

Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective
Political Science 559
Pepperdine University
Fall 2002
Wednesdays 12-4

Dr. Chris Soper
226 Appleby Center
456-4792
csoper@pepperdine.edu

Course Description: Religious groups are an obvious and important part of political life around the world. Though their involvement is not always welcome, religious believers of many faiths have mobilized dynamic social movements to affect political change. This course explores the status of relations between politics and religion in the contemporary world. Some basic historical and theological information will be provided as each religion is introduced (Judaism, Islam, and Christianity) followed by an analysis of the political involvement of groups in specific countries.

The course will be divided into four broad sections. Part I will introduce students to leading theories of religion and culture and the key questions that confront the institutions of church and state. Part II focuses on Islamic politics, with particular emphasis on Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East. Part III will look at Jewish political activism in Israel. Part IV will look at Christianity, with a particular focus on religion and politics in the United States.

Course Requirements: Members of the class will be expected to study the materials in the textbooks according to the schedule provided, attend class and participate in lively debate, and take a midterm and final examination.

The final grade for the course will be based upon the following scale:

Essay Reflection	(four to six pages)	25 points
Short paper	(four to six pages)	25 points
Participation		25 points
Midterm Examination		100 points
Final Examination		100 points
Research Paper	(ten to fifteen pages)	125 points
		Total 400 points

Final grades will be based on the percentage of total points earned where:

94-100 A	90-93 A-	87-89 B+	84-86 B
80-83 B-	77-79 C+	74-76 C	70-73 C-
66-69 D+	60-65 D	< 60 F	

Books: The following books are available at the Pepperdine book store.

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*
2. Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*
3. John Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*
4. Robert Booth Fowler, Allen D. Hertzke, and Laura Olson, *Religion and Politics in America*
5. Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox, editors, *Religion and Politics in Comparative Perspective*

A good class, much like a good government, requires an active, engaged, and interested citizenry. To that end, I expect members of the class to study the material in the books according to the schedule provided, attend class regularly, and participate in lively discussion. I encourage student questions, comments, and arguments about religion and politics.

Except for a documented emergency, I expect students to take the exams on the days that they are scheduled. If you have an emergency and need to reschedule an exam, please see me early in the semester. If you wish to re-schedule the final examination you will need to receive written permission from the Dean's office.

Office Hours: My office is 226 Appleby Center. My office hours are from 8-10 on Wednesday and 2 to 4 on Thursday. You can also reach me via e-mail, if you wish. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Course Schedule:

NOTE: To help with discussions, the readings **must** be completed by the date listed.

Part One: Religion and Political Culture

August 29: Introduction: What are politics and religion?

1. Jelen and Wilcox, chapter 1

September 4: Religion and secularization

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*.
2. Karl Marx, selected readings

Short Paper #1 Due

September 11: Theories of Religion and Culture

1. Jelen and Wilcox, chapter 1
2. Booth, Fowler, and Olson, chapter 12.
3. Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion in America" (on reserve in library).
4. Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (on reserve in the library).
5. Declaration of Independence/ speeches of Lincoln, King, Bush Inauguration

Reflective Essay Due

Part Two: Islam

September 18: Islamic theology and political mobilization

1. Malise Ruthven, *Islam: A Very Short Introduction*

September 25: Islamic Extremism

1. Jelen and Wilcox, chapter 7
2. Esposito, chapters 1-2

October 2: Contemporary Islamic politics

1. Esposito, chapters 3-4
2. Jelen and Wilcox, chapter 6.

Short Paper #1 Due

October 9: **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Part Three: Judaism

October 16: The Politics and History of Israel

1. Jelen and Wilcox, Chapter 5

October 23: The Palestinian crisis.

1. Barak/Malley Exchange

Part Four: Christianity

October 30: The Roman Catholic Church

1. "Gaudium et spes" (on reserve)
2. John Paul II Papal Encyclicals (on reserve).

November 6: The Catholic Political Experience

1. Jelen and Wilcox, chapters 2, 3, 8, and 9.

November 13: Religion and American History; Religion and the Courts

1. Booth, Fowler, and Olson, chapters 1, 10-11

November 20: Contemporary Religion and Culture in the United States

1. Booth and Fowler, chapters 2-6

November 27: African-American Church Tradition; Women and Religion, Religious Minorities

1. Booth, Fowler, and Olson chapter 7 -9

December 4: TBA

Paper #2 Due

Final Examination: December 12, 10:30-1:00

Reflective Essay Project

For this assignment, you have two options. You can write a reflective analysis on what you believe your faith requires of you in terms of social and political involvement. Some possible questions that you might consider include: What does love your neighbor mean in terms of politics? Is faith primarily a personal matter of individual salvation or does it also require you to do something to change the political world around you? Should your faith inform your politics? If so, in what ways?

If you are not a religious believer, or do not wish to write on the first topic, you may, alternatively, for this assignment, write an essay in which you outline what you believe to be the proper relationship between religion and politics. Some possible questions for you to consider include: What do you believe to be the dangers and insights that people of faith can bring to politics? Is a government without some religion possible, or desirable? Should there be a strict separation between the institutions of church and state, or should there be an accommodation between them, or even a religious establishment?

Consider your target audience for this essay reflection to be a family member, friend, co-worker, or colleague who has asked to explain to him/her what you believe to be the proper relationship between religion and politics in your life.

While you are free to do research for this essay if you wish, this is not a research paper. I want for you to provide your personal reflections (which should be well-thought out and reasoned) on these enduring questions in four to six pages. Ideally, you would explore the connections between the course reading and your own life.

The essay is due on September 11.

Paper Project #1

For paper #1 you also have a choice of topics. You can, first, write a four to six page paper on Sigmund Freud's, *The Future of an Illusion*. The purpose of this short paper is for you very briefly to review the main points of Freud's thesis and to explain what implications the book has for religion, and religion and politics. Consider your target audience for this assignment to be a family member, friend, co-worker, or colleague who knows nothing about Sigmund Freud but is interested in the topic of the psychology of religion.

Alternatively, you can write a four to six page paper on John Esposito's *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam*. The purpose of this short paper is for you to address the question: Is Islam a Danger to the West? In answering this question, you should use Esposito's book to weigh evidence for and against the proposition. Consider your target audience for this assignment to be a family member, friend, co-worker, or colleague who has knows nothing about Islam except what she or he sees on television.

If you write your paper on Freud's book this paper is due on September 4. If you write your paper on the Esposito book the paper is due on October 2.

Paper Project #2

The third assignment, paper project #2, is a research paper on any topic related to this course. Use the introduction of your paper to engage the reader's interest in a problem or question related to religion and politics that you would like to address in your essay. The body of your paper should be your own response to this topic made as persuasive as possible through the appropriate use of outside resources and your own analysis. You are also required to submit to me a one page paper proposal to on your topic on October 30. I expect you to do a significant amount of research for this paper, using as many sources as necessary for you to become very knowledgeable on the issue that you are examining.

As this is a more traditional research assignment, you should consider that I am the audience for your paper.

The paper should be 10-15 pages in length and is due on December 4.