

POLSCI 303: Religion and Politics

Course Info	<i>Term:</i> Spring 2025 <i>Meet:</i> MTW, 4pm-6pm Eastern Time <i>Meeting:</i> Link to Zoom Meeting <i>Last Update:</i> May 4, 2025	<i>Instructor:</i> Hilary Zedlitz (she/her) <i>Email:</i> zedlitz@umich.edu <i>Office Hours:</i> By appointment *if the appointment slots currently available do not fit your schedule, please email me! <i>Faculty Supervisor:</i> Rob Mickey
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Course Overview “Religion” and “politics” – to say nothing of the complex relationship between them – are among the most contested and controversial terms in public discourse. How do religion and politics interact in the world around us? How do we define “religion” and what conceptual frameworks do we use to understand and study it?

This course aims to introduce students to the study of religion and politics primarily in political science; however, this course is also as much about the study of religion and politics as it is about the phenomenon itself. While students can expect to encounter and analyze religion and politics research, we want to pay special attention to how researchers arrive at their conclusions, the conceptualizations they adopt, and the consequences of these conceptualizations on how we measure and understand religion. This course also allows you to select a topic of interest to you, explore it in greater depth with a group of your classmates, and present your findings to the class.

- Learning Outcomes** *Substantive Knowledge:*
By the end of the class, I expect students to be able to:
- Identify and evaluate various conceptual frameworks used to study religion and politics (such as secularization-desecularization; civil religion; nationalism, populism, and religion; liberation theology(ies); prosperity theology(ies); religious economy/rational choice; and the rise of “No religion”)
 - Explain the relationship between religion and politics, both in the United States and globally
 - Apply concepts, theories, and methodologies from the study of religion & politics to real world examples
 - Describe and explain how scholars define and measure religion and how that affects our understanding of the interplay between religion and politics

Skills:

Students should also acquire the following skills:

- The ability to access and use academic sources of knowledge and information, including the University of Michigan library system
- The ability to summarize, synthesize, and analyze scholarly resources, news resources, and personal artifacts
- Written communication skills including organizing arguments and presenting knowledge in a concise manner.
- Time-management
- The ability to engage in productive conversations across disciplines.

Course Format

Term III courses are accelerated terms, meaning that there is less turnaround time for assignments and readings. While this can be challenging, it also allows students to dive deeply into the course materials rather while juggling fewer academic commitments. I invite you to view this course as a unique opportunity to focus on the course topic and to communicate with me when you encounter challenges. To make the most use of our time together, I expect students to attend class prepared to engage with the materials and one another. We will discuss online class etiquette during our first week of class, and update our **Rules of Engagement** after that conversation.

Our course is an *online, synchronous course* that will take place via Zoom. Please note that I will be recording our course sessions to allow students to replace **no more than five absences** by utilizing one of our tokens (more info below) to watch the recorded lecture and complete an associated assignment. These assignments must be completed within seven days of the original missed class.

I expect you to have completed the readings according to the course schedule. While I expect you to come to class prepared, I understand that situations happen that are beyond our control. Please let me know if there are specific things I can do to accommodate your needs right now. I have tried my best to build flexibility into the course; however, if something happens and you need additional time, communicate with me. Though I'll be flexible on deadlines where I can, please know that I cannot ignore the University's deadlines for turning in grades at the end of the semester. Except in the most rare & extreme circumstances, I will not provide incompletes in this course.

Grading

You are likely familiar with traditional grading structures: You complete assignments; you receive some number of points on those assignments; those points are calculated as a percentage; that percentage is converted to a letter grade. That structure can tell you how well you did on a few assignments, but it doesn't demonstrate what you actually learned in the course.

In this course, your final grade will be based on how well you demonstrate mastery in **three** areas:

- knowledge of conceptual frameworks
- exploration assignments
- reflection on learning

along with attendance, active class participation, and completing readings on Perusall. This approach ensures that your final grade reflects your understanding of the core course material.

Each assignment is an opportunity for you to earn mastery points. If you earn **five** mastery points, you have successfully demonstrated mastery of an area.

Your final grade will depend on (1) the number of areas you've mastered, (2) the total mastery points you've earned in any unmastered areas (3) the amount of Perusall readings completed, and (4) your attendance (not accounting for up to 5 asynchronous make ups).

