Secularism, religion, and politics

Political science 490 (Graduate seminar)

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The word “religion” or “religious” appears over 14,000 times in state and federal statutes and regulations in the United States alone. What can these words mean, in law?

--Winni Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, 11.

Thus it is that modernity, an inconsistent and paradoxical combination of claims about nature and culture, passes itself off as the clean, enlightened alternative to a messy, primitivistic cosmology that confuses the natural with the cultural, mixes the animal with the human, mistakes the inanimate for the animate, and contaminates the moral with the prudential. Latour reminds us that modernity too is a kind of cosmology, even though its sense of itself as a radically new event and its recurrent suppression of this or that side of its own vision prevent it from acknowledging this fact…To acknowledge modern hybridizing would call into question modernity’s standing as the progressive triumph over an enchanted world.

--Jane Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life*, 97-8.

This seminar is about secularism, religion and the politics of modernity. Particular attention will be devoted to the politics of international law and international human rights as they intersect with the critique of secularity.

The presence of religion in world politics is one of the most intellectually intriguing and politically surprising developments of the late modern era. Conventional understandings of international politics, focused on material capabilities and strategic interaction, exclude from the start the possibility that something called religion could be a fundamental organizing force in the international system. Yet a range of factors including the internal pluralization of western societies, a collective questioning of post-Enlightenment assumptions about and formations of secularism, and a sense of urgency among policy-makers in Europe and the United States in a post-9/11 world have set in motion a re-evaluation of long-standing research programs across disciplines based on the assumption that religion is easily defined and that it will either decline or disappear altogether. This seminar is part of this re-evaluation.

Course Requirements

This course requires a substantial amount of reading and preparation. Class attendance and participation will be important components of the final grade, and comments on the week’s reading are mandatory for all participants. Oral presentations of course materials will be required. No late work will be accepted without a written medical excuse.

# It is recommended that seminar participants read the SSRC blog *The Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion, and the Public Sphere*:

# http://www.ssrc.org/blogs/immanent\_frame/

Presentations

Each participant is responsible for one 15-20 minute presentation. The presentation should summarize central themes and pose questions for discussion. Please also submit a 5-page written “reader’s response” in class on the day of your presentation. This essay may serve as the basis of your presentation.

Writing assignments

Seminar participants will submit two 5-page essays in response to course readings, one of which is due on the day of his or her presentation. The second may be submitted at any time during the quarter, also in response to the day’s assigned readings.

A final paper (10-12 pages) applying insights from this course to your own developing research interests is due on the first day of finals week, Monday, December 7th. The idea is to present a short but solid argument that could be turned into a dissertation chapter.

## Evaluation

Final grades will be based upon 1) attendance and participation, including the presentation (25%); 2) 2 reader’s response essays (25%); and 4) final paper (50%).

## Required Texts

The following texts should be purchased at Beck’s; most are available in paper and all are on reserve at the Library. Articles marked with an asterisk (\*) are available for copying in the Department.

Bennett, Jane, *The Enchantment of Modern Life: Attachments, Crossings, and Ethics* (Princeton, 2001).

Casanova, José. *Public Religions in the Modern World* (University of Chicago, 1994).

Connolly, William E. *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style* (Duke, 2008).

Hurd, Elizabeth Shakman. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (Princeton, 2008).

Mahmood, Saba. *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, 2005).

Scott, Joan W. *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton, 2007).

Sullivan, Winnifred F. *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (Princeton, 2005).

Taylor, Charles. *A Secular Age* (Belknap Press, 2007).

van der Veer, Peter & Hartmut Lehmann. *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton, 1999).

# Seminar Topics

# Sept. 24 Introduction

Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*

*Recommended:*

Tomoko Masuzawa. *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Oct. 1 Secularism, religion, and politics: 4 approaches

Casanova, *Public Religