

DPI-342: Religion, Politics, and Public Policy in the U.S.

Weil Town Hall (BL-1)
 Tuesday and Thursday, 10:15 – 11:30am
 Shopping Day: Tuesday, August 29, 10:15 – 11:30 Weil (BL-1)

Prof: Richard Parker
 Office: T256; Richard_Parker@hks.harvard.edu; 617-216-2752 (cell)
 Course Assistant: Anthony John
anthony_john@mail.harvard.edu 914-393-6545 (cell)
 Faculty Assistant: Karen McCabe 617-496-7037 (office)
karen_mccabe@hks.harvard.edu

Class Overview

America's ongoing debates about religion in public life and politics— whether about gay marriage, Hobby Lobby, abortion, the role of political Islam post-9/11, or Religious Right activism, to name just a few—have caused millions to realize that religion may well be the most powerful, yet least understood, force of our times. After World War II, academics generally thought just the opposite. They took as a given that science, democratic disestablishment, and consumerism had stripped religion of most of its older claims to public authority in America. Yet, as we now know, religion hasn't disappeared from public life at all: in fact, our once-assumed "post-religious" world never answered a host of difficult questions—and today is raising new ones.

This course is formulated around three of the most powerful, even daunting, of those questions. The first is this: whatever your beliefs (or non-beliefs), how should you assess and respond to the political and policy claims of religiously-based groups or issues? The second is: how together might we conceive of, and organize, political and public life in ways that allow for their vibrant and tolerant debate? The third is perhaps the greatest challenge: whether or not you believe in God (or in humanly-transcendent forces that exercise moral claims, however defined), how can you live and act in public life in concert with your beliefs?

Polls tell us America is, by far, the most religious of the industrial democracies, and our often-contentious politics reflect that: the debate over abortion and gay marriage, the 1980s rise of the Christian Right, President Bush's frequent invocation of religious guidance, and our still-heated clashes over "moral values" are only its more obvious manifestations. In truth, similar claims have suffused American history: the abolition, suffrage, and temperance movements all had deeply religious dimensions; the Progressive Era was powerfully shaped by the Social Gospel movement; many in the civil rights and anti-war efforts of the 1960s drew on deeply-held religious imperatives.

Today, America, once overwhelmingly Protestant Christian, is the most religiously diverse country on the planet: all the major world religions (and innumerable minor ones) have adherents here, and Protestantism claims barely half the population today. While millions of Americans have "rediscovered" religious beliefs in recent years, millions have left organized religion in any form: nearly a third of young people claim no religious affiliation in recent polls. But how should we understand these facts, and how should we treat simultaneous religious variety, religious revival, and abandonment of religion in the context of a pluralist society? And what impact will all this have on America's relations with the world in the years to come?

This class will examine not only the current extent and shape of American religious beliefs (and their impact on public life), but their origins and evolutions in the nation's history. It will also—through a series of case studies—probe how religious ideas, values, and communities continue to arise and affect the law, politics, economics, journalism, public morality and social policy. Importantly, you will be asked to examine—and share with classmates—your own sense of belief and faith (or lack thereof) in examining those case studies, and share in the sometimes difficult work of "coming to judgment" about the appropriate role of religion in modern public life.

There will be a midterm in class and a take home final paper (10 pp). Each week I'll have you give me very brief summary about the readings to make sure you're keeping up.

Schedule of Classes

Section One: Background and Origins Issues

Week One, Opening Class (Thursday, August 31) – Overview and Key Concepts

We'll begin with a broad overview of the class, by reading a chapter from Putnam's Amazing Grace. We'll then review the first section ("The Religious Blocs") in the charts and graphs, to see how the "bloc" groupings we'll be looking at throughout the term were formed, how most took form elsewhere and then came to America, how the sequencing of migration from the 1600s onward, then westward settlement, industrialization and urbanization, all influenced the religious landscape. We'll also quickly look at their enduring effects on politics and policy.

We'll also introduce ourselves to one another, to see how we might find our own backgrounds in some of these patterns, and then see how the historical evolution of these blocs helps us understand our political history.

Thurs: Robert Putnam, Amazing Grace, ch. 1
("The Religious Blocs") in the "Charts and Graphs" slides on the Course Page.

Week 2 (Tues, Sept. 5 – Thurs, Sept 7)—What Americans Say They Believe About Religion—and Its Impact on Politics and Public Life

We'll start by reading Garry Wills' essay on religion's surprisingly resilient role in modern American political life, then discuss the quite extensive polling data on American religious beliefs as our quantitative overview and starting-point (**review "Religious Blocs" again, then read "Looking More Closely" in the "Charts and Graphs" folder**). We'll then look at two political scientists' analysis of how religion and politics interacts in contemporary America in terms of class, region, and party.

