

POLITICAL SCIENCE/RELIGION 325: RELIGION AND POLITICS IN AMERICA

Gustavus Adolphus College, Spring 2013

Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30 – 9:50 am, Old Main 205

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Chris's Office Hours: Mondays, 1:30 – 3:30 pm
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 – 1:20 pm
other times by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW: This course examines the political impact of religion in the United States, both historically and today. The phrase "separation of church and state" is one (but not the only) characterization of the official relationship between U.S. governmental institutions and religious institutions; it does not begin to cover the myriad connections found between organized religion and government at all levels and in all historical periods of American society. The primary goals are first, to understand how the interrelationships between religion and politics in the United States have developed; and second, to explore how religion in various forms continues to affect American public life, the workings of key political and social institutions, and the lives of citizens.

THIS COURSE "COUNTS" IN SEVERAL WAYS: This course serves as an introduction to religion and politics for advanced majors in political science and religion, and for any other interested students. It counts as an elective for the political science major and the religion major (Religion, Culture, and Society area). This course also counts for Curriculum I SOSCI general education credit. SOSCI courses are concerned with human behavior and social institutions. In this course, by the end of the semester you will have studied the following:

- what social scientists know about how religion affects politics at both individual and group levels;
- how that information has been gathered and organized;
- how these findings bear on social and political issues in contemporary U.S. politics and culture.

CLASS FORMAT: The course will be conducted as a seminar; brief lectures will occur occasionally, but primarily we will discuss with one another during each class period. In order for you to contribute meaningfully and comprehend more in class, reading assignments should always be completed in advance. Questions, comments, and ideas are always welcome in class. My goal is to talk WITH you throughout the semester, as opposed to merely talking to you or at you. Make it your goal to talk with, listen to, and learn from each other.

COURSE MOODLE PAGE: The Moodle site for this class (log in and go to 2013 s-pol-325-001) has links to this syllabus, all class handouts, exam study guides, and other additional readings and materials. Everyone (including REL-325 enrollees) has been added to this Moodle site. The Moodle site will be updated if any aspects of our schedule change during the semester.

BOOKS: All of these are available in Book Mark, and all are required.

- Amy Black, Douglas Koopman, and Larycia Hawkins, eds., *Religion and American Politics* (abbreviated in syllabus as **BKH**)
- Jon Meacham, *American Gospel: God, the Founding Fathers, and the Making of a Nation*
- Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (6th edition) (abbreviated in syllabus as **WCB**)
- J. Matthew Wilson, ed., *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic*

OTHER READINGS, HANDOUTS, ETC.: If there is any other reading (I doubt we will need much more!), I will post it on Moodle and/or give you a paper copy.



GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:

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| Midterm exam (March 28) | 20% |
| Final exam (May 24) | 25% |
| Church journals (due May 21) | 15% |
| Class participation/attendance/leading | 15% |
| Research paper (due May 17) | 25% |

GRADING SCALE:

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|---|--------------------------|
| A = | 93.000 average and above |
| A- = | 90.000 through 92.999 |
| B+ = | 87.000 through 89.999 |
| B = | 83.000 through 86.999 |
| B- = | 80.000 through 82.999 |
| grades C+ and lower calculated on same scale; minimum avg. for passing (D) = 60.000 | |

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS: The midterm exam covers the first half of the course; it will consist of some combination of term identification and essay questions. The final exam covers the second half of the course and will probably have a short cumulative section; format will be similar to the midterm exam. Study guides for both exams will be posted on Moodle at least one week before each exam date; the study guides will contain complete information about the question format and material to be covered.

RESEARCH PAPER: Religion and Politics in America covers a very broad range of topics, and the research paper assignment encourages you to explore any aspect you wish. This can include aspects of religion and politics outside the United States (although the U.S. should somehow still constitute one facet of such a paper). The term "research" means that a personal, reflective essay on some topic is not acceptable; however, your personal reflections and views may be incorporated into this paper in appropriate ways (e.g. making an argument for a specific point of view on some relevant topic). Discussing the topic in advance with me is not required but may be a smart idea; I am also very happy to assist you in finding sources. A list of topics students have researched in previous semesters will be posted on Moodle, to help give you an idea of the possibilities.

Specific requirements for research paper: 10-12 pages in length, double spaced with normal margins and font size; your paper should also have a title (separate title page is optional). All sources used should be appropriately cited in the body of the paper using any standard citation method (the method is your choice; just use one method consistently and don't leave out the citations!), with a bibliography or works cited page provided at the end. This paper should not depend on the course readings for the bulk of the material – I expect you to go beyond course materials to find new and additional resources on your topic. Finally, read your paper very, very closely before turning it in; the final product should have as few grammatical and typographical errors as humanly possible!

