Political Science POL 3062 Mondays 2:30-5:20

Fall 2014 Rievschl 423A

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**Beyond belief: Global religion and politics**

**Course description**

Religion is central to freedoms and oppressions worldwide.  Through field trips (Hebrew Union College, the Islamic Association of Cincinnati, and the Creation Museum), careful reading, engaged responses, and independent research, students in this class will better understand religion and politics both locally and globally.  Different relationships between religion and the state impact everything from marriage, to science education, to minority rights.  Students from a variety of backgrounds will deepen our discussions, so this interdisciplinary course is open to students from any major or college, without prerequisites.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students in this class will:  
  
1) compare and contrast diverse conceptualizations of the relationship between religion and communities, with a focus on boundaries and memories

2) appraise politics and policies related to religious freedom, science, and conversion in different countries and religious traditions and assess their legal and constitutional underpinnings  
3) encounter unfamiliar religious institutions through site visits and written reflections  
4) research, write and present findings on a question related to religion and politics

**Pedagogy and experiential learning components**

Class meetings will be **graduate-style seminars**, with pairs of students leading a portion of the discussion each week, time reserved for small group meetings of students doing related research topics, and critical interactions about assigned materials in light of current events around the world.

Students will contribute **journal/blog responses through “discussion board” on Blackboard** (including text and optional images and/or video reflections) responding to:

Assigned course materials – five 400-500 word responses (sign up in class for the weeks you will write). These should be posted in the appropriate blackboard discussion board forum (look for author’s names) by midnight on Sunday (the day before the class for which those readings were assigned).

Visit to an institution affiliated with a religion unfamiliar to the student –write and post 3 questions before visit and 3 responses/observations after.

Field trips – write and post 3 questions *before* class trip and 3 responses/observations after (to be posted before the next class meeting)

UHP students may select some of these blog entries for inclusion in their learning portfolios. Discussion/training about the ethics of taking and using images or recordings for blogs and/or research presentations will precede site visits.

The class will be going on three **field trips** to sites related to the course themes:

The Skirball Museum at Hebrew Union College, Clifton

The Islamic Association of Cincinnati, Clifton

The Creation Museum, Petersburg KY

Additional field trips may be added if I learn that relevant events, such as conferences, exhibits or films on course themes will be in Cincinnati during the semester. In the past, for example, I have brought classes to view and interact with temporary exhibits at the Contemporary Arts Center and the Freedom Center, followed immediately by class discussions at these venues.

Students will do **research** on a topic of interest to them related to religion and politics anywhere in the world, resulting in:

regular assignments and discussion of work-in-progress during semester

a 10 page research paper/portfolio/case study (It may be possible to do another type of research-based project, appropriate to student’s major and agreed upon with professor, such as an art portfolio, musical composition, or community planning proposal. I will evaluate course related content but seek a second reader if the media chosen is far from my own expertise).

in-class presentation/discussion of final project. Materials from this project and presentation could be included in UHP students’ learning portfolios.

**Grades**

50% journal/blog

50% 10 page research paper and presentation (including prior assignments: 3 potential topics, outline, annotated bibliography, draft, peer review, all handed in when due and again with final paper)

Each absence beyond one will lower your final grade. One additional absence is permitted during the weeks of 11/24 and 12/1 (see below).

**Course Materials**

Articles, case studies, and book chapters: linked on syllabus or posted on Blackboard

Sign up for two e-newsletters about religion and politics, which will provoke ideas for research topics and questions and enable you to bring current events into your responses and class discussions:

<http://www.pewforum.org/religion-in-the-news/>

(Box to sign up is at bottom of right column.)

<http://religionandpolitics.org/>

(Box to sign up is at bottom of page.)

**Weekly thematic schedule, assigned materials, questions to ponder**

For books listed, *selections* from these will be posted to Blackboard. One or two of the questions to ponder can spark your response papers, or, especially as the term progresses, please respond based on some of your own questions.

Key Concepts: Communities, Boundaries, Memories

**Mon 8/25 Communities**

*Life of Pi* clip, excerpt and discussion

“Nones” article (handed out) and discussion

*What is religion? How does it relate to communities? Who are the “Nones”? Is Pi a None? What is captured or left out by this concept? How might the trends that inspired the category “Nones” change communities?*

**Mon 9/1 Labor Day - UC Holiday Think about research topics.**

**Mon 9/8 Communities**

Pew website- Short articles on the Pew barometer of American views of various religious communities in the US <http://us1.campaign-archive1.com/?u=434f5d1199912232d416897e4&id=aa3df152b2&e=d735784fd9>

Pew Website – The Global Religious Landscape

<http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>

Michael Sandel. “The claims of community.” <http://www.justiceharvard.org/2011/02/episode-11/>

*Did anything surprise you in the Pew barometer or religious landscape? Why do you think we find these patterns in the US? What do we owe one another? Do community boundaries impact this?*

Bring to class (typed) three potential research topics/puzzles in the form of 3 questions.

**Mon 9/15 Boundaries**

Craig Martin “Authenticity”

Jeremy Menchik. 2014. "Productive Intolerance: Godly Nationalism in Indonesia". *Comparative studies in society and history*  56 (3), p. 591.

Pluralism Project case: “Branding a hero, Defining a message, A nomination to controversy” (Cases study is on blackboard, and you can read about the Pluralism Project at <http://www.pluralism.org/casestudy>.)

*How has the notion of authenticity been used to divide communities? What are the origins of Indonesia’s “godly nationalism”? Apply concepts discussed by Martin to the “godly nationalism” article. Does Martin provide any concepts that would be useful for your own research projects? Which one(s) and how might you apply them?*

Project meetings in class.

**Mon 9/22 Memories**

Visit to the Skirball Museum at Hebrew Union College.

The Skirball Museum, Cincinnati is located at:  
3101 Clifton Avenue   
Cincinnati, OH 45220-2488

Admission:Free. **Current government issued photo ID required for security.**

We will meet at our classroom at 2:30 and walk there together, or you can meet us there at about 2:50.

<http://huc.edu/research/museums/skirball-museum-cincinnati>

Kathleen Blee. 2009. “Access and Methods in Research on Hidden Communities: Reflections on Studying U.S. Organized Racism.” eSharp, Special Issue: Critical Issues in Researching Hidden Communities (2009), pp. 10-27 URL: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/esharp>.

Vandana Joshi. 2012. “The Volksgemeinschaft and its female denouncers in the Third Reich” in Kathleen M. Blee and Sandra McGee Deutsch, eds. *Women of the Right: Comparisons and Interplays Across Borders.* Penn State University Press.

*Consider what is remembered and what is hidden in the museum, and in the communities studied by Blee. Consider why. How can researchers uncover what is hidden, and should this be attempted? How does attention to women and gender impact the museum and/or the studies by Blee or Joshi?*

Project meetings in class.

**Mon 9/29 Memories**

Bruce Lincoln. 2003. “Thinking about religion after September 11.”

Pluralism Project case. “Center of Dispute.”

In class: Film: Koran by heart. HBO films (80 minutes) and/or

“Dialogues” vol 1 episode 2, “The Use and Misuse of Memory” Richard Heffner with Elie Wiesel.  [HM291 .D52 1997](https://uclid.uc.edu/search%7ES16?/cHM291+.D52+1997/chm++291+d52+1997/-3,-1,,E/browse)

*Is Lincoln’s definition of religion useful for your research project? Would you add or subtract any element? How does his focus on texts associated with 9/11 shape his analysis? What are some research methodology challenges associated with the study of events such as 9/11? Compare with the challenges discussed in the prior reading by Blee.*

Discussions of each student’s project- come prepared with research question and outline (written in complete sentences), and speak for 5 minutes about progress and problems.

**Mon 10/6 Interlude: Puzzlement**

Meeting with librarian Sally Moffitt at library for session on library sources for your topics. CLASS MEETS IN ROOM 462 LANGSAM LIBRARY TODAY

J. Z. Smith. 2013. “Puzzlement.” In J. Z. Smith, ed. By Christopher L. Lehrich. *On Teaching Religion.* Oxford University Press.

J. Z. Smith. 2004. “God Save this Honorable Court” in his *Relating Religion*, 375-390.

Lynch v. Donnelly, 465 U. S. 668 (1984).

*Reflect on the educational value of puzzlement. Smith, like Lincoln (a prior reading), discusses the difficulty of defining religion. Compare or contrast their perspectives. Scholars can debate these definitions endlessly, but sometimes courts need to decide what is religion, what is religious or what constitutes unlawful entanglement of religion and the state. In this context, discuss Lynch v. Donnelly.*

Contested Debates: Freedom, Creation, Conversion

**Mon 10/13 Freedom**

Visit to the Clifton Mosque/Islamic Association of Cincinnati

The Clifton Mosque is located at 3668 Clifton Ave., Cincinnati 45220

Admission: Free, Dress: Modest.