As you read, ask yourself three questions:

- 1) Given the seeming strength and durability of religious beliefs, what accounts for the apparent "factual" ignorance of many about religiously important information? Is this, in your view, compatible? Why or why not?
- 2) What do you imagine explains the apparent durability of religious beliefs among Americans? Immigration, the frontier, urban anomie, community are clues.

- 3) Protestants—who are barely 50% of Americans—are denominationally highly divided, yet "clustered" in another way, conventionally described as "mainline," "evangelical", and "African-American" Protestant. What first thoughts do you have about why this seeming trichotomy exists? What effects might it have on religious practices generally, including for non-Protestants?

Required Readings (Each week I list what you must read before each class):

- T:** Garry Wills, Under God: Religion and American Politics, introduction
Section II; Review Section I "Religious Blocs" and read "Looking More Closely..." in
Charts and Graphs (On Course Page)
[What do Americans know about religion?](#) (Read just the short online Executive Summary)
- TH:** Leege and Kellstadt, Rediscovering the Religious Factor, Ch. 1
Pew Research, "[America's Changing Religious Landscape](#)" (pp. 1-87 only)

* Further Readings (These are always optional):

Pew Center, [US Religious Values Survey](#) –the full report
Gallup and Castelli, The People's Religion
Diana Eck, On Common Ground: World Religions in America
The Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches
Ted Jelen, Religion and Political Behavior in the U.S.
Jelen and Wilcox, Public Attitudes Toward Church and State
Kenneth Wald, Religion and Politics in the United States
Pippa Norris, Sacred and Secular
Garry Wills, Head and Heart
Robert Putnam, American Grace
Robert Wuthnow, Inventing American Religion: Polls, Surveys, and the Tenuous Quest for a Nation's Faith

Week 3 (Sept. 12 & 14) – Where Americans' Beliefs Took Form, from the Colonial Era to the Civil War

Having established the contemporary landscape of religious diversity, before we closely examine its interplay with political life and public policy today, we'll turn back to look at how the current American landscape is rooted in America's past—and how that past helps us unravel some of the questions Week 2 has raised.

Two hundred years ago, America was—for better or worse—a thoroughly Protestant country (non-Protestants were less than 5% of the citizenry. It was moreover dominated by three Old Colonial Protestant denominations. Over the 19th century, that reality changed dramatically—with powerful effects on America's religious and political landscape.

Peter Williams' **America's Religions: From Origins to 21st Century** is one of several standard guides, and we'll read selectively from it. (The field of American religious history is vast, so in Further Readings I point to a number of alternatives, both general and for specific topics.)

As you read, reflect on the dynamic evolution of religious beliefs alongside the country's national evolution. Watch carefully two potent trends.

First, note what happened to the three Old Colonial denominations of pre-Revolutionary “first wave” America—the Congregationalists (née Puritans), Presbyterians, and Anglican/Episcopalians—and their vision of America as a “Benevolent Empire”; the rapid evolution of New Frontier Evangelical denominations (foremost, the Methodists and Baptists) and their pivotal role in the cleavage of 19th C. Protestantism, then b) a second cleavage introduced by science, industrialization, immigration, and ecumenism that will come to define the enduring “mainline” versus “evangelical” divide in American Protestantism.

Then watch what happened to America's 19th C. "second wave immigration": a) how the Irish transformed the tiny American Catholic Church they found, how in turn Catholicism interacted with dominant American culture (which becomes Catholicism's famous "Americanism" debate), and then how Catholicism absorbed later, non-Irish immigrants, becoming in the process the most multicultural branch of Catholicism in the world; b) how Judaism's Reform movement, born in Germany but flowering in the mid-19th C. US, powerfully shaped Jewish immigrant thought, and laid the grounds for assimilating later East European arrivals. Finally, we'll look at the emergence of America's black churches before and most importantly after the Civil War, and the "peculiar" place of the South—white and black alike—in America's religious and political landscape.

Questions for you to consider that we'll discuss in class:

- 1) How did settlement patterns of the 13 colonies make the colonies different? What role did religion play?
- 2) How did America's territorial expansion interact with its religious beliefs? How did rank, region, race (and ethnicity) in turn interact with religion?
- 3) What about the particular place of New England made it such a crucible for "modernizing" so many Americans' religious and political values?
- 4) In what ways did slavery shape both the South's evangelicalism--and vice-versa?
- 5) How did growing religious pluralism stimulate social reform? What role did the debate over “literalism” have in debates over abolition, suffrage, and temperance?

