

CSS 340 - Junior History
College of Social Studies

Spring 2017

Religion, Secularism, and Modernity

Instructor: Professor Victoria Smolkin

Course Room/Time: PAC 422, Fridays 2 – 4 pm

Office Hours: Wednesdays and Thursdays 4:15 - 5:15 pm (& by appointment)

Office: PAC 410

Contact: 860.685.3293; ysmolkin@wesleyan.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In recent decades, religion has regained prominence as a force in world politics. It has also become a contested category of analysis in the humanities and social sciences. This return of religion to politics and public life would have profoundly surprised generations of thinkers—from Karl Marx and Max Weber to theorists of secularization—who prophesied that religion would “die out” as a force of public, and perhaps even private, life. Religion’s return has brought into question many of the foundational assumptions of modernity—namely, that modernization and secularization are twin processes that rationalize and disenchant the world and create the modern (secular) subject. This junior history tutorial will examine religion, secularism, and the relationship of both to the concept of modernity. We will analyze assumptions that guided the secularization thesis, and investigate recent debates about the desecularization of the world; religion and secularism in public life; and the concept of the post-secular. The tutorial will also address methodology and prepare students to work on sustained research projects by producing a research prospectus.

READINGS

1. John Bowen, *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton, 2007).
2. Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* (Duke, 2014).
3. Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (Oxford, 2011).
4. Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* (Vintage, 2008).
5. Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2007, 2010).
6. Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Belknap, 2012).
7. Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton University Press, 2012).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS, GRADES

(1) Six response papers: 60%

(2) Class participation: 20%

(3) Research proposal: 20%

PAPERS: During the first six weeks of the tutorial, students will write response/review papers (3-4 pages) to each group of readings. The review must address the author's question/s in a broader historical context; the author's organization, conceptualization, and sources; and your own analysis of the text.

PARTICIPATION: Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss reading assignments and ready to participate. Everyone will be assigned one week during which they are responsible for leading discussion of the assigned readings with a partner. Discussion leaders introduce the material to the class and organize the discussion by formulating questions and addressing interesting or problematic points.

RESEARCH PROSPECTUS: An important focus of our tutorial is research and writing, with the goal of producing a complete and engaging research prospectus. Students will work on their prospectus over the course of the tutorial. We will spend some time during each meeting discussing methodology, progress, and problems/questions as these arise.

GRADING: Response papers constitute 60% of the final grade, and are due at the end of each class. Late papers will not be accepted. Class participation makes up 20% of the final grade. The complete research paper prospectus, also 20% of the final grade, is due at the last meeting of the tutorial. Full attendance is mandatory. Unexcused absence can lead to dismissal from the tutorial.

NOTE: The syllabus may be slightly altered and some readings may be change

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Christendom and Political Theology

Readings/Assignments

- Thomas Hobbes, "Of Religion," from *The Leviathan* (1660)
- John Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration" (1689)
- Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Religion, Politics, and the Modern West* (Vintage, 2008): Parts 1 and 2.
- Philip Gorski, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ca. 1300-1700," *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 138-167.

Week 2: Political Religion

Readings/Assignments

- Mark Lilla, *The Stillborn God: Part III*
- *Divini Redemptoris: Encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Atheistic Communism*
- Erich Voegelin, *Political Religions* (pp. 1-15)
- Phillippe Burrin, "Political Religion: The Relevance of a Concept," *History and Memory* 9, no. 1-2 (Fall 1997): 321-349.
- Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton University Press, 2012): Chs. 1, 3, 4.

Week 3: Communism and Atheism

Readings/Assignments

- Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach" and "The German Ideology, Part I" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), pp. 143-200 [SKIM].
- Friedrich Engels, "On morality" and "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, pp. 725-727 [SKIM].
- V. I. Lenin, "Socialism and Religion" (1905)
- Victoria Smolkin, *A Sacred Space: How Soviet Atheism Was Born, Lived, and Died* (Princeton UP, forthcoming 2017), selections.
- Sonja Luehrmann, "Was Soviet Society Secular?" in Tam Ngo and Justine B. Quijada, eds. *Atheist Secularism and its Discontents: A Comparative Study of Religion and Communism in Eurasia* (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015), 134-151.

Week 4: Civil Religion and the Cold War

Readings/Assignments

- Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America," in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970 [1967]), pp. 168-87.
- Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew: An Essay in American Religious Sociology*, selections.
- Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle against Communism in the Early Cold War* (Oxford, 2011): Read Parts 2 & 3 closely, SKIM Part 2.

Week 5: Religious Crisis (1960s) and Human Rights (1970s)

Readings/Assignments

- *Humanae Vitae*, Papal Encyclical of Paul VI on the Regulation of Birth (1968)
- Hugh McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* (Oxford, 2010).
- Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Belknap, 2012).
- *The Helsinki Final Act*, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (1975)

Week 6: Laïcité, Multiculturalism, and Desecularization

Readings/Assignments

- Peter L. Berger, “The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview” in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, pp. 1-18.
- John R. Bowen, *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton, 2007).
- David Feldman, “Why the English Like Turbans: A History of Multiculturalism in One Country,” in *Structures and Transformations in British History* (Cambridge, 2010).
- Mayanthi L. Fernando, *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* (Duke, 2014): Ch. 1-4.

Week 7: Research Prospectus Presentations

- Prospectus assignments and schedule handed out separately