POL 305
Religion and Politics
S1 External 2014

Dept of Modern History, Politics & International Relations

Contents

General Information 2
Learning Outcomes 2
Assessment Tasks 3
Delivery and Resources 5
Unit Schedule 6
Policies and Procedures 13
Graduate Capabilities 15

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff
Unit Convenor
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Credit points
3

Prerequisites
39cp or (6cp in HIST or MHIS or POL units at 200 level including 3cp in POL)

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description
Since the eighteenth century Enlightenment philosophers have predicted that religion would vanish as capitalism, science and state separation from religion progressed. To some extent this has happened in some European countries, but, on the whole, the 'secularisation thesis' has not come true. Not only is religion still with us, but in many regions of the world it has grown and its impact has become more intense. This unit examines the nature of the relationship between religion and politics by analysing the history of political thought, as well as recent developments in global and national politics.

Important Academic Dates
Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at https://students.mq.edu.au/important-dates

Learning Outcomes
On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

- The ability to analyse and express your judgement about the relationship between religion and politics in oral and written form.
- Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.
- Think more critically and systematically about politics and religion, and related ideas such as secularism and secularisation.
- Appreciate the historical and philosophical subtleties of ideas such as secularism, the...
secular state, and religious pluralism.
Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Article Review</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Monday 24 March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Monday 5 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quizzes (internal students)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>31 March and 19 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review (external students)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Monday 26 May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Test</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>9 June</td>
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</tbody>
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Article Review

Due: **Monday 24 March**

Weighting: **20%**

Choose **one** of the following texts from the unit reader and write a 1200-1400 word review: Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, ch.1; Charles Taylor, 'What Does Secularism Mean?'; William Cavanaugh, *The Myth of Religious Violence*, Ch.2, excerpt.

In your review you should aim to answer the following questions: what are the key arguments or ideas that the author is developing? What ideas is the author rejecting or challenging? How successful is the author in making his case?

Apart from including page numbers in the text no further referencing is required.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- The ability to analyse and express your judgement about the relationship between religion and politics in oral and written form.
- Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.
- Think more critically and systematically about politics and religion, and related ideas such as secularism and secularisation.
- Appreciate the historical and philosophical subtleties of ideas such as secularism, the secular state, and religious pluralism.
Essay

Due: Monday 5 May
Weighting: 40%

Write a 2500 word essay. Questions to be distributed in week 5.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- The ability to analyse and express your judgement about the relationship between religion and politics in oral and written form.
- Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.
- Think more critically and systematically about politics and religion, and related ideas such as secularism and secularisation.
- Appreciate the historical and philosophical subtleties of ideas such as secularism, the secular state, and religious pluralism.
- Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

Quizzes (internal students)

Due: 31 March and 19 May
Weighting: 10%

Two short answer tests during the lecture time. The tests will be based on the lectures and readings for the two weeks prior to the test date. This means that the first test (31 March) will be on Augustine and Hobbes and the second test (19 May) will be on religion and the public sphere.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- Appreciate the historical and philosophical subtleties of ideas such as secularism, the secular state, and religious pluralism.

Review (external students)

Due: Monday 26 May
Weighting: 10%

Write a review of Michael Walzer's essay "Drawing the Line: Religion and Politics" (in unit reader). Follow the same instructions as per the first article review, except that this paper should be between 800 and 1000 words.

On successful completion you will be able to:
- The ability to analyse and express your judgement about the relationship between...
religion and politics in oral and written form.

• Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.

• Think more critically and systematically about politics and religion, and related ideas such as secularism and secularisation.

• Appreciate the historical and philosophical subtleties of ideas such as secularism, the secular state, and religious pluralism.

Class Test
Due: 9 June
Weighting: 20%

A final class test to be held in the last lecture of the semester. Instructions to follow.

On successful completion you will be able to:

• The ability to analyse and express your judgement about the relationship between religion and politics in oral and written form.

• Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.

• Think more critically and systematically about politics and religion, and related ideas such as secularism and secularisation.

• Appreciate the historical and philosophical subtleties of ideas such as secularism, the secular state, and religious pluralism.

• Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

Delivery and Resources

Delivery:
Day, External

This unit will use:
iLearn, iLecture

Times and Locations for Lectures and Tutorials
Lectures: Monday 11am - 1pm. E6A131

For timetable information consult the MQ timetables website:
https://students.mq.edu.au/student_admin/timetables.jsp

Resources:
This unit will use a book of readings that can be purchased from the co-op bookshop

**Unit Schedule**

**Week 1. (week commencing 3 March)**

**A Secular Age?**

The recent upsurge in religion around the globe has forced many scholars to question the 'secularisation' thesis that had, until the past few decades, dominated most sociological and historical accounts of the place of religion in modern world. We will discuss some of the classic secularisation narratives, the criticisms they have attracted, and the extent to which they are still useful in light of recent developments.