Required Readings:

T: Williams, America's Religions, Part II (**book**)

TH: Williams, America's Religions, Part III

Mary Cayton, "Social Reform from Colonial Period through the Civil War"

Further Readings:

Ian Tyrrell, Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire

Andrew Preston, Sword of the Spirit, Shield of Faith: Religion in American War and Diplomacy

Catherine Albanese, America: Religions and Religion

Martin Marty, Righteous Empire

Martin Marty, Modern American Religion (3 vols)

Perry Miller, The New England Mind

Alfred Kazin, God and the American Writer

Finke and Starke, The Churching of America
Steve Bruce, Religion and Modernization
Sidney Mead, The Nation with the Soul of a Church
James Reichley, Religion in American Public Life
Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints
Sidney Mead, The Lively Experiment
Jerald Brauer, The Lively Experiment Continued
Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind
James Monroe, Hellfire Nation
Sacvan Bercovitch, The Puritan Origins of the American Self
Jon Butler, Awash in a Sea of Faith

Week 4 (Sept. 19 & 21) -- Constructing the "Modern" Religious Landscape: from the Civil War to Great Depression

In some sense, virtually all the important religious issues and alignments we encounter today in the 21st century were alive 100 years ago: the divisions between the "modernist" and "fundamentalist" views; the political/denominational divide between "liberals" and "conservatives"; the questions about how religion, politics, and policy should (and did, a different matter) interact; the tensions—albeit more directly expressed then than now—among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, and between whites and blacks.

We'll look particularly at how the rise of "ecumenical" religious movements interplayed with the rise of the Progressive Era professional, how the modern idea of "public reason" was advanced, and what reactions it set off—not just in the rise of a new "Fundamentalism," but the birth of distinctly American denominations, such as Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and Pentecostals, and a redefinition of "Evangelical." We'll also examine how Catholic "separatism" was addressed, and how figures such as Cardinal Gibbon of Baltimore and Fr. John Ryan pioneered transformation of that relationship in the "Americanism" debates. We'll see too how by the 1930s, in a reaction to a burst of American anti-Semitism as well as the rise of European Fascism, America's conception of itself was consciously and deliberately shifted from that of "Christian" nation to "Judeo-Christian," with important implications for religious pluralism.

Questions to consider:

- 1) To what extent was 19th century Mainline Protestant adaptation to science, professionalism, and ecumenical social activism costly to its religious strength? What benefits were gained?
- 2) Viewed historically, to what degree was Catholicism "integrated" into American culture--and to what extent, and in what ways, did it stand apart?
- 3) How did America's German Reform Judaism adapt first to American Protestantism, then to the arrival of East European Jews, and in what ways did the two Judaisms approach integration into a larger non-Jewish mainstream?
- 4) What factors created the all-encompassing nature of the Black Church, especially after the Civil War, and how did they interact?

Required Readings:

- T:** Williams, America's Religions, part IV (**book**)
John Mayer, "Social Reform, Civil War to Great Depression"
- TH:** Lipset and Raab, Jews and the New American Scene, intro & chs. 1-3 (**book**)
Raboteau, "Black Christianity in North America"

Further Readings:

David Hollinger, After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History
Martin Marty, Modern American Religion
Martin Marty, Righteous Empire
John McGreevy, Catholicism and American Freedom
Charles Morris, American Catholics
Mark Silk, Spiritual Politics
Lipset and Raab, Jews and the New American Scene
Seymour Lipset, American Exceptionalism: a Double-Edged Sword
William Hutchison, The Modernist Impulse
Kenneth Cauthen, The Impact of Religious Liberalism
James Turner, Without God, Without Creed
Dorothy Brown, The Poor Belong to Us
Darren Dochuk, From Bible Belt to Sun Belt

Week 5 (Sept. 26 & 28) – American Religion's Role in Politics and Policy after World War II: Toward a "Post-Protestant" Religious World, or Secular Pluralism?

We'll look now at the dramatic post-World War II religious landscape, and how the early 20th Century helped create it. We'll look at religion's growth in the post-war 1950s; its role in the 1960s debates over civil rights, Vietnam, feminism, gay rights, and environmentalism; the appearance of a "new" Christian fundamentalism in the 1970s, and the increasingly-heated debates over the role of women, family, sexuality, and abortion.

Questions to consider:

- 1) What explains the 1950s growth, then the drop-off in membership that began in the 1960s, and why did it affect some denominations more than others?
- 2) How does the involvement of some blocs and denominations in civil rights and anti-Vietnam struggles, and then in feminism and gay rights, represent continuity or discontinuity with pre-World War II involvements?
- 3) How successful were postwar efforts to soften inter-religious and inter-denominational tensions? What were the large drivers behind that softening—and what sorts of resistance did they encounter?

