

## **POLITICAL SCIENCE 4070: RELIGION AND AMERICAN POLITICS** **Clemson University, Spring 2014**

Dr. Laura Olson  
230-G Brackett Hall  
[laurao@clemson.edu](mailto:laurao@clemson.edu)  
MW 2:30-3:45

Despite the supposed constitutional ban on “separation of church and state” in the United States, religious groups scarcely have avoided political involvement. As Alexis de Tocqueville observed, “By the side of every religion is a political opinion, which is connected with it by affinity.” This observation is even truer today than it was when de Tocqueville visited the United States in the 1830s. The presence of religious voices in debates about such issues as abortion, the environment, sexuality, and even the federal budget provides plenty of evidence to show that the link between religion and politics is alive and well in the United States.

This course is designed to examine and critically analyze the nature of the relationship between religion and various aspects of politics in the United States. We analyze **how** religion affects American politics among the masses and in the courts, and we ask **why** religion and politics are so thoroughly interwoven in the United States by examining the religion-politics relationship in historical and theoretical perspective. In doing so, we will encounter a range of themes that are relevant to the study of American politics.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

This course has two objectives. The first is to gain a substantive understanding of why and how religion and politics intersect in American political culture, both in theory and in practice. By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Sketch the history of religio-political interaction in the United States.
- Describe the general contours of American religious diversity.
- Explain the roles religious affiliation and religiosity play in mass level American politics.
- Describe and explain how religion affects American jurisprudence.
- Explain when and why various religious groups have/have not had political influence.
- Offer a detailed empirical assessment of how religion and American politics intersect.
- Render informed normative judgments about whether and how religion and American politics ought to intersect.

The second objective of the course is to improve your critical thinking and writing skills by engaging in a variety of thinking and writing activities.

### **Readings and Videos**

#### **Required books:**

Black, Amy E., Douglas L. Koopman, and Larycia A. Hawkins, ed. 2011. *Religion and American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Perspectives*. Boston: Pearson Longman. ISBN 9780136038146.

Fowler, Robert Booth, Allen D. Hertzke, Laura R. Olson, and Kevin R. den Dulk. 2013. *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*, 5th ed. Boulder, CO: Westview. ISBN 9780813348513.

Waldman, Steven. 2008. *Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty*. New York: Random House. ISBN 9780812974744.



### Required videos:

“God in America” (2010). Six-part series. Available at <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>  
“The Lord Is Not on Trial Here Today” (2011). To be shown in class.

Please note that from time to time I will provide additional materials in class and/or on our course Blackboard site, and I will expect you to read them.

### Office Hours

My office is located at 230-G Brackett Hall. I will hold office hours on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:00 to 2:00 or by appointment. The most efficient way to contact me is via email: [laurao@clemson.edu](mailto:laurao@clemson.edu). You may also reach me through the Political Science Department office (864-656-3233).

In the unlikely event that I need to cancel or delay the start of a class meeting, I will make every possible effort to notify you in advance via email. However, if ten minutes have passed and I have not appeared for a scheduled class meeting, you will be free to go.

### Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who need accommodations should make an appointment with Dr. Arlene Stewart, Director of Disability Services, to discuss specific needs within the first month of classes. Students should present a Faculty Accommodation Letter from Student Disability Services when they meet with instructors. Student Disability Services is located in Suite 239 Academic Success Building (864-656-6848; [sds-1@clemson.edu](mailto:sds-1@clemson.edu)). Please be aware that accommodations are not retroactive and new Faculty Accommodation Letters must be presented each semester.

### Grades

There will be a total of 100 points possible in this course. Grading will follow this scale: A=90-100; B=80-89; C=70-79; D=60-69; F=59 and below.

*As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a "high seminary of learning." Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form.*

**Anyone caught engaging in any form of academic dishonesty will receive a grade of F in the course.**

You **may not** reuse work from previous or concurrent college classes without my explicit consent. See me if you have any questions.

