

VIOLENCE, TOLERANCE, AND FREEDOM
RELS 2540/ANTH 2540 MW 17:15–18:45

THIS IS A DRAFT. READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

This seminar examines how the adjective “religious” has been used to modify the nouns “violence,” “tolerance,” and “freedom.” It traces the historical development of liberal ideas of tolerance, interrogates the common assumption that religion exerts a perverse influence on politics and vice versa, critically examines the concept of terrorism, and connects the neoliberal ideal of unfettered free markets to the idea of being “spiritual, but not religious.”

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The purpose of a liberal arts education is not merely the accumulation of facts. While you will emerge from this course with more general knowledge about the contemporary dynamics of religion and how it relates to law, politics, and public policy, the primary objectives of the course are to facilitate opportunities to engage in the transferable and life-long skills of critical reading, spirited yet civil discussion, and meticulous analytical writing.

EXPECTATIONS

You should plan on reading about 125 pages a week. You will also be responsible for leading class discussion at least once and possibly twice, depending on the number of students in the course. The responsibility of the presenter is to briefly summarize the main points of the reading and to facilitate discussion by asking at least two open-ended questions based on specific passages in our texts. You are expected to be punctual, to come to class prepared, and to be civil in discussion even (especially!) when you disagree with others.

This course has a general discussion board and a Perusall interface, meaning that discussion of the readings will begin online. Please post a question, comment, or link to topical media content (with brief commentary) by no later than midnight ET on Mondays (i.e., after our first class meeting for the week). We’ll use these posts to guide our conversations on Wednesdays.

You can skip on weeks when you are busy, but please post a comment or question at least **ten times** over the course of the term (10 posts=10% of your grade).

A NOTE ON DECORUM

Past experience suggests that this course challenges every student in some way, but it challenges each student differently. Some of you will find the readings abstract and impenetrable. Others will find the authors’ conclusions to be counterintuitive or morally repugnant. Still others will be frustrated with our authors’ reluctance to establish clear normative aims. Then again, in some cases your classmates might adopt hardline normative stances that you find abhorrent. Simply put, at some point in this course you are going to find it hard to be your best self. The simple rule of thumb here is that your participation in the course signals to me and your classmates that you have agreed from the outset to stick to the facts, to own (and be able to describe) your feelings, and to disagree respectfully and civilly. Other than that, we will collectively establish some ground rules for decorum in the first week of class.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Attendance is expected as a matter of course. I won't penalize you for legitimate absences (e.g., illness), but I do expect you to show up. Repeated, unexplained absences will result in a warning and then in a drop of a letter grade. That said, do not come to class if you are sick.

10% of your grade will be based on your online discussion board posts. Don't forget to post!

10% of your grade will be based on your performance as the designated leader of discussion. You will be assessed on the accuracy of your summary of the readings (5%) and the quality of your discussion questions (5%).

80% of your grade will be based on four short response papers, each worth 20%:

Question 1: *What problem does secularism aim to fix, and what problems does it engender?*

Question 2: *What's wrong with "religious violence"?*

Question 3: *Who is tolerance for?*

Question 4: *Freedom isn't really free. Why?*

For those who choose it, 40% of the final grade can be based on a research paper, podcast, or video rather than the last two response papers. The project should explain through a concrete case how religion connects with violence, tolerance, and/or freedom (or some combination thereof). Group projects are permitted, but you must clear them with me ahead of time. Whether it is a paper, video, or podcast, the project must be argument-driven and must engage critically with the category of religion. If you choose this research project option, you will be expected to make steady progress by meeting a set of deadlines throughout the semester. Each of these assignments is graded and contributes to your final score.

EXTENSION POLICY

I want you to feel like you are able to do your best work, so I readily grant extensions to students who have conflicts with assignment deadlines in other courses. However, there is a limit to the length and number of extensions I am willing to grant.

Typically, I will be most amenable to extension requests that come before the due date and ask for reasonable accommodations. Most extensions are for 24–48 hours, although in extreme or extenuating circumstances I may offer up to a week. Longer extensions tend to get students in trouble with stacked up assignments and should be avoided.

PLAGIARISM POLICY

Please follow standard academic citation practice and attribute all ideas that are not your own to the authors who generated them. (When in doubt, follow the Chicago Manual of Style, but I will accept any consistent citation style.)

If I determine that you have engaged in academic misconduct, I will give you a failing grade for the assignment. Because each writing assignment is worth 20% of your grade, this quickly puts you in danger of earning a low final grade or possibly failing the course.

Simply put: plagiarism is not worth it! If you're struggling to finish, ask for an extension and/or come to my drop-in hours to discuss strategies for success.