I reserve the right to adjust the grading bundles as necessary; such an adjustment would only occur if the changes would result in a favorable outcome for students. *I will not make changes that penalize students.*

Here's how these elements combine to determine your final grade:

Grading Bundles

Grade & Learning Mastery	Students who complete the components in the following bundles will receive the respective final grade.
E	Not meeting the conditions for a D- or better
D-	Earn 50% of available Perusall points + fewer than 5 absences
D	At least 2 points in every mastery area + earn 60% of available Perusall points + fewer than 5 absences <i>or</i> Earn 6 mastery points + earn 60% of available Perusall points + fewer than 5 absences
D+	At least 3 points in every mastery area + Earn 60% of available Perusall points+ fewer than 4 absences <i>or</i> Earn 9 mastery points + earn 60% of available Perusall points + fewer than 4 absences
C-	At least 4 points in every mastery area + Earn 70% of available Perusall points+ fewer than 4 absences <i>or</i> Earn 12 mastery points + earn 70% of available Perusall points + fewer than 4 absences
C	Mastery in 1 area + at least 3 points in remaining areas + Earn 70% of all available Perusall points + fewer than 4 absences
C+	Mastery in 1 area + at least 4 points in remaining areas + Earn 70% of all available Perusall points + fewer than 4 absences
B-	Mastery in 2 areas + Earn 80% of all available Perusall points + fewer than 3 absences
B	Mastery in 2 areas + at least 2 points in remaining area + Earn 80% of all available Perusall points + fewer than 3 absences
B+	Mastery of 2 areas + at least 3 points in remaining area + Earn 80% of all available Perusall points + fewer than 3 absences
A-	Mastery of 2 areas + at least 4 points in remaining area + Earn 90% of all available Perusall points + fewer than 3 absences
A	Mastery of all 3 areas + Earn 90% of available Perusall points + fewer than 3 absences

Each assignment allows you to earn mastery points in specific categories. Some assignments (marked x2 or x3) offer the chance to earn two or three points in the same category. Assignments marked with an asterisk (*) have multiple submission opportunities. You can find a Grade Tracker to help you follow your progress at this link (you will be prompted to make a copy).

Mastery Categories	Assignments offering mastery points
You may earn up to 7 mastery points in the reflection on learning category.	Intro Survey Weekly Reflections (weeks 2-7)*
You may earn up to 8 mastery points in the knowledge of conceptual frameworks category.	Religious Literacy Quiz Concept Quizzes (x2)* Final Open Note Exam (x5)
You may earn up to 7 mastery points in the exploration assignments category. <i>There are four exploration assignment attempts in this class, in Weeks 3, 4, 5, & 6. Students may submit the exploration assignment type that they are most interested in completing, with a maximum of three attempts per assignment type. I will only grade one exploration assignment each week; if you accidentally submit more than one, only the first will be graded.</i> <i>The number of exploration assignments students complete will depend on their target grade.</i>	Observation Assignments (x2)* Literature Search Assignments* (x2)*

Tokens

To support your learning and provide flexibility, you have access to **five tokens** that can be used in the following ways:

- Turn in an assignment 48 hours late
 - You must request use of this token before the assignment is due
 - Due to timing constraints, tokens cannot be used to submit the final exam late.
- Credit on a missed multiple choice question on the final exam
- Request to make up a missed absence asynchronously
 - Request must be submitted within 48 hours of the missed class
 - Asynchronous assignments are due within 7 days of the missed class

Course Agenda

WEEK ONE: Assignment Due Friday @11:59pm Eastern Time: Religious Liberty Quiz Intro Survey	May 6: Introductions to Course & One Another; Brainstorming Exercise May 7: Defining Religion & Politics • Ira and Saul Allen, “God Terms and Activity Systems: A Definition of Religion for Political Science.” <i>Political Research Quarterly</i> 69 (2016) • Elizabeth Frazer, “Politics.” In <i>Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory</i>, ed. Bryan S. Turner et al (Blackwell, 2017).
WEEK TWO: Assignments Due Friday @11:59pm Eastern Time: Week 2 Reflection	May 12: What makes politics “religious”? • Melani Cammett and Pauline Jones, “Politics in Muslim Societies: What’s Religion Got to Do with It?” In <i>Oxford Handbook of Politics in Muslim Societies</i>, ed. Cammett and Jones (Oxford, 2021). • William T. Cavanaugh, “The Myth of Religious Violence.” In <i>The Blackwell Companion to Religion and Violence</i>, ed. Andrew R. Murphy (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). May 13: Skill-Building Day-Navigating Library Research & Citations • No reading May 14: Secularization and Desecularization • Grace Davie, “Secularization.” In <i>Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory</i>, ed. Bryan S. Turner et al (Blackwell, 2017). • Wald, Kenneth D. and Allison Calhoun-Brown. 2018. “A Secular Society?.” <i>Religion and Politics in the United States</i>. 8th ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 1-19.

