY; NO CLASS


7. F 9/11: CERP&D


Gray Whaley, Oregon and the Collapse of the Illahee, Introduction and Ch. 4.


10. F 9/18: CERP&D


Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address” and “Second Inaugural Address”


13. F 9/25: CERP&D


II. Religion and Politics in the 21st Century United States

18. W 10/7: Kevin Kruse, One Nation, Under God

19. F 10/9: CERP&D

20. M 10/12: Kevin Kruse, One Nation, Under God

21. W 10/14: Kevin Kruse, One Nation, Under God

   F 10/16: MID-SEMESTER DAY, NO CLASS

22. M 10/19: Kevin Kruse, One Nation, Under God

23. W 10/21: Kevin Kruse, One Nation, Under God

24. F 10/23: CERP&D

25. M 10/26: Kevin Kruse, One Nation, Under God

27. F 10/30: CERP&D

28. M 11/2: Kevin Kruse, *One Nation, Under God*


30. F 11/6: CERP&D


33. F 11/13: CERP&D


36. F 11/20: CERP&D

**V. Research Presentations**


38. W 11/26: Presentations, Day 2

   F 11/27: THANKSGIVING, NO CLASS


40. W 12/2: Presentations Day 4

41. F 12/4: Presentations Day 5, LAST CLASS