Required Readings:

T: Williams, America's Religions, Part V (**book**)

TH: Deane Fernald, "Religious Thought Since World War II"
Glenn Bucher, "Social Reform Since the Great Depression"

Further readings:

John McGreevy, Catholicism and American Freedom: A History

Kevin Kruse, One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America

Will Heberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew

John Courtney Murray, We Hold These Truths

Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society

John Patrick Diggins, Why Niebuhr Now?

Christopher Lasch, The True and Only Heaven

Robert Wuthnow, Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since WWII

William McCready & Andrew Greeley, Ultimate Values of the American Population

Andrew Greeley, Denominational Society

David Hollinger, Cloven Tongues

David Sehat, The Myth of American Religious Freedom

Week 6 (Oct. 3 & 5) – America's Religious Landscape Today

Beginning in the 1970s a new era seemed to begin—marked initially by the rise of the Religious Right and the shift of white evangelicals from the Democratic to Republican party. But more was at play: the Mainline Protestants became more progressive institutionally even as they declined in number; Catholics remained a quarter of the population, but only because a new wave of immigrants from Latin America and Asia was replacing the descendants of European Catholics who were leaving the Church (and the Democratic Party). As the civil rights movement entered history, the prominence of the black church was also being eclipsed in both the black and larger white communities, and American Judaism was wrestling with exogamy, identity, and what it means to be a Jew in the wake of the Holocaust and Israel's rebirth. Most surprisingly, by 2000, as the early surge of Christian Right groups faded (the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition were defunct by the time George W. Bush was president), significant numbers of Americans began disaffiliating from organized religion in all forms—indeed, by 2000 the "not affiliated" (aka "The Nones") were the fastest-growing "religious bloc" in the country, claiming over 16% of the population.

Some questions:

- 1) What, according to Chaves, are principal factors in the decline of Protestants in general— and Mainline Protestants in particular? Are similar trends observable in the other big blocs?
- 2) Chaves notes six key trends in congregations (see ch. 5)--what are they, and how do you assess them?
- 3) Religious leadership is changing—describe the attributes of that change.

Required Reading:

T: Mark Chaves, American Religion: Contemporary Trends (**book**)

TH: Continued discussion of Mark Chaves book

Further Readings:

David Chappell, A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow

Andrew Greeley, The Catholic Myth

Nathan Glazer, We Are All Multiculturalists Now

Charles Silberman, A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today

Jack Wertheimer, A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America

Doland and Wind, New Dimensions in American Religious History

C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Church in African-American Experience

Garry Wills, Papal Sins

Mark Noll, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind

Andrew Delbanco, The Death of Satan

Thursday, October 5 Midterm distributed; due back October 12th.

Section Two: Elementary Issues

Week 7 (Oct. 10 and 12) – If Religion is Important to Public Life, Why?

Given the apparent strength of religious commitments of most Americans, how do such commitments intersect our political and civic life? Peter Berger's argument is a modern classic, updating both Durkheim and Weber, on why religion exists—and persists—as a deep claim on human life in the modern world. Robert Bellah's work looks at the ways in which religious institutions operate at two quite different levels—denominations and congregations—to instill, reinforce, and activate civic engagement of the kind Robert Putnam and others worry is declining in America.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Can you summarize Berger's argument briefly: 1) What are nomos and cosmos? What is secularization? How does it work? What are its origins?
- 2) How persuasive is Berger today, given that Europe is highly secular and America seems to be moving that way? Why then do you think people (especially young people) seem to be disaffiliating?
- 3) Are the associations Bellah traces between belief and civic engagement coherent in terms of causality? Or is there a plausible alternative that associates the two with education, race, religious tradition, and socio-economic status?
- 4) If so, how different are both the religious and civic commitments of different socio-economic groups?

Required Reading:

T: Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy, chs. 1-2 & 5-7 (**book**)

TH: Robert Bellah, The Good Society, intro & chs. 1, 5, 6 (**book**)

Further Reading:

Robert Bellah, Habits of the Heart

Peter Berger, A Rumor of Angels

Robert Wuthnow, Acts of Compassion

Robert Wuthnow, Rediscovering the Sacred

Raab, Covenant for a New Creation

Wood and Davis, The Role of Religion in Making Public Policy

Merkl and Smart, Religion and Politics in the Modern World

Rowner, Civil Religion and Political Theology

Jelen and Wilcox, Public Attitudes Toward Church and State

Rubenstein, Spirit Matters

Week 8 (Oct. 17 & 19) – Dealing with the Challenges of the World—America, Religion, and Life After September 11th

"Everything changed" after September 11th—or did it? The Iraq and Afghan wars are now the longest in U.S. history, Osama bin Laden is dead, but militant Political Islam certainly isn't. How does the religiously-inspired militancy of Islam and other faiths challenge American policy, domestic life, politics, and fundamental values?