WEEK THREE: Assignments Due Friday @11:59pm Eastern Time: Exploration Assignment 1 Week 3 Reflection Concept Quiz 1	May 19: Secularization & Desecularization - Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, <i>Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide</i>, 2nd edition (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 3-27. <i>Politically Speaking: Secular Surge</i> PBS interview with David Campbell. (2021). (26:46 run-time) May 20: Religious Liberty - Driessen, Michael. 2019. "Religious Establishment as a Subject of Political Science. <i>Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics</i>. Oxford University Press. - Fox, Jonathan. "Religious Regulation: The Regulation of All Religion in a Country" <i>Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics</i>. Oxford University Press. May 21: Religious Liberty - Laylock, Joseph P. 2020. "The Day Satan Came to Oklahoma." <i>Speak of the Devil: How the Satanic Temple is Changing How We Talk about Religion</i>. Oxford University Press. 1-26.
WEEK FOUR: Assignments Due Friday @11:59pm Eastern Time: Exploration Assignment 2 Week 4 Reflection	May 26: No class due to Memorial Day May 27: Civil Religion - Robert N. Bellah, "Civil Religion in America" (1967) - Adam Possamai, "Civil Religion." In <i>Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Social Theory</i>, ed. Bryan S. Turner et al (Blackwell, 2017). May 28: Civil Religion - Wald, Kenneth D. and Allison Calhoun-Brown. 2018. "Religion and American Political Culture." <i>Religion and Politics in the United States</i>. 8th ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. 51-57.
WEEK FIVE: Assignments Due Friday @11:59pm Eastern Time: Exploration Assignment 3	June 2: Nationalism, Religion, Populism - Rogers Brubaker, "Religion and Nationalism: Four Approaches." <i>Nations and Nationalism</i> 18 (2011): 1-19. - Anna Grzymala-Busse. "Religious Nationalism and Religious Influence." In <i>Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics</i>. (2019).

Week 5 Reflection	June 3: Nationalism, Religion, Populism - Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry, <i>The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy</i> (Oxford, 2022), Ch. 1, 3. - Efe Peker and Emily Laxer, “Populism and Religion: Toward a Global Comparative Agenda.” <i>Comparative Sociology</i> 20 (2021): 317-343. June 4: Religion and Revolution: Liberation Theologies - Gustavo Gutierrez, “The Task and Content of Liberation Theology” (1999) - Rambachan, “The Resources and Challenges for a Hindu Theology of Liberation” (2019)
WEEK SIX: Assignments Due Friday @11:59pm Eastern Time: Exploration Assignment 4 Week 6 Reflection Concept Quiz 2	June 9: Religion and Revolution: Liberation Theologies - Mary Grey, “Feminist Theology: A Critical Theology of Liberation” (2008) - Mehmet Ciftci, “Liberation Theology: A Comparative Study of Christian and Islamic Approaches” (2014) June 10: Prosperity Theology(ies) - Paul Djupe and Ryan Burge. The Prosperity Gospel of Coronavirus Response. <i>Politics and Religion</i>. 2021;14(3):552-573 - Mary V. Wrenn, “ Selling salvation, selling success: neoliberalism and the US Prosperity Gospel” <i>Cambridge Journal of Economics</i> 45(2):295–311 June 11: Religious Economy/Rational Choice Approach - Rodney Stark. “An Economics of Religion.” <i>The Blackwell Companion to the Study of Religion</i>, 2nd edition (Blackwell, 2006), ch. 2. - Djupe, Paul A. and Jacob R. Neihsel. 2019. “Political Mobilization in American Congregations: A Religious Economics Perspective.” <i>Politics and Religion</i> 12(1): 123-152
WEEK SEVEN: Assignments Due Friday @11:59pm Eastern Time: Exploration Assignment 7 Week 7 Reflection	June 16: The Rise of the “Nones” Margolis, Michele. 2017. “How Politics Affects Religion: Partisanship, Socialization, and Religiosity in America.” <i>Journal of Politics</i> 80(1).

	- Dingeman Wiertz and Chaeyoon Lim. 2021. “The Rise of the Nones across the United States, 1973 to 2018: State-Level Trends of Religious Affiliation and Participation in the General Social Survey. <i>Sociological Science</i> 8:429-454. June 17: Current Events in Religion & Politics - Readings to be determined by class June 18: Semester Wrap-up - No readings. Please bring your questions about the exam to class.
WEEK EIGHT: Monday, June 23rd 8am-10 Final Exam	June 23rd, 8am-10am - Our official exam time assigned by the registrar is June 23rd 8am-10am EDT. - While the exam will open on Canvas at 8am EDT, it will remain available for 24 hours. Once you begin the exam, you will have 2 hours to complete the open note exam. (If you have extended test time as an accommodation, please reach out to me so I can assign you to the extended time exam).