Relevant dates: To help keep you on track, note that the schedule section of the syllabus has three pertinent dates for this assignment:

Thursday, March 21 – submit your **research paper topic** (you can change it after this date, but I do expect you to give me your best guess as of this date); a paragraph would be perfect.

Thursday, May 2 – submit an **initial list of sources** you are using/plan to use

Friday, May 17 – **papers due by 5 pm**, in person or e-mail to cgilbert@gustavus.edu

CHURCH JOURNALS: You will attend some form of religious worship service at least 4 times during the semester; you can certainly attend more. Daily chapel services at Gustavus do not count, nor should Sunday Gustavus chapel services be used. Your goal is to find out what goes on in a congregation that could be considered "political," and to reflect on such activities in your journal entries. We will also discuss these experiences in class during the semester. You are encouraged to attend church services together with other class members, to experience a variety of faith traditions beyond your own, and/or to stick with several visits to the same church. Listings of St. Peter and Mankato area churches are available in any phone book and the St. Peter Herald; most area churches now have service times and other information on their websites, too. Several houses

of worship are within short walking or driving distance of campus. Pages 6-7 in this syllabus detail all expectations for the church visits and journal entries.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION: I expect you to attend every class session; if you cannot attend, please notify me (in advance when possible) and I will give you an opportunity to make up any missed class in some reasonable manner of my choosing. I reserve the right to lower the final course grade of students who make it a habit of skipping this class, whether or not “make up” assignments are completed.

Participation in a seminar course certainly involves more than just talking. Listening to your classmates and professor, and showing your engagement with the course material and classroom work, are also important forms of participation that count positively toward this portion of your grade.

One formal way in which everyone will participate: students will lead class TWICE during the semester, working in groups of 2 or 3. Leading class consists of opening class by talking briefly (no more than 3-5 minutes total) about something you found particularly interesting or puzzling about the day’s reading, and preparing some activity and/or set of discussion questions to guide that day’s session (some set of discussion questions MUST be prepared). Do not spend any time summarizing what everyone is expected to have read; assume we have read the material and proceed accordingly. Sign-up for leading class is on a first-come, first-served basis and will be completed by the end of February.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND CLASS POLICIES

HAND THINGS IN ON TIME, PLEASE: In general, grades for specific assignments will be reduced at least one letter grade for each day late.

CELL PHONES, IPODS, and other such electronic devices: Turn them OFF when class is in session – no ringing, no vibrating, no IM, no distractions for yourself or your classmates. Using a laptop to take notes is acceptable as long as you perform NO non-class-related tasks while doing so (e.g. do not disrespect your professor and classmates by checking Facebook during class!!).

SCHEDULE CONFLICTS: Students with advance notice of schedule conflicts (e.g., school-related activities that conflict with our class time) should present a list of these to Chris as soon as the conflict dates are known. There should be few or no schedule conflicts that cannot be resolved – the key is early notification. The Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the Gustavus Academic Bulletin exists to inform you of your obligations and to help us work out any problems.

POLICY ON EXCEPTIONS: Plan on taking all exams at the appointed time and completing all other work by indicated due dates. Because of events beyond your control (e.g. a major illness), sometimes this is not possible despite good-faith efforts on your part. Therefore, exceptions and extensions will be considered on an individual basis. NOTE: nonacademic personal commitments and end-of-semester travel plans are NOT valid reasons for requesting extensions or exceptions. Nor are activities scheduled well in advance, e.g. extracurricular activities or obligations for other classes. As with class attendance, please inform Chris well in advance of such conflicts. This policy is consistent with the Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the Gustavus Academic Bulletin.

ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS WHOSE FIRST LANGUAGE IS NOT ENGLISH: Support for English Language Learners (ELL) and multilingual students is available via the College’s ELL support staff person, Andrew Grace (agrace@gustavus.edu or x7395). He can meet with individual students for tutoring in writing, consulting about academic tasks, and helping them connect with the College’s support systems. The College’s ELL staff person can provide students with a letter to me that explains and supports academic accommodations (e.g. additional time on tests, additional revisions for papers). In addition, ELL and multilingual students can seek help from peer tutors in the Writing Center. **I am very happy to discuss this process and determine accommodations, based on specific individual needs, with any student who qualifies.**