One set of issues involves the US posture abroad, another at home. Can the question of terrorism be solved through military means? What else is involved—and what should Americans be weighing as we move forward, in terms of analysis and response?

At home, what trade-offs are involved in heightening security while maintaining both openness and tolerance? Islam is a rapidly-growing religious presence in America—estimates of the number of American Muslims range from 1.5 million to 10 million. What issues are involved in their presence, and how will a generally religiously-tolerant society reconcile its tradition when American security seems threatened?

Questions to consider:

- 1) Bernard Lewis' essay raises a number of issues arising from the historical relations between major Islamic cultures and the West, while Barakat's offers an intriguing assessment of Arab Muslim culture in particular—one quite relevant to the Arab Spring and what is now emerging in Egypt, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and Iran. Can you identify those issues succinctly? What's your own brief personal reaction/assessment of their arguments?
- 2) Read Armstrong and Wood together, then counter pose their key points of agreement and disagreement. Does one author's arguments negate the other's? In what way(s) might both be truthful? Where do you locate yourself in this exchange?"
- 3) Muslim Americans as a group turn out to be far more heterogeneous than many might imagine;

at the same time, note how much they share in values of the wider community. Think about that duality, and the issues Smith raises about the challenges that assimilation poses. Are there different communities? Different responses? How are the challenges similar and/or different from those faced by immigrant Catholics or Jews or freed African-American slaves in the 19th century? Why?

Required Readings:

- T:** Bernard Lewis, "[The Revolt of Islam](#)"
Halim Barakat, [The Arab World](#), Ch. 12
Karen Armstrong, "[The Myth of Religious Violence](#)," [The Guardian](#), 9/25/14
Graeme Wood, "[What ISIS Really Wants](#)", [Atlantic Monthly](#), March 2015
- TH:** Jane Smith, [Islam in America](#), Chs. 4, 6. and Resources
Pew, "[Muslim Americans](#)," pgs 1- 75
Pew Center, "[Widespread Negativity: Muslims Express Greater Distrust Westerners More Than Vice-versa](#)"

Further Readings:

- Pew Center, "Religion More Prominent"
Pew Center, "[Benedict XVI Viewed Favorably But Faulted on Religious Outreach](#)," pp 4-8 only.
Pew Center, "[Public Remains Conflicted over Islam](#)"
Pew Center, "[Little Support for Terrorism Among Muslim Americans](#)"
Pew, 2011 summary of, "[Muslim Americans](#)," with other links and graphs
The single most [comprehensive overview survey](#) of Muslim Americans
Samuel Huntington, [Clash of Civilizations](#)
Halim Barakat, [The Arab World](#)
[The American Journal of Islamic Studies](#)
Yvonne Haddad, [The Muslims of America](#)
C. Eric Lincoln, [Black Muslims](#)
Jack Shaheen, [Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Culture](#)
Gilles Kepel, [Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam](#)
Olivier Roy, [Globalized Islam](#)

**Section Three: Case Studies of Specific Arenas Where
Religion Engages Public Policy and Politics**

Week 9 (Oct. 24 & 26) – The Religious Right: The Intersection of Religion and Party Politics

The appearance of Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority in the 1980s and then Pat Robertson and the Christian Coalition in the 1990s paralleled a period of heightened conservatism in American politics. The shift prompted a vigorous debate not only among politicians and journalists, but among political scientists, about the significance of this religious-political movement—not to mention sparking alarm among many who feared it as a new outbreak of religious intolerance.

But after 2000, things changed: both the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition have effectively

disbanded; and many Christian Right figures (Cal Thomas, eg.) called for a reassessment of the intersection of politics and religion. Many younger evangelicals are wrestling with, and working on, "social justice" questions that in the past leaders such as Falwell and Robertson viewed as unacceptably "liberal" or "non-religious." Can we explain why the movement emerged when and where it did? Is it now in permanent decline—or temporary eclipse, subsumed (perhaps) in the Tea Party movement, but likely to reappear independently? President Trump was supported by over 80% of white evangelicals but is not the least bit religious himself. Why?

Questions to consider:

- 1) What role did this Christian Right play in America's rightward shift politically? To what degree does it represent a long-term change in American politics, versus a "spike" that is already leveling out or even declining? What were the historical precedents?
- 2) How representative of fundamentalists and evangelicals as a whole is the Christian Right? What explains the conservatism of this era's fundamentalists versus their populism in the late 19th Century? Why then do political scientists find that on "economic" versus "social" issues, even today some fundamentalists are more "liberal" than "conservative"?