**Readings:**


Berger, Peter, *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), ch.1

**Week 2. (10 March)**

**Inventing ‘Religion’ and the ‘Secular’**

This week takes the critique of the secularisation thesis further by exploring the history of the categories "religion" and "secular". In much public discourse these terms appear to have fairly self-evident meanings and they are usually understood in oppositional or binary terms (i.e. secular and secularism are generally defined as the absence of religion). However, the concept of the secular is itself bound up with theological debates within Western Christendom, and "religion" understood as a body of beliefs about the transcendent and divided into various branches (Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.) is an invention of the modern West. Understanding the complex history of these terms sheds light on their current use.

**Compulsory Readings:**


Conflict (Oxford University Press, 2009), excerpt.


Further Reading:


Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, The Meaning and End of Religion (Fortress Press, 1962)

Milbank, John, Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), ch.1

Smith, Graeme, A Short History of Secularism (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), ch.1

Taylor, Charles, A Secular Age (Harvard University Press, 2007)

Week 3. (17 March)

The Augustinian Inheritance. The Two Cities

The distinction between the two cities - heavenly and earthly - has been a feature of Christian social thought since the time of Christ ("render unto Caesar..."). It was given its most influential articulation in the writings of Saint Augustine in the early fifth century A.D. Seeking to explain the fall of Rome and the Christianisation of the Empire, Augustine wove his account of the two cities into a grand narrative of human history that would have a profound influence in the West, up to and including the rise of the modern liberal state.

Compulsory Readings

Augustine, The City of God (Penguin, 1984), excerpts


Further Reading:

Brown, Peter, Augustine of Hippo (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967)
Week 4. (24 March)

Hobbes and the Mortal God.

In the midst in the English civil wars in the seventeenth century Thomas Hobbes produced his masterpiece, *Leviathan*, which laid out the basis of authority in the modern state. For Hobbes, one of the chief sources of disorder of the day was religious strife which he sought to tame by bringing it under the control of the Sovereign authority. Though himself no liberal, many have seen his argument as paving the way for the liberal state. Others, however, have seen Hobbes's political theory as built on a particular construction of religion that has legitimised the (often violent) consolidation of power within the 'secular' state.

**Compulsory Readings:**

Hobbes, *Leviathan*, excerpts


**Further Reading:**


Week 5. (31 March)

Locke, Jefferson and Toleration

The idea of religious toleration did not exercise the European imagination in a widespread way until the eighteenth century. An important proponent of toleration in this period was Thomas Jefferson who argued against the establishment of an official church in the United States. Jefferson was building on the work of figures such as John Locke and Pierre Bayle who had
championed the idea of toleration in the seventeenth century.

**Compulsory Readings:**


Jefferson, Thomas, excerpts from *Political Writings* (Cambridge, 1999), J. Appleby and T. Ball (eds.)

**Further Reading:**


**Week 6. (7 April)**

**Religion and the Enlightenment**

One of the key components of the 'secularisation' theses is that the decline of religion in the West resulted from the spread of Enlightenment ideals such as reason, freedom, and individuality. However, a close examination of eighteenth and nineteenth century history reveals that the so-called "Enlightenment" was not singular but had several manifestations not all of them hostile to religion. Indeed, for many the Enlightenment simply represented the latest development in the long standing dialogue between faith and reason.

**Compulsory Readings:**


Kant, Immanuel, excerpt from *The Critique of Pure Reason* from *Faith and Reason* (Oxford, 1999), P. Helm, (ed.)

**Further Reading:**

Gascoigne, John, *The Enlightenment and the origins of European Australia* (Cambridge, 2002)

**Mid semester break. April 11 - April 28.**

**Week 7. (28 April)**

Reading Week. No classes. Work on your essays.

**Week 8. (5 May)**

**Religion and the Public Sphere 1: Defending Separatism**

In recent decades political theorists have devoted considerable attention to the issue of how to manage religious differences within the liberal state. One strong strand of theorising has argued that political life should be governed strictly by principles of public reason, or forms of reasoning that everyone (religious and non-religious) can accept. On this view, which we might call 'separatism', all specifically religious or 'comprehensive' world views should remain in the private realm. We look at two influential proponents of this position, John Rawls and Robert Audi.

**Compulsory Readings:**


Audi, Robert, *Religious Commitment and Secular Reason* (*Cambridge, 2000*) ch.4


**Further Reading:**

Week 9. (12 May)

Religion and the Public Sphere 2: Questioning Separatism

Critics of the ‘separatist’ position have argued that the benefits of the religiously neutral state come at too high a price. That is, the restriction of religion to the private sphere narrows public debate and threatens genuine pluralism. The separatist position, so the critics claim, undermines the very neutrality it purports to establish by discriminating against religious communities (such as Islamic communities) that do not recognise the public/private split that the separatist position depends on.