**Your grade for the course will be based on the following:**

#### 1. Exams (46 points)

Two exams will be given. The first exam, which will be worth **20 points**, will be held in class on **Wednesday, March 5**. The second exam will be held during finals week on **Thursday, May 1**, at 3:00 pm. This exam will be worth **26 points** because I will be adding two three-point essay questions. One of these will be broadly cumulative. In the other, you will be required to reflect on the book *Founding Faith* by Steven Waldman, which you will read on your own over the course of the semester.

*Makeup exams will not be given except under the most extreme circumstances. In order to have any chance of being given a makeup exam, you must provide me with written documentation of a severe emergency that prevented you from taking the exam with the rest of the class.*

## **2. Research Project (40 points)**

You will complete a semester-long project about a religion-and-politics topic that interests you. The project will force you to improve your thinking about the topic you choose. There will be three sources of points attached to this project:

### **a. Problem Statement Paper (5 points)**

On the basis of your viewing of the “God in America” video series in January, identify a topic dealing with some aspect of religion and American politics that interests you. By **Monday, January 27**, write a short paper consisting of three paragraphs:

1. One paragraph summarizing your topic. You must be specific, and you must relate the topic directly to content from “God in America.”
2. One paragraph in which you (a) explain why the topic interests you and (b) honestly state any biases and/or personal opinions you have about the topic.
3. One paragraph outlining precisely what you wish to learn about the topic.

### **b. Annotated Bibliography (10 points)**

By **Monday, February 26**, you will complete an annotated bibliography for the topic you have chosen to study. I want you to find at least ten sources (books, articles, news stories, opinion pieces, etc.) that relate directly to the topic you are studying. For each source, provide an accurate bibliographical citation and a few sentences summarizing the information contained in the source. Any source (printed or online) is acceptable, but **you must include:**

1. Sources that present different points of view or frames of reference.
2. Academic and non-academic sources.
3. A sentence in each summary explaining how the source is relevant to your topic.

### **c. Final Analysis Paper (25 points)**

You will submit a final 12- to 15-page (double-spaced) paper in class on **Wednesday, April 23**. In this paper, you are to synthesize the information you’ve gathered about your research topic. Do not just write a report about the topic; instead, analyze what you have learned about it over the course of the semester. Confront the biases and/or opinions you identified in your “problem statement paper” and discuss whether your views are different, more nuanced, or more concrete now than they were at the outset of the semester. Relate the topic to what you’ve learned in our class and (if applicable) to your own life experience.

*Be advised that I take academic dishonesty very seriously and will pursue sanctions against you if I catch you plagiarizing. **You must always provide proper citation for all outside sources!** In the absence of a compelling excuse (e.g. serious illness, death in the family), **late papers will be penalized by the equivalent of one letter grade for each day they are late, including weekend days.** You must contact me as soon as possible if you believe you have a compelling excuse for submitting a late paper without penalty, and you must provide me with written documentation of the severe emergency that prevented you from handing in the paper with the rest of the class.*

### 3. Reading Quizzes (10 points)

Over the course of the semester, I will give **at least seven** short, unannounced reading quizzes in class to determine whether you have been doing the assigned readings. You will be allowed to drop **at least two** of these reading quizzes. *Makeup quizzes will **not** be given under any circumstances.*

### 4. Class Participation (4 points)

I expect everyone to attend and participate actively in this class. Therefore, I am reserving these final points of your grade as a measure of your habits of attendance and participation. I will circulate an attendance sheet on most days, and will also keep close track of your level of attention and participation in class.

Rules regarding classroom decorum (lack of adherence will hurt your participation grade):

- **You will not surf the Internet or text during class time. I reserve the right to ask you to put your laptop and/or phone away at any time of my choosing.**
- Phone ringers should be turned off.
- You will not read a newspaper, magazine, or any other material not related to our class.
- You will not do work for another class.
- You will not organize your day planner.
- You will not listen to your iPod, MP3 player, or similar device.
- You will not arrive excessively late or leave early.