Required reading:

T: Clyde Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers (**book**)

TH: Jim Wallis, "Who Speaks for God"

Ron Sider, "Towards an Evangelical Political Philosophy and Agenda for Christians..."

Jones and Cox, "[Religion and the Tea Party](#)"

Pew Forum Report, "[Young White Evangelicals Less Republican, Still Conservative](#)"

Further reading:

Molly Worthen, Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism

Matthew Sutton, American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism

Martin Marty, Fundamentalisms and the State

Marty, Fundamentalisms and Society

Clyde Wilcox, God's Warriors: Christian Right in 20th C.

Frances Fitzgerald, Cities on a Hill (Ch on Falwell)

John Green, Religion and the Culture War: Dispatches from the Front

Christian Smith, American Evangelicalism

Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More

Grant Wacker, Heaven Below

Week 10 (Oct. 31 & Nov. 2) – Economics, Work, and Justice: The Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the US Economy

Occupy Wall Street, Thomas Piketty, Bernie Sanders, and Donald Trump have all elevated the subject of economic inequality to the center of the political debate, but their proposed remedies are quite different yet often far from specific. In the 1980s, the Catholic Bishops issued a powerful pastoral letter that provoked heated debate over the Church's willingness to criticize modern American capitalism and to offer specific remedies.

Influenced by Catholicism's traditional social teachings as well as by Vatican II and the Liberation Theology movement, American bishops sought a clear statement of responsibilities Catholics ought to share in relation to economic processes and outcomes. The battles around reaching that statement, and the debates it provoked, offer object lessons in how religious leaders struggle not only to articulate public policy goals that can affect broader political behavior, but how resistance within denominations (and from outside) acts to constrain and shape such actions.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Although denominations are inherently "free" to press such claims on the larger society, does the fact that they are faith-based claims somehow "weaken" their influence in a multicultural society? Should the bishops have worked, less visibly and openly, with existing political organizations to encourage their claims for such goals? Does one denomination's claim to authority merely encourage other denominations to issue countervailing claims, and do the resulting competing claims by religious organizations thereby "remove" the very subject from a larger "political" arena, rather than advance it?
- 2) Can you tell me which three of Benestad's traditionalist and conservative arguments seem most powerful to you? How might a supporter of the Letter respond most effectively?
- 3) Birnbaum writes from a sympathetic 'left' position, as a secular Jewish sociologist teaching at Georgetown. Which three of his arguments do you find powerful—and how would you answer them?

Required Reading:

- T:** Conference of Catholic Bishops, "[Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy](#)"
- TH:** Norman Birnbaum, "The Bishops in the Iron Cage"
J. Brian Benestad, "[The Bishops' Pastoral Letter](#)"

Further Reading:

Fred Herzog, [Justice Church](#)
Michael Harrington, [Politics at God's Funeral](#)
Michael Novak, [Freedom with Justice](#)
Ronald Stone, [Paul Tillich's Radical Social Thought](#)
Don Pellote, [John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict](#)
Charles Morris, [American Catholics](#)
Michael Novak, [Toward a Theology of the Corporation](#)
Vicchio, [Perspectives on the American Catholic Church](#)
Gower, [Religion and Economic Ethics](#)
Douglass, [Deeper Meaning of Economic Life](#)
Himes, ed., "Catholic Social Teaching"

Thursday, November 2 in class: Submit a brief (half-page to one page) outline of the 10-page final paper due at end of the term.

Week 11 (Nov. 7 & 9) – Race, Gender, Identity and Faith: How Religion Shapes the Views of its Believers--and the Implications for Public Policy

Religion acts powerfully to inform and reinforce its members' beliefs about themselves and others—the history of Protestant antagonisms toward Catholics, Christian anti-Semitism, the deep divide over slavery that splintered three of America's largest denominations, and the still ongoing debates over homosexuality and over women's place in various faiths all underscore religion's power in shaping attitudes toward identity and, in turn, the world we share in common.