Course Policies

Rules of Engagement:

We will spend a portion of our first class meeting discussing and developing community rules of engagement, which will be updated here on the syllabus and on our course Canvas page. This policy will, at minimum, include provisions about electronics, respect, rules of engaging in discussion, and conflict resolution. Students are invited to add to this list during this discussion.

Accommodations:

This course is designed to give you the flexibility to adjust to whatever circumstances you may be in, but if you are struggling, have questions, or need extra help or guidance, please reach out to me. Further, Services for Students with Disabilities offers services for students with documented disabilities. If you need accommodations for documented disabilities, you have a right to have those met. Students who are experiencing a disability-related barrier should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at <https://ssd.umich.edu/>; 734-763-3000 or ssdoffice@umich.edu. For students who are connected with SSD, accommodation requests can be made with Accommodate. If you have questions or concerns,

please contact your SSD coordinator or visit SSD's Current Student webpage.

Documented disability or not, we can all benefit from accommodations because we all learn differently. Your learning is important to me, so if there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or that exclude you, please let me know. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

Attendance:

Unless otherwise arranged with the instructor, active attendance is required to receive credit. Because life is unpredictable, absences are built into each grading bundle as appropriate to demonstrate learning in the course. If this becomes an issue or barrier to your learning, please contact me.

Email policy:

I will reply to emails that I receive during regular working hours (i.e., Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM Eastern Time) as soon as possible, often the same day. For emails received outside of those working hours, I will generally reply during the next working day. **This policy also applies to emails sent the day an assignment is due. If you have a question about an assignment, it is always best to ask it at least one day in advance.**

Plagiarism and Cheating:

Each student in this course is expected to abide by the standards of academic integrity. Any work submitted by a student in this course for academic credit will be the student's own work. Students are strictly forbidden from buying or selling course materials. Cheating and plagiarism will be treated according to University regulations. The penalty for violating academic integrity is an E (Unsatisfactory) for the assignment. Repeated or egregious examples may result in an E for the course. For more information, including examples of behaviors that are considered academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see <https://lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/academic-integrity/academic-misconduct.html>.

Generative AI Policy

U-M GPT, ChatGPT, and other similar technologies are advancing rapidly and there are many instances where they will be key tools in your schoolwork and career. **For the purposes of this class, we are asking all students to pledge that they will not use these technologies.** We believe this is key for this learning environment because we want you to learn how to critically engage with the

material we'll be discussing, including learning how to search for and identify relevant sources, synthesize these materials, and make recommendations without the aid of technology. Artificial Intelligence cannot do this learning for you. Students who are found to have used Generative AI or the like to complete their assignments will receive no mastery credit for that assignment.

The only exception to this policy is for AI Grammar tools that students might use to check their grammar or style. You may not use these tools to generate any portion of your writing assignments, only to check grammar. Students who are using AI Grammar tools are asked to disclose said usage in their submissions. All other uses are highly discouraged and will result in grade penalties.

Class Recording Policy

It is possible that some course lectures will be recorded and made available to students who have missed class. If you do not wish to be recorded, please email me [zedlitz@umich.edu] during the first week of the class.

Students are prohibited from recording or distributing any class activity without written permission from me, except as necessary as part of approved (and documented) accommodations for students with disabilities. Any approved recordings may only be used for the student's private use and may not be shared with individuals outside of this course.

Religious and Academic Conflicts:

In keeping with the University of Michigan's policy of respecting students' religious commitments, all attempts will be made to accommodate conflicts arising out of religious observances. For example, I am happy to move assignment deadlines that conflict with a religious holiday or to set up a time to meet during office hours to talk about topics covered in class that were missed because of a religious holiday. Students who miss class due to a religious commitment may arrange an asynchronous option with me. If you are aware of a religious conflict, please let me know ASAP so we can appropriately plan an alternative method of engagement for you.

Additional Campus Resources

Also available are a range of educational resources, such as the Sweetland Center for Writing, and resources related to health and safety, including Counseling and Psychological Services and the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center. Please let me

know if you have any questions about these and other campus resources.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center

Location: 1551 West Quad
Phone: 734-764-7771 (9-5);
734-936-3333 (24-hour crisis
line)
Website: sapac.umich.edu

Services for Students with Disabilities

Location: G-664
Haven Hall
Phone: 734-763-3000
Website:
ssd.umich.edu

Sweetland Center for Writing

Location: 1310
North Quad
Phone: 734-764-0429
Website:
lsa.umich.edu/sweetl
and

Counseling and Psychological Services

Phone: 734-764-8312
(24 hours)
Website:
caps.umich.edu