#### \*\*\*\*\* Course Outline \*\*\*\*\*

### Section 1: How Religion and American Politics Intersect

#### A. *Historical and General Background* (January 8, 13, 15)

To set the stage for the study of religion and politics for the rest of the semester, you will view the six-part Video series “God in America,” available for free at <http://www.pbs.org/godinamerica/view/>

READ:

- Fowler et al., chapter 1
- Black et al., 1.2, 1.5, 1.8, 1.10, 1.11, 2.3, 2.9, 2.10

#### B. *American Religious Diversity* (January 22, 27, 29, February 3, 5, 10)

The United States supports a remarkably diverse and thriving religious marketplace. We will explore the “Three Bs” (religious belonging, believing, and behaving) of America’s major religious traditions, with emphasis placed on Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam. Attention will also be given to the growing number of Americans who do not affiliate with any religion.

READ:

- Fowler et al., chapters 2-3, 10
- Black et al., 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.5

C. *Religion and Political Attitudes* (February 12, 17)

One of the most important questions we can ask this semester has to do with the extent to which religion affects Americans' political inclinations and attitudes. How do religious variables affect ideology, partisanship, and issue positions?

READ:

- Fowler et al., chapter 7
- Black et al., in this order: 10.5, 10.7, 10.6, 4.8

D. *Religion and Political Behavior* (February 19, 26)

It is equally important to ask how religion affects Americans' political behaviors. How do religious variables affect voting behavior and other forms of political participation?

READ:

- Fowler et al., chapter 4
- Black et al., 3.4, 4.6, 4.7, 4.9

E. *Religious Interest Groups and Social Movements* (February 28, March 3)

We will explore some of the prominent American religious interest groups and social movements and consider the extent to which they have achieved success in promoting their political agendas.

READ:

- Fowler et al., chapter 5
- Black et al., in this order: 6.1, 6.2, 5.1, 5.2, 6.5, 6.6, 5.8, 5.9

**The first exam will be held in class on Wednesday, March 5.**

**Section 2: Why Religion and American Politics Intersect**

A. *Religious Jurisprudence: General Background* (March 10)

Is there really "separation of church and state" in the United States? Interpretation of the religion clauses of the first amendment has challenged some of the greatest legal minds in American history. How do the federal courts, especially the U.S. Supreme Court, approach the relationship between church and state?

READ:

- Fowler et al., chapter 8
- Black et al., 9.1

B. *Religious Establishment and Non-Establishment* (March 12, 24, 26, 31\*)

The first amendment specifies: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." What does this mean in practice? How far can government go in recognizing and benefiting organized religion? You will view "The Lord Is Not on Trial Here Today" in class as part of this section.

READ:

- Fowler et al., chapter 9
- Cases as assigned from The Oyez Project (<http://www.oyez.org>)

*\* There will be no class meeting on Wednesday, April 2. I will be at a political science conference in Chicago.*

C. *Religious Free Exercise* (April 7, 9, 14, 16)

The first amendment also specifies: “Congress shall make no law prohibiting the free exercise [of religion].” What does this mean in practice? When, if ever, might your right to practice the religion of your choice run afoul of the law?

READ:

- Fowler et al., chapter 9
- Cases as assigned from The Oyez Project (<http://www.oyez.org>)

D. *Wrapping Up: Religion and Politics in Theoretical Context* (April 21, 23)

To conclude the course, we will take up several theories about the significance of the interaction between religion and politics in the United States. What are the broad ramifications of religious pluralism in the United States?

READ:

Fowler et al., chapter 12  
Black et al., 3.1, 3.6, 3.7, 3.12, 11.3

**The second exam, which will cover material since the first exam and two final essays, will be held on Thursday, May 1, 3:00-5:30 pm.**