We'll look at three issues: the constantly evolving use of biblical text to validate public policy and attitudes; the Catholic Church's recent statement encouraging a more compassionate understanding of homosexuality; and the heated debate over the mission of the Southern Baptists to convert Jews as examples of enduring tensions in a multi-religious landscape.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Gomes presents you with a sequence of interconnected issues, moving from what were once controversial topics (such as Prohibition, slavery, anti-Semitism) to what are today's controversial topics, especially homosexuality. Gomes's order here is purposeful, designed to win your assent to his conclusion at each stage, and then using that assent to prepare you to assent to the next stage. Describe that sequence to yourself—and consider whether you're persuaded by it.
- 2) Given what you know already about the differing importance of Biblical text in America's various denominational blocs, explain why you think Gomes adopts this strategy, and what about each of the major blocs would make it more or less responsive to this style of argument.
- 3) Compare the Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter to Gomes, and explain what makes its conclusions different from Gomes's? In what ways are its arguments similar to—and different from—Gomes's approach? Why?
- 4) The Southern Baptist Convention's mission to the Jews represents another example of text, traditions, and the problematic ambiguities of a pluralism. Suspend your personal conclusions here, and try to state the respective arguments on both sides—from each side's own point of view. Then offer your own argument about the choices being made here and the political/policy implications, recognizing that resort to law or public regulation as a solution is not an option (as it would be were government taking a position here).

Required Reading:

T: Peter Gomes, The Good Book (**book**), chs. 4-8

TH: NCCB, "[Always Our Children: Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual](#)

[Children](#)"

Jeffrey Goldberg, "[Some of Their Best Friends Are Jews](#)," [New York Times Sunday Magazine](#), March 16, 1997

Further Readings:

Stephen Prothero, [Why Liberals Win the Culture Wars \(Even When They Lose Elections\)](#)

Martin Marty, [The One and the Many](#)

Ron Thiemann, "Toward an American Public Theology: Religion in a Pluralistic Democracy," in [Constructing a Public Theology](#)

Bruce Chilton et al., [Forging a Common Future: Catholic, Judaic, and Protestant Relations...](#)

Michael Harrington, [The Politics at God's Funeral](#)

Week 12 (Nov. 14 & 16) – [Religion, Public Education, and Welfare Reform: The Clinton and Bush Administration's Guidelines on Prayer and the Schools—and the "Charitable Choice" Debate over a New Role for Religious Institutions in Welfare Delivery](#)

In the past 30 years, two seminal debates have broken out that touch deeply on the "separation of church and state" question. Conservatives, long hostile to Supreme Court rulings that limited prayer and religious education in public schools, have sought to pass a constitutional amendment permitting both; to forestall it, and to provide greater clarity about what can and cannot be done on this sensitive issue in public schools, the Clinton Administration in the mid- 1990s sponsored a set of guidelines and advisories meant to address these issues. We'll then look at how the Bush and Obama administration reacted to Clinton's guidelines.

On Thursday, we'll look at the 1990s welfare reform debate--and the "Charitable Choice" question of voluntary associations as an alternative to direct government services to the poor--by examining how religious groups may now participate in delivery of various welfare programs, whether or not this threatens First Amendment separation, and whether such private voluntaristic services can ever effectively supplant public delivery.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Do the Clinton's guidelines' attempt to codify by clarifying seem persuasive? What ambiguities do you find in the Clinton guidelines?
- 2) How did Bush and Obama adapt those guidelines? What should we expect from Trump?
- 3) How does "Charitable Choice" differ from earlier public financial support for faith-based organizations? How would you assess its strengths and weaknesses as an issue of public policy?

Required reading:

T: [Clinton Administration Guidelines on Religion and Schools](#)

TH: Michele Estrin Gilman, "[Fighting Poverty with Faith: Ten Years of Charitable Choice](#)"

Further Readings:

Steven Green, [The Bible, the Schools, and the Constitution](#)

Pres. Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based Initiatives, "[A New Era of Partnerships: Recommendations on Poverty Reduction and Community Building](#)"

Pres. Bush's Advisory Council, "[Innovations in Compassion: a Final Report to the Armies of Compassion](#)"

Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy, "[Taking Stock: The Bush Faith-Based Initiatives and What Lies Ahead](#)"

Chaves and Wineberg, "[Did Faith-Based Initiatives Change Congregations?](#)"

Week 13 (Nov. 21; No class Nov. 23 for Thanksgiving Recess) -- Religion and the Environment: Clashing or Compatible Faiths?

Some environmentalists see in America's dominant religious beliefs the justifications for a human-centered and environmentally-hostile world of consumption and pollution. Others have argued for seeing key elements of environmentalism within those dominant beliefs. We'll examine a range of arguments, from advocates of "Gaia" spirituality to those who trace environmentalism at least back to Transcendentalism, and beyond, to America's Calvinist roots, both dark and light.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Lynn White gives a compelling picture of the evolution of Western religious attitudes toward nature, but is his handling of the tradition--either historically or contemporaneously--compelling as a characterization of practice, rather than ideals?
- 2) Can you see how arguments that White surfaced in the 1960s are being explored and adapted in [Laudato Si](#), papal teaching issued in 2015? Is the papal teaching going even farther than White? In what ways?
- 3) Robert Nelson offers a toughly critical assessment of environmentalism as a "religion" in First Amendment terms. How persuasive is his argument? Does his argument cast any light on the ways in which existing religions in America reacted to the emergence of environmentalism, and in particular to deep ecology?