Weekly Schedule

Week	Readings	Extracurricular
Part I: Secularism and Religion-Making		
Week 1: Orientation January 11	Orientation & Planning	Optional Readings: (Various takes on why everything we know about religion is wrong) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RELIGIOUS STUDIES: Owen, "The World Religions Paradigm: Time for a Change," 253-268 • POLITICAL SCIENCE (IR): Desch, "The Coming Reformation of Religion in International Affairs?" 14-55 • HISTORY: Lofton, "Why Religion is Hard for Historians (and How It Can Be Easier)," 1-18 • SOCIOLOGY: Smith et al. "Roundtable on the Sociology of Religion," 1-36 • ANTHROPOLOGY: Lambek, "Facing Religion, From Anthropology" • LAW: Berger, "The Cultural Limits of Legal Tolerance," 98-123
Week 2: Secularisms and Religion-Making January 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dressler and Mandair, "Introduction: Modernity, Religion-Making and the Post-secular," 20-24 • Asad, <i>Formations of the Secular</i>, 1-17 • Jakobsen and Pellegrini, eds. <i>Secularisms</i>, 1-17 • Mahmood, <i>Religious Difference in a Secular Age</i>, 1-24 • Blankholm, "Secularism and Secular People," 245-68 	Optional Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mahmood, "Can Secularism Be Other-Wise?" 282-299
Week 3: Sexularism January 23 and 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott, <i>Sex and Secularism</i>, esp. 1-29; 156-183 • Coviello, <i>Make Yourself Gods</i>, 1-47 	Optional Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott, "Sexularism," 91-116 Book Recommendation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jakobsen, <i>The Sex Obsession</i>

Week 4: Liberalism (Subject, Agent, Sovereign) January 30 and February 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foucault, "Why Study Power: The Question of the Subject" (1983), 208-16 • Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent," 202-236 • Coviello, <i>Make Yourself Gods</i>, 171-211 	Optional Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grove, "Biopolitics," 22-27 • Foucault, "Governmentality," 131-43
Response Paper #1 <i>What problem does secularism aim to fix, and what problems does it engender?</i> 500-1000 words; due on February 3		
Part II: Violence		
Week 5: Violence February 6 and 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juergensmeyer, "Rethinking the Secular and Religious Aspects of Violence," 185-203 • Cavanaugh, "Religious Violence as Modern Myth," 486-502 • Goldstone, "Secularism, 'Religious Violence,' and the Liberal Imaginary," 104-124 	Book Recommendation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cavanaugh, <i>The Myth of Religious Violence</i>
Week 6: Terrorism February 13 and 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lincoln, <i>Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11</i> (2nd Edition), 1-32 • Asad, <i>On Suicide Bombing</i>, 1-5; 39-64 • Puar, <i>Terrorist Assemblages</i>, 37-78 	Optional Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Williams, "From Pearl Harbor to 9/11," 63-78 • Barkun, "Religion and Secrecy after September 11," 275-301 • Comerford and Bryson, "Struggle over Scripture," 1-42 (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change Report, December 2017)
Week 7: Abuse February 20 and 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lucia, "Guru Sex," 953-88 • Goodwin, <i>Abusing Religion</i>, 1-40 • Evans, MOVE, 1-13; 123-52 (book is available through Penn libraries; read the Introduction and chapter 5 for this week) • Burnley, "Former MOVE Members Are Speaking Out" 	Media Pairing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Megan Goodwin, <i>Abusing Religion</i> interview at the Classical Ideas Podcast • Beth McNamara, Murder at Ryan's Run (podcast about alleged abuse in MOVE; explicit content warning)

Week 8: Order February 27 and March 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wessinger, "The FBI's 'Cult War' against the Branch Davidians," 203-43 • Evans, MOVE, 175-234 (book is available through Penn libraries; read chapters 7 and 8 for this week) 	<p>Book Recommendation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson and Weitzman, <i>The FBI and Religion</i> <p>Media Pairing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Osder, Let the Fire Burn (link to streaming video at Penn libraries) • Oliver, <i>40 Years a Prisoner</i> (documentary about MOVE; available via HBO)
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Response Paper #2

What's wrong with "religious violence"?

500-1000 words, due on March 3

Research Paper Track Only:

If you plan to do a final research project instead of the last two response papers, you must submit a proposed research question to me by email by no later than midnight on 3 March. This should be an answerable question, not just a topic.

If you are proposing a group project, all group members must email me individually indicating that they are on the same page about the project and agree to earn the same grade for their work.