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DOCUMENTED DISABILITIES: Gustavus Adolphus College is committed to ensuring the full participation of all students in its programs. If you have a documented disability (or you think you may have a disability of any nature) and, as a result, need reasonable academic accommodation to participate in class, take tests or benefit from the College's services, then you should speak with the Disability Services Coordinator, for a confidential discussion of your needs and appropriate plans. Course requirements cannot be waived, but reasonable accommodations may be provided based on disability documentation and course outcomes. Accommodations cannot be made retroactively; therefore, to maximize your academic success at Gustavus, please contact Disability Services as early as possible. Disability Services (<https://gustavus.edu/advising/disability/>) is located in the Advising and Counseling Center; Disability Services Coordinator Laurie Bickett (lbickett@gustavus.edu or x6286) can provide further information. **I am very happy to discuss this process and determine accommodations, based on specific individual needs, with any student who qualifies.**

ACADEMIC HONESTY: Plagiarism or cheating in any form corrupts the intent of all that we do as a community of scholars. Consistent with the Gustavus Academic Honesty Policy and the Honor Code (both are found in the Academic Bulletin), the policies and procedures for this course are as follows:

- Violations of the Academic Honesty Policy will result in at least a grade of 0 for the specific assignment, and failure for the course in the case of egregious violations. Students accused and/or penalized for these violations, AND students who become aware of such violations, have specific rights and responsibilities, as outlined in the Academic Bulletin's Honor Code section.
- Each exam and the research paper will contain the statement "On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid in completing this work." Students are required to sign; typing the statement on a paper submitted electronically is equivalent to signing.
- Students CAN consult with each another and with the professor while working on individual or group assignments and preparing for exams; these are examples of "authorized aid." Individual papers should consist only of each student's own work.
- Under the Honor Code, proctoring of exams is at the instructor's discretion. I will be present at exams to answer any questions that may arise.

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH JOURNALS

As noted earlier in the syllabus, you are expected to attend some form of religious worship service **at least four times during the semester**. Your goal is to observe what goes on in a church that could be considered "political" in any way, and to record and reflect on these observations in your journal entries. In effect, you are doing field work to see religion and politics (if it is present – sometimes it will not be present) within congregations, using these personal observations to further stimulate and illuminate our class discussions about this subject.

You are encouraged to attend services together with other class members, to experience faith traditions besides your own, or to stick with making several visits to the same church. Attending your "home church" back home is acceptable; students have often found it interesting to observe their "home church" through the lenses described here.

General guidelines

Journals may be handwritten (legibly!) or typed. It is usually a very good idea to include printed material you obtain at the church, such as the service bulletin or other information you can find. If you attend the same service with other class members, it is acceptable for you to "share the load" with each person looking for different types of political manifestations, but each person should write his/her own comprehensive journal entry for the visit. Also, if there are only limited amounts of some printed material, it would be ok if only one of you took the material and shared with other classmates, so there are copies left for the congregation!

Remember that even though you have been given a specific task, never forget that you are attending a church service! You should participate in the worship only to the extent that you feel comfortable. Be respectful of the practices and actions of the congregation members. Note taking during the service (in order to remember things for later) should be done **very discreetly** if at all (best advice: listen a lot, but don't try to write a lot on the spot; this has worked well for students in the past).

Finally, while your journal will include some of your personal reactions to what you have observed, *evaluating the service isn't the point*: you should **not** focus on critiquing the minister's sermon, praising/panning the service music, or criticizing what the church is/is not doing in the political realm. Your focus is on observing (using the guidelines on this page and the next page) and relating what you see to what we are reading and discussing in class.

DUE DATES: Please make at least one visit and turn in at least the first entry (based on guidelines below) by **Tuesday, March 26**. At least one more visit and entry should be turned in by **Tuesday, April 23**, with the entire journal (including these first entries) due on **Tuesday, May 21** (our last class meeting).

GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH VISITS/JOURNAL ENTRIES

FOR ALL VISITS

- service date and time
- name and location of congregation (e.g. First Lutheran Church, St. Peter)
- classmates also present (if observed)

QUESTIONS FOR FIRST VISIT (and for any visit to a new house of worship; repeat visits to the same place can follow these general guidelines without repeating everything)