Required Reading:

- T:** Lynn White, "[Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis](#)"
"[Laudato Si: A Map](#)" (This "map" summarizes Pope Francis' 2015 papal encyclical; you may--but don't have to--read the [full text](#))
Robert Nelson, "[Environmental Religions and Church and State](#),"

Further Reading:

Devall and Sessions, [Deep Ecology](#)

Bill McKibben, [The End of Nature](#)

Roderick Nash, [Wilderness and the American Mind](#)

Week 14 (Nov. 28 & 30) -- I'll finish with an overview of the future of the issues we've studied and make the case for a new way to study them using a summary of John Dewey's legendary Terry Lectures at Yale 80 years ago. We'll share refreshments

Required Reading:

T: Bradley Baurain, "[Common Ground with A Common Faith: Dewey's Idea of the 'Religious'](#)"

TH: No assigned reading; overview discussion of what you've learned

Hand in your 10pp final paper no later than Friday, December 8th, at 5PM.

DPI-342: Housekeeping and Related Notes

1. **My Office Hours** will be by arrangement. I don't use sign-up sheets; you should request a meeting by email or see me after class.
2. **Class Attendance and Review Sessions:** Regular attendance is assumed. If you have to miss a class, let the Course Assistant know by email.
3. The **Final Paper** should be 10pp, double spaced, with the usual provisions regarding style, originality, etc. (If in doubt, use [The Chicago Manual of Style](#).) Topics should include a public policy or political dimension, obviously, but I'm willing to entertain historically comparative, thematic, case model, or philosophic approaches. Feel free to schedule time with me, especially before the paper proposal is due on Thurs, November 2, to discuss topics and approach. I'LL PUT SOME FINAL PAPERS FROM PAST CLASSES IN A FOLDER ON THE COURSE PAGE.
4. On **Grading**, I will grade you on your paper (30%), midterm (25%), final (25%) and class participation (20%). I will use a curve, following HKS's recommended grade distribution <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/degrees/registrar/faculty/exams-and-grading/grades>.

A	A-	B+	B	B- or lower
15%	25%	35%	20%	5%

5. **Academic honesty:** I take academic honesty very seriously. If you have any questions about plagiarism, ethics, or simply your responsibilities as a student, see the [Student Handbook](#).
6. **Mark these dates in your calendar:**

Thursday, October 12 – TAKE-HOME MIDTERM due in class (I'll pass it out October 5th)

Thursday, November 2 – BRIEF OUTLINE (1/2 – 1 page) OF FINAL PAPER due.

Thursday, November 30 – FINAL EXAM distributed

Friday, December 8, 5:00 PM -- FINAL PAPER AND EXAM due. Extensions will be granted only in rarest circumstances, with written requests made no later than final day of classes, Thursday, November 30.

7. **Books, course materials, and further readings** -- You're expected to read each week's "required readings" by the appropriate class of that week. Those readings marked "books" are at the Coop; all other material is organized by class date on the Course Page. Many online readings can be accessed by clicking the link on the electronic syllabus. There may occasionally be additional handouts not indicated in the syllabus. "Further readings" are mostly materials readily available in the Harvard Library system, and I'll try to have many of them at HKS Library Reserve.

Required Books (At The Coop, or buy online. Used copies will cost approximately \$65 in total.)

Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion

Peter J. Gomes, The Good Book: Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart

Clyde Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers? The Religious Right in American Politics

Peter W. Williams, America's Religions: From Their Origins to the Twenty-First Century

Mark Chaves, American Religion: Contemporary Trends

Robert Bellah, The Good Society

*Seymour Lipset and Earl Raab, Jews and the New American Scene (**This book is out of print and not available at the COOP. You can get it on Amazon for pennies.**)

8. **Finally, our commitment to one another:**

This is a class on a subject that will involve for many their deepest feelings and beliefs. Let me therefore say for the record that I expect two crucial commitments from all of you.

First, no one should presume--or ever respond as if--anyone else in the class intended to wound or denigrate another person or belief; neither should your own words or conduct ever carry such intentions.

Second, what we say in class is to remain in class; the vitality of this course in part depends on our willingness to explore our own confusions, doubts and beliefs, and some may not wish to have those shared outside the classroom.

If you don't feel you can meet such standards, please do not enroll. For any reason, if you believe that these commitments have been violated during a class, please see me immediately.