I will vet your topics and get back to you by the end of Spring Break (i.e., no later than 12 March). I reserve the right to veto questions that seem unanswerable, and I may discourage certain group projects if it seems that the workload would be unevenly distributed or if there is a palpable enthusiasm gap among the proposed group members.

If you choose the research project option, you do not have to write the last two response papers. If you start on a research project and then drop it because the project is not feasible, you must complete all four response papers to receive full credit in the course.

SPRING BREAK

Part III: Tolerance

Week 9: Tolerance (Holding Your Nose?) March 13 and 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jakobsen and Pellegrini, Love the Sin (link takes you to the ebook at Penn libraries) • Wilcox, "Words Kill: Sex and the Definition of US Religion," 5-26 	<p>Book Recommendation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown, <i>Regulating Aversion</i>
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Research Project Track Only:

Submit a bibliography of at least five secondary sources that you plan to use in your research project. These sources may appear on the course syllabus, but ideally you will include at least a couple of additional sources.

If you plan to do work on primary sources such as historical documents or video found footage, you should also indicate such sources here (please list these primary sources in addition to the five secondary sources listed above).

Due on 17 March, to be followed by a meeting with me to discuss your research plan. 5 points.

Week 10: Justice (On Being Seen, Or Is It Blind?) March 20 and 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Butler, "Doing Justice to Someone," 621-36 Shweder, "Shouting at the Hebrews," 247-265 Earp and Shahvisi, "The Law and Ethics of Female Genital Cutting," 1-24 	Optional Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Okin, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" Shweder, "What about Female Genital Mutilation?" Shweder, "The Goose and the Gander"
Week 11: Pluralism (On Being Heard But Not Seen) March 27 and 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weiner, <i>Religion Out Loud</i>, 158-94 Stoker, "Zero Tolerance?" 814-39 Fernando, "State Sovereignty and the Politics of Indifference," 261-73 Laycock, <i>Speak of the Devil</i>, 103-30 	Recommended Books: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weiner, <i>Religion Out Loud</i> Gaston, <i>Imagining Judeo-Christian America</i>

Response Paper #3

Who is tolerance for?

500-1000 words, due on March 31

Research Project Track Only:

Submit an abstract outlining the argument of your project and the evidence that supports your claim.

If doing a podcast or video, this should be the "blurb" that tells the audience what your program is about (think YouTube video description).

No more than 150 words; due on 31 March. 5 points.

Part IV: Freedom

Week 12: Free Exercise April 3 and 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sullivan, <i>The Impossibility of Religious Freedom</i>, 1-31 Wenger, <i>Religious Freedom</i>, 1-14, 188-231 Curtis, "Exercise," 59-72 	Book Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hurd, <i>Beyond Religious Freedom</i> Su, <i>Exporting Freedom</i>
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Week 13: Freedom of Conscience April 10 and 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCrary, <i>Sincerely Held</i>, 206-35 • Lofton, <i>Consuming Religion</i>, 197-219 • Weiner, "The Corporately Produced Conscience," 31-63 	Optional Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stahl, "Conscience," 40-58
Week 14: A New Freedom? April 17 and 19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin, <i>Capitalizing Religion</i>, 1-12, 33-85, 107-24 • Guest, <i>Neoliberal Religion</i>, 7-40 	Book Recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown, <i>Undoing the Demos</i> • Cooper, <i>Family Values</i> Optional Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fourcade and Healy, "Seeing Like a Market," 9-29 • Logan, "The Lean Closet," 600-28 (on Gwyneth Paltrow's brand <i>goop</i>)
Research Project Track Only: Submit a rough draft to me for review. The product should be finished enough for a critical audience to discern your argument and main sources of evidence, but it doesn't have to be "done." For example, a podcast or a video might include a storyboard and a script (in text form) even if you haven't finished recording, mixing, and editing your audio/video. A paper might still be partially in outline form, but there should at least be some prose that lays out your argument and evidence, with annotations indicating what information will go into the unwritten parts. Due date: 21 April. 10 points.		
Week 15: Our Ugly Freedoms April 24 and 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anker, Ugly Freedoms, 1-76 (link to book at Penn libraries; read the intro and chapter 1) • Thomas, "Microclimates of Religious Freedom," 75-88; 94-95 	Optional Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anker, Ugly Freedoms, 148-80 (link to book at Penn libraries; read chapter 4) Book Recommendation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rocklin, <i>The Regulation of Religion and the Making of Hinduism in Colonial Trinidad</i>
Response Paper #4 Freedom isn't really free. Why? 500-1000 words, due on April 28		
Research Project Track Only: Submit your revised and polished project to me by May 5. 20 points.		