We will meet at our classroom at 2:30 and walk there together, or you can meet us there at about 3:00.

http://cliftonmosque.org/the-mosque

Sabha Mahmood. 2001. “Feminist theory, embodiment, and the docile agent: Some reflections on the Egyptian Islamic revival.” *Cultural Anthropology*, 6(2): 202-36.

David Foster Wallace “This is Water.” Transcription of 2005 Kenyon College Commencement Address <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~drkelly/DFWKenyonAddress2005.pdf>

*Is freedom for women necessarily resistance? What is a docile agent? Should we try to recognize cultural differences in the definition of freedom? How does Wallace’s speech relate our culturally embedded ideas of freedom (or the lack thereof)?*

Annotated bibliography of ten sources, including at least four academic journal articles, due. In an annotated bibliography 2-3 sentences following each entry summarize the likely contribution of that source to your project.

**Mon 10/20 Freedom**

**Class meets at Taft Research Center with filmmaker Pankaj Rishi Kumar, for a showing and discussion of “In God’s Land.” The Taft Research Center is located on the ground floor of Edwards 1, Suite 1110 (it has its own entrance from the sidewalk). If interested, you can read a bit more about his films at** [**http://kumartalkies.blogspot.com**](http://kumartalkies.blogspot.com)

View: “Our journey: How we know caste” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JC3C2voZjrA>

This week’s *response papers* can be handed in AFTER class so you can respond to the film and Pankaj Kumar’s discussion. They will be due by Friday Oct 24 at 11:59.

Drafting (nothing to hand in)

**Mon 10/27 Creation**

Visit to the Creation Museum

The Creation Museum is located at 2800 Bullittsburg Church Rd.  
Petersburg, KY 41080 ([see map](http://creationmuseum.org/plan-your-visit/map/)) (7 miles west of the Cincinnati Airport)

Admission: $29.95

We will carpool, leaving at 2:30 (leave promptly to avoid rush hour traffic) to arrive at the museum at about 3:00. http://creationmuseum.org/

David R. Montgomery. 2012. *The rocks don’t lie: A geologist investigates Noah’s Flood.*

*Compare memory and community formation in this museum with what you observed in the Skirball museum. Which things are chosen, displayed and presented and why? What did you expect to see in the museum, and what did you find? What did you expect Montgomery to write, based on the title of his book, and what did he say? What did you learn about relationships between religion (particularly religious people) and science in the past?*

Drafting (nothing to hand in)

**Mon 11/3 Conversion**

Talal Asad. 1996. “Comments on conversion.” In Peter Van der Veer, ed. *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity.* London: Routledge.

Paul M. Taylor. 2012. “Religion and Freedom of Choice.” In John Witte Jr. and M. Christian Green, eds. *Religion and Human Rights: An Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

*What does Asad mean when he says the verb “convert” is a transitive and intransitive verb? How does this distinction impact the notion of religious freedom? Does Asad challenge a one-size-fits-all notion of religious freedom or human rights?*

Bring draft to exchange with peer review partner.

**Mon 11/10 Conversion**

B. R. Ambedkar. The Annihilation of Caste.

Martin Luther King. (2010 [1963]). “Pilgrimage to Nonviolence.” In *Strength to Love.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

*Ambedkar and King are two advocates for social justice in their own contexts. Compare/contrast their political arguments and/or rhetoric. Does the concept of conversion shed light on their arguments or experiences? Is becoming a nonviolent activist a form of conversion? Is an entire caste group rejecting Hinduism a form of conversion?*

Review partner’s paper and bring to class to discuss. (Bring their marked up paper and 2 copies of typed comments (~200 words), one to turn in and one to give to your partner.) Continue revising your own paper and start preparing presentation.

**Mon 11/17 – No class meeting. (Professor Jenkins in Cairo doing program review at the Future University in Egypt) Complete revisions on your paper and prepare presentation.**

**11/24 and 12/1 --** These two class meetings will be rescheduled to different days due to Professor Jenkins presenting a paper at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting and doing a program review at the University of Colorado-Denver on these dates. It will be difficult to find times everyone can attend, so I will survey the class to find the best times and only require that you attend one of these presentation meetings (the one in which you present your paper!) but encourage you to attend all presentations if you can. If necessary to accommodate everyone’s schedule, we will also have some presentations during the slot reserved for the final exam for the class, which you are welcome but not required to attend.

Presentations of research projects.

**Fri 12/12** 10:30-12:30 No final exam, but this time period may be used for some final presentations for students who could not attend rescheduled classes at the end of the semester.

Research papers/portfolios due by 12:30 in my office (submit printed paper/portfolio and also submit final paper via Safeassign in Blackboard)