

Religion and Politics

Professor Davis

June 15, 2018

I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church and State.

– Thomas Jefferson, 1802, Letter to the Danbury Baptists

If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, then we will be one nation gone under.

– Ronald Reagan, 1984, Ecumenical Breakfast, Dallas, TX

1 Course overview

For better or worse, religion pervades American politics. Why? Jefferson and the Framers were *deeply* suspicious of religion in service of politics, and yet they stamped the trappings of civil religion across their private and public writing. This was no mistake. The Framers read Rousseau, whose book, *The Social Contract*, argued that civil religion formed the moral and spiritual foundation essential for modern society. And, yet, it is likely that the Framers could not have predicted that the inclusion of this religious language would have serious ramifications for the interpretation of vital rights and liberties many decades and centuries later. Put another way, this civil religion morphed into an explicitly political one over time.

This course explores both the origin of religion's role in American politics, as well as the more recent evolution of religion's political clout within the conservative movement. In doing so, one of our primary tasks will be to understand and evaluate how the Religious Right developed and evolved into a major force behind the modern Republican Party. Yet, we will also consider how variety in religious beliefs and practices contribute to political behavior and shape public opinion.

To this end, we will investigate the basic theories, concepts, and controversies that exist within the field of religion and politics. In some sense, we are jumping into the deep end of the pool: we will not only evaluate narrative or qualitative accounts of the role of religion, but will wrestle with quantitative social science research that studies these questions. These tasks will require you to both critically engage with your peers and reflect on this material in short essays. As a result, I expect that this course should hone your ability to communicate as much as it sharpens your writing skills.

2 Course objectives

After we complete this term, I expect that you will be able to do the following things:

1. Explain how religion shapes institutions, laws, and the behavior of public officials.
2. Contextualize the historical roots of religious-partisan sorting
3. Explore the linkage between personal religious convictions and individual-level political behavior and policy attitudes
4. Grapple with whether or not the separation of church and state outlined in the Constitution has been effective.

3 Readings

Textbook. You are responsible for purchasing the following book:

- Hertzke, Allen D., Laura R. Olson, Kevin R. Den Dulk, and Robert Booth Fowler. 2018. Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices, 6th Edition. Westview Press.

Other readings. All other readings are available online in our shared website repository. Please be sure to download and read these materials during the appropriate week.

4 Assignments

4.1 Reading summaries (30%)

You will write three summaries of individual articles that have been assigned over the term (you may *not* review the assigned textbook reading). You may select an article from the week in which the assignment is due OR you may select an article from a prior week. These summaries should be roughly 450-500 words; if you write less than 450 points, then you will not be eligible to receive full marks; you do not need to draw these out beyond 500 words, however. The point of these reading summaries is a) for you to internalize the research, but also b) to learn how to write with economy and clarity. When writing these summaries, think about the following things:

1. Think about the overarching theme of the reading. What is the research question that the author asks? What sort of historical context surrounds this question?
2. Who is the author writing about? What research question are they addressing?
3. What are the conclusions that the author draws from the research? Do you see any holes in their logic? Does their conclusion match the evidence?
4. On the subjects of grammar and narrative structure:
 - Take time to think about your writing; make sure your summary flows in a logical manner.
 - Prioritize simple, clean ways of describing the material. If I need a thesaurus to figure out a word you've used, then you've probably lost the reader.

4.2 Reading quizzes (10%)

There will be five randomly assigned reading quizzes in multiple choice format throughout the semester to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading. These will occur at the beginning of class and cover the major points from the associated week's reading. I am not trying to trick you on these quizzes; if you did the reading, then you should earn full marks. I will gladly throw out your worst quiz at the end of the term, which gives you some wiggle room if you have a bad day or need to miss class for any reason.