Compulsory Readings:


Further Readings:

Connolly, William E., Why I am Not a Secularist (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999)

Smith, Steven D. The Disenchantment of Secular Discourse (Harvard University Press, 2010)

Williams, Rowan, Faith in the Public Square (Bloomsbury Continuum, 2012)

Week 10. (19 May)

Fundamentalism and Modernity 1: Christian Fundamentalism

Though religious fundamentalism is sometimes depicted as a throwback to ‘primitive' forms of religion it is in fact an essentially modern development. The origins of fundamentalism are to be found in the early twentieth century reaction to ‘liberal' theology among certain American protestant groups. The long standing conflict between creationism and evolution is one of the on-going legacies of this reaction. This week we look at the concept of fundamentalism in general and Christian fundamentalism in particular.

Compulsory Readings:


**Further Readings:**

Lawrence, Bruce, *Defenders of God: The Fundamentalist Revolt Against the Modern Age* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), ch.7


**Week 11. (26 May)**

**Fundamentalism and Modernity 2: Islamic Fundamentalism**

Islamic fundamentalism, no less than its Christian counterpart, is also a product of modernity. However, where Christian fundamentalism emerged out of debates over science and Biblical interpretation, Islamic fundamentalism developed in the Middle East in the mid twentieth century as a response to Western colonialism. From the beginning Islamic fundamentalism was an inherently political movement. This lecture will present a brief history of Islam as background for understanding the development of Islamic fundamentalism from the Muslim brotherhood to Al-Qaeda.

**Compulsory Readings:**

Kramer, Martin, ‘Coming to Terms: Fundamentalists or Islamists?’, *Middle East Quarterly*, Spring 2003, 65-77


**Further Reading:**


**Week 12. (2 June)**
The New Atheism: another fundamentalism?

In response to the global resurgence of religion in recent times a group of writers has risen to prominence denouncing religion in all its forms. Often labelled the New Atheists figures such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, and others have written a series of highly polemical best-sellers that have tapped into a mood of public anxiety about religion. However as numerous critics have pointed out these works not only display a strikingly evangelical tone they tend to attack only the most literalistic forms of religion. In other words, the New Atheists seem to be the mirror image of the fundamentalists they attack.

Compulsory Readings:


Further Reading:


Week 13 (9 June).

Class Test – Monday June 9.

Policies and Procedures

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:


Unit guide POL 305 Religion and Politics

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the Learning and Teaching Category of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct
Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Student Support
Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit http://students.mq.edu.au/support/

Learning Skills
Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- Workshops
- StudyWise
- Academic Integrity Module for Students
- Ask a Learning Adviser

Student Enquiry Service
For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

Equity Support
Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the Disability Service who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

IT Help
For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://informatics.mq.edu.au/help/.

When using the University’s IT, you must adhere to the Acceptable Use Policy. The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.
Graduate Capabilities

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.
- Think more critically and systematically about politics and religion, and related ideas such as secularism and secularisation.
- Appreciate the historical and philosophical subtleties of ideas such as secularism, the secular state, and religious pluralism.
- Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

Assessment tasks

- Article Review
- Essay
- Quizzes (internal students)
- Review (external students)
- Class Test

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- The ability to analyse and express your judgement about the relationship between
religion and politics in oral and written form.

- Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.
- Think more critically and systematically about politics and religion, and related ideas such as secularism and secularisation.
- Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

**Assessment tasks**

- Article Review
- Essay
- Review (external students)
- Class Test

**Problem Solving and Research Capability**

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- The ability to analyse and express your judgement about the relationship between religion and politics in oral and written form.
- Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.
- Think more critically and systematically about politics and religion, and related ideas such as secularism and secularisation.
- Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

**Assessment task**

- Essay

**Creative and Innovative**

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.
This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcome**

- Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

**Assessment task**

- Essay

**Effective Communication**

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

**Learning outcomes**

- The ability to analyse and express your judgement about the relationship between religion and politics in oral and written form.
- Critically interpret some classic and contemporary texts on the relation between religion and politics.
- Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

**Assessment tasks**

- Article Review
- Essay
- Quizzes (internal students)
- Review (external students)
- Class Test

**Engaged and Ethical Local and Global citizens**

As local citizens our graduates will be aware of indigenous perspectives and of the nation’s historical context. They will be engaged with the challenges of contemporary society and with knowledge and ideas. We want our graduates to have respect for diversity, to be open-minded, sensitive to others and inclusive, and to be open to other cultures and perspectives: they should have a level of cultural literacy. Our graduates should be aware of disadvantage and social justice, and be willing to participate to help create a wiser and better society.

This graduate capability is supported by:
Unit guide POL 305 Religion and Politics

Learning outcome

• Place contemporary debates and controversies within broader philosophical and historical contexts.

Assessment task

• Essay