- Who was there? Generally describe the *composition* of the congregation and the service leaders (rough estimate of attendance, how full was sanctuary; audience breakdown by age, gender, race; who led the service).
- What political *symbols* were present in the sanctuary or elsewhere in the building? Specify where these were located.
- Was any printed *political information* available? Look for a table with newsletters, denomination publications or other handouts, bulletin boards, announcements in the church bulletin - anything that informs congregation members about some political issue or event.
- Is there evidence of any *groups* within the congregation devoted to some political issue or activity? The service bulletin, newsletter, or church website may list such groups and their events for the upcoming week or month.
- Did the *sermon* have any political content? Be as specific as possible here – what did the minister/priest/rabbi/preacher say that you considered to be political in any way? Also try to give a sense of whether these political messages (if you heard any) were a major or minor theme of the sermon.
- Did any other *parts of the worship service* have political content? For example, many churches pray for national leaders, sometimes for the U.S. president specifically.
- How similar or different was this worship service (all of it, not just the political stuff) from your usual worship experience? I am especially interested in your perceptions if/when the church you visit is of a different denomination or faith tradition than your own, and whether you feel your observations and reactions were in any way affected by your own religious beliefs and background (or by your lack of these, if applicable).
- If you discussed any of these items with your fellow classmates who also attended, it is fine (but not necessary) to tell me what you talked about and what others perceived.
- Finally, was there more or less political content than you expected to find, and what was your *personal reaction* to whatever political content you observed? This may be a good place to bring in any readings or discussions we have had in class, too, that might be relevant.

DAILY SCHEDULE - TOPICS, READING ASSIGNMENTS

The course Moodle page will have all class handouts, all additional readings, and anything else listed on this schedule as “to be posted.” If our schedule changes for some reason, the Moodle page will be updated and should be considered the "official" schedule. I will always alert you (ahead of time whenever possible) if/when our schedule changes.

| <i>Date</i> | <i>Topics covered</i> | <i>Readings/activity/announcements</i> |
|----------------|--|--|
| T February 12 | Intro to religion and U.S. politics | None |
| Th February 14 | Overview of U.S. religion and its intersections with politics | WCB 1, 2 BKH 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6 |
| T February 19 | Historical roots, part I: to the American Revolution | WCB 37-51 Meacham Intro, I BKH 1.1, 1.5 |
| Th February 21 | Historical roots, part II: religion and the founding of the United States | BKH 1.2 and 2 (all) Meacham II |
| T February 26 | Religion, civil religion, and U.S. political culture | WCB 52-61 BKH 3 (all) |
| Th February 28 | Tracing religion’s influence through U.S. history | Meacham III, IV |
| T March 5 | Political institutions I: the Supreme Court | WCB 63-85 BKH 9.1 through 9.5 Dates for students to lead class begin today |
| Th March 7 | More Supreme Court: debating the boundaries of free exercise and religious establishment | WCB 86-104 BKH 9.6 through 9.11, 6.7 and 6.8 |
| T March 12 | Political institutions II: the presidency | BKH 7 (all) Meacham V |
| Th March 14 | Political institutions III: Congress | BKH 8 (all) |
| T March 19 | Religious activism and public policy | WCB 5 Wilson 1 BKH 4.5 |
| Th March 21 | Social movements and religious interests in the political process | BKH 5 (all), 6.1 Midterm exam study guide posted by today Submit research paper topic to Chris by today |
| T March 26 | Evangelicalism and U.S. politics | WCB 8 BKH 6.5 one additional reading (Moodle) First church journal due today |

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| Th March 28 | MIDTERM EXAM | |
| March 29-April 7 | No class – Spring break! | |
| T April 9 | Evangelicals and Mainline Protestants in tension | Wilson 2, 3 WCB pp. 259-266 |
| Th April 11 | African Americans, religion and politics | Wilson 6 WCB pp. 275-286 BKH 4.7 one additional reading (Moodle) |
| T April 16 | Shifting dynamics of Catholic political behavior | Wilson 4 WCB pp. 239-259 |
| Th April 18 | Latinos, Catholic and Protestant | Wilson 7 WCB pp. 286-291 BKH 4.8 |
| T April 23 | Jewish political behavior | Wilson 8 WCB pp. 266-273 Second church journal due by today |
| Th April 25 | Muslims, an emerging political force? | Wilson 9 WCB pp. 291-298 BKH 4.9, 6.6 |
| T April 30 | The political importance of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) | Wilson 5 WCB pp. 299-304 |
| Th May 2 | Women, secular Americans, gays and lesbians, other religions: points in common, points in contention | Wilson 10 WCB pp. 305-307 and ch. 11 Submit research paper source list to Chris by today |
| T May 7 | Religious activism and public policy, another look | WCB 6, 7 |
| Th May 9 | Domestic policy issues | BKH 10 (all), 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 |
| T May 14 | International policy issues | BKH 11 (all) |
| Th May 16 | Final considerations, part I: projecting the future of religion and politics in America | Meacham VI WCB 12 Wilson 11 BKH 12 Final exam study guide posted by Friday, May 17 Research paper due Friday, May 17 by 5 pm |

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| T May 21 | Final considerations, part II | No new reading; course evaluation today in class Final church journals due today in class (submit all) |
| Friday, May 24 | FINAL EXAM 8:00 – 10:00 am The final will be in Old Main 05 (not our usual 205) | |