4.3 Presentations (20%)

During our two weeks on religion, law, and courts, you will choose a major court case from a list of cases I provide and present the case to the class. You are responsible for a five minute presentation

that summarizes the court case, the motivation of the plaintiff, the underlying social, political, or economic context surrounding the case, the major arguments for and against the plaintiff's case, and a brief description of the case's outcome. These presentations should be compact and direct. You should develop a short powerpoint to accompany your presentation.

General grading rubric for assignments			
Criteria	A (9-10 points)	B (8-8.9 points)	C and below (<7.9)
Understanding	Demonstrates a deep understanding of the assignment and the relationship among concepts	Demonstrates acceptable understanding of the material, where some connections between concepts are weak or missing	Demonstrates limited understanding of material and the relationship among concepts; shows poor grasp of ideas
Application / discussion	Applies concepts in the reading to either related historical or current events in a compelling manner; offers insight or creative discussion	Attempts to draw on historical or recent event to make a comparison that captures spirit of reading; some discussion, but missing evidence	Implies or invokes some of the concepts, but missing key components or linkages between material and other events; weak or shallow discussion
Organization	Clear, logical organization of material; submission flows from a well-developed introduction, to body, to conclusion	Some organization, but the logical flow is flawed or not totally clear.	Lacks structure and organization; perhaps missing a formal introduction or other structural deficiencies
Quality of writing	Excellent grammar, vocabulary, and word choice	Some errors or imprecision; room for improvement in writing	Awkward word choice, imprecise, even sloppy

4.4 Exams (Midterm: 20%, Final: 20%)

Students will take a multiple choice mid-term exam in-class. This test covers the first half of the term's material. For the final, you will be tasked with completing a take-home essay exam. Because you will have full resources available to answer the questions on that essay, this exercise will be graded accordingly.

5 Course schedule

Week 1 – Introduction

- RPA Chapter 1
- “It’s not Harry Potter.”

Weeks 2 & 3 – A brief history of religion in the United States

- Dreisbach, Daniel L. 2011. “The Bible in the political rhetoric of American founding.” *Politics and Religion*, 4, 401–427.
- Chapters 1, 3,& 4: Harder, Joesph D. 2014. “*Heal their land*”: *Evangelical political theology from the Great Awakening to the Moral Majority*. Available here: [.pdf](#)
- Finkleman, Paul. 2016. “Religion and the Foundations of Slavery in America.” *In The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Politics in the U.S.* (ed.) Barbara McGraw. Wiley and Sons.

Week 4 – Christianity and politics

- RPA Chapter 2
- Chapter 6: Harder
- Margolis, Michele F. 2018. “How politics affects religion: Partisanship, socialization, and religiosity in America.” *The Journal of Politics*, 80(1), 30–43.
- Davis, Nicholas T. Forthcoming. “Religion and partisan-ideological sorting, 1984-2016.” *Social Science Quarterly*. doi: 10.1111/ssqu.12508

Week 5 – Religious pluralism

- RPA Chapter 3
- Jelen, Ted G. 2007. “The Constitutional basis of religious pluralism in the United States: Causes and consequences.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 612(1), 26–41.

- Schoettmer, Patrick. 2013. “Zen and the science of American politics: Minority religious tradition and political engagement.” *Politics and Religion*, 6(1), 164–185.
- Wald, Kenneth D. 2015. “The choosing people: Interpreting the puzzling politics of American Jewry.” *Politics and Religion*, 8, 4–35.

Week 6 – Religious roots of voting

- RPA Chapter 4
- Margolis, Michele F. 2016. “Cognitive dissonance, elections, and religion.” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 80(3), 717–740.
- Hawley, George. 2015. “Attitudes toward Mormons and voter behavior in the 2012 presidential election.” *Politics and Religion*, 8, 60–85.
- Driskell, Robyn, Elizabeth Embry, and Larry Lyon. 2008. “Faith and politics: The influence of religious beliefs on political participation.” *Social Science Quarterly*, 89(2), 294–314.

