

Syllabus

Religion and International Relations

Dr. Valeriya Kamenova (vkamenov@upenn.edu)

International Relations Program, University of Pennsylvania

Spring 2023: M/W 1:45-3:15pm OR 3:30-5pm

Course Description: Despite the predictions of modernization theorists, the heartfelt longings of secularists, and the deliberate neglect of structural realists, religion has not withdrawn from the world's political stage. To the contrary, religion continues to shape individual values, social organizations, state institutions, and international relations. This has led to a re-evaluation of long-standing research programs that were based on the assumption that religion would either decline or disappear altogether. Scholars of world politics are now struggling to articulate a vision for the role of religion in public life, in the policies of states, and in global politics. This course is part of that process.

Course Objectives: By drawing on readings from international relations, comparative politics, sociology, history, and anthropology, this course will begin charting a path toward understanding the place of religion in contemporary world affairs. The outcome of this class will not be a new paradigm, nor will it be a unified theory of the role of religion in politics. Rather, by the end of the course, students should possess:

- A historical understanding of the contingent nature of the Westphalian system and its ideational progeny: sovereignty, nation-states, realism, and liberal internationalism.
- A critical perspective on secularization theory.
- A descriptive understanding of select twentieth century religious-political movements.
- A set of causal hypotheses about the role of religious actors in democratization, social movements, political party formation and development, war, economic development, and political psychology

By the end of the course, students should have the vocabulary and knowledge to discuss the role of religious actors in world politics. This skill will be obtained through writing, critical thinking, and seminar discussions, and should be useful both inside and outside the classroom.

Course Requirements:

Participation (20%): The course will be run as a seminar. This format requires students to attend regularly, read diligently, and participate actively in class discussions. Each week, please come to class prepared with 1-2 discussion questions that pertain to the readings.

Presentation (10%): Each student will be assigned to a two-person group, which will be responsible for one 10-minute presentation on current political events regarding a religious organization of their choosing. Students will choose presentation dates in the first week of class. Presentation topics must be approved by the professor and be relevant to course themes. A grading rubric is at the end of the syllabus.

Response Papers (3 x 10% = 30%): Student will write three short (2-3 pages, double-spaced, 1 inch margins) analytical response papers (RP) over the course of the semester. I will provide the paper prompts one week before they are due. A grading rubric is at the end of the syllabus.

Research Paper (5% + 35% = 40%): Students will write a 15-20 page research paper. Students must meet with me mid-March to discuss a topic proposal and preliminary list of sources for the paper (5%).

Required Texts: The following books are required for the class. They are also available at the Penn Library. Additional article and chapter-length readings can be accessed through Canvas.

- Beth Baron, 2014. *The Orphan Scandal: Christian Missionaries and the Rise of the Muslim Brotherhood* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).
- Ziad W. Munson, 2009. *The Making of Pro-Life Activists: How Social Mobilization Works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Recommended:

- Timothy Samuel Shah, Alfred Stepan and Monica Duffy Toft, eds. 2012. *Rethinking Religion and World Affairs* (New York: Oxford University Press).