Religion, Race, & Politics: Global and Imperial Perspectives

Political Science 490/Religious Studies 471
Professor Elizabeth Shakman Hurd
Winter 2019

Wed. 9:00-11:50am, Ripton Room
Office: Scott 209
Office hours: Tues. 1:00-3:00pm or by appointment
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This seminar is an experiment in studying the intersections of religion, race, and global politics. We discuss how particular understandings of ‘religion’ and ‘race’ inform contemporary scholarship and shape national and international legal and governmental practices. We examine a range of contexts including constitutional law’s construal of religious diversity in Malaysia, formations of ‘churchstateness’ in the Americas, the celebration of ‘moderate’ religion at the US State Department, the rationalities of spiritism, the occult, and their imbrication with Shi’i traditions in Iran, and the racialization of the field of imperial comparative religion. Cross-cutting themes include religion and the rise of the nation-state; the politics of religious establishment and freedom; the role of race in the formation of the disciplines of religious studies and international relations and the social sciences; the formation of modern vocabularies of religious and racial exclusion; the role of race and secularism in American history at home and abroad, and the politics of religion and race in colonial and postcolonial contexts. We read books and articles that draw on international politics, religion, political theory, law, anthropology and history.

Requirements
The course requires a substantial amount of reading and preparation. Class attendance and participation are important components of the final grade, and comments on the week’s reading are mandatory for all participants.

Presentations
Working in pairs, seminar participants will give one 15-20 minute presentation based on the week’s reading. The presentation should summarize central themes of the readings and raise questions for discussion.

Written assignments
There are two required written assignments:

1. Book review (3-5 pages, double-spaced) due on or before last day of class. Review one or more of the books on the syllabus (required, recommended and/or one from which we read an excerpt). For models see here and here.

   or

Undergraduate syllabus due on or before last day of class. Write a syllabus for an undergraduate research seminar for a class that you would like to teach, bringing together your area of concentration within your discipline with one or more of the themes of this seminar.
2. **Final paper** (8-10 pages, double-spaced) **due March 18th**, applying something you learned in this course to your own research interests. This should be a short but solid argument that could potentially be revised to become a dissertation chapter. Submit your paper electronically to the instructor. Please, no incompleteds except in the case of medical or personal emergency.

**Evaluation**
Final grades will be based upon 1) weekly attendance and participation, including your presentation (25%); 2) book review or syllabus (25%); 3) final paper (50%).

**Required Texts**
The following texts are on 4-hour reserve at the library. Used copies are available used through Amazon and other sites. Other materials are posted on the Canvas site under “Documents.”


**Seminar Topics**

1/9  **Introduction**

  Faisal Devji, “*Against Muslim Unity.*” *Aeon*, July 2016.


M. Cooper Harriss, “Two Ways of Looking at an Invisible Man,” in Race and Secularism in America, pp. 153-177.

1/16  Religion, law, freedom

Sullivan, Impossibility, 2nd ed. (all)

“The Impossibility of Religious Freedom” (The Bent Angle)

Recommended:


1/23  Race and the disciplines I: international relations

Vitalis, White World Order, Black Power Politics.

“Desegregating International Relations: A Conversation with Robert Vitalis on White World Order, Black Power Politics”

Recommended:
Millennium special issue on race and IR.


1/30 No class

2/6 Religion, race, and environmental politics

Guest Lecturer: Dr. Rosemary Hancock, University of Notre Dame-Australia


2/13  Race and the disciplines II: religious studies

Chidester, *Empire of Religion.*

*Recommended:*


2/20  Religion, rights, liberalism

Moustafa, *Constituting Religion*

*Recommended:*


Nandini Chatterjee, “Muslim or Christian? Family Quarrels and Religious Diagnosis


**2/27 Religion, race, colonialism, the Americas**

Johnson et al, *Ekklesia: Three Inquiries in Church and State*


Guest speaker: Dr. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Indiana University

Recommended:


Spirituality, reason, religion, superstition, the state

Alireza Doostdar, *Iranian Metaphysicals.*

Listen to Doostdar’s [interview](https://newbooksnetwork.org/doostdar/) with SherAli K. Tareen, New Books Network

**Recommended:**


International politics and the construction of religious difference

**NB: Book review or syllabus due today.** Discussion of final papers.

Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom.*

Browse this Immanent Frame [discussion series](https://immanentframe.net/) on Beyond Religious Freedom.

**Recommended:**


3/18 Final papers due by noon to eshurd@northwestern.edu