Week 7 – Religious interest groups

- RPA Chapter 5
- Beyerlein, Kraig and Mark Chaves. 2003. “The political activities of religious congregations in the United States.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(2), 229–246.
- Djupe, Paul A. and Franklyn C. Niles. 2010. “Prophets in the wilderness: An ecology of ministerial organization participation in public affairs.” *Politics and Religion*, 3, 150–178.
- ax, Jeffrey R. and Justin H. Phillips. 2009. “Gay rights in the states: Opinion and policy responsiveness.” *American Political Science Review*, 103(3), 367–386.

Week 8 – Religion and “elites”

- RPA Chapter 6
- Adkins, Todd, Geoffrey C. Layman, David E. Campbell, and John C. Green. 2013. “Religious group cues and citizen policy attitudes in the United States.” *Politics and Religion*, 6, 235–263.
- Simas, Elizabeth N. and Adam L. Ozer. “Church or state? Reassessing how religion shapes impressions of candidate positions.” *Religion and Politics*, April-June, 1–5.

Week 9 – Religion, civil society, and political culture

- RPA Chapter 7
- Shortle, Allyson F. and Ronald Keith Gaddie. 2015. “Religious nationalism and perceptions of Muslims and Islam.” *Politics and Religion*, 8, 435–457.

- Sokhey, Anand Edward and Stephen T. Mockabee. 2012. "Reexamining political discussion and disagreement in church networks: An exit poll assessment." *Politics and Religion*, 5, 253–279.
- Bellah, Robert N. 1967. "Civil religion in America." *Daedalus*, 96(1), 1–21.

Week 10 – Religion, politics, and the law

- RPA Chapter 8
- Lewis, Andrew R. 2014. "Abortion politics and the decline of the separation of Church and state: The Southern Baptist case." *Politics and Religion*, 7, 521–549.

Week 11 – Church-state disputes in the courts

- RPA Chapter 9
- Hays, Bradley D. 2012. "The curious case of school prayer: Political entrepreneurship and the resilience of legal institutions." *Politics and Religion*, 5, 394–418.
- Audette, Andre P. and Christopher L. Weaver. 2015. "Faith in court: Religious outgroups and the perceived legitimacy of judicial decisions." *Law and Society Review*, 999.
- Gill, Rebecca D. and Ted G. Jelen. 2015. "The religion clauses in the 21st Century; The Supreme Court loosens its grip," in McGraw, B.A. (ed), *Companion to Religion and Politics in the United States*. Oxford, UK.

Week 12 – Minorities, religion, and politics

- RPA Chapter 10
- Gershon, Sarah Allen, Adrian D. Pantoja, and J. Benjamin Taylor. 2016. "God in the barrio?: The determinants of religiosity and civic engagement among Latinos in the United States." *Politics and Religion*, 9, 84–110.
- Mattis, Jacqueline S. 2001. "Religion and African American political life." *Political Psychology*, 22(2), 263–278.
- Wright, Bradley R.E., Michael Wallace, Annie Scola Wisnesky, Christopher M. Donnelly, Stacy Missari, Christine Zozula. 2015. "Religion, race, and discrimination: A field experiment of how American churches welcome newcomers." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 54(2), 185–204.

Week 13 – Gender, religion, and politics

- RPA Chapter 11
- Devries, Jacqueline R. 2015. "Religion and the Politics of the Womens Movement in Nineteenth-Century America," in McGraw, B.A. (ed), *Companion to Religion and Politics in the United States*. Oxford, UK.

- Calfano, Brian R. and Paul A. Djupe. 2011. “Not in His image: The moderating effect of gender on religious appeals.” *Politics and Religion*, 4, 338–354.
- Setzler, Mark and Alixandra B. Yanus. 2015. “The impact of religion on voting for female congressional candidates.” *Politics and Religion*, 8, 679-698.

Week 14 – Theoretical perspectives, exam review

- RPA Chapter 12
- Hackett, Conrad and D. Michael Lindsay. 2008. “Measuring evangelicalism: Consequences of different operationalization strategies.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47(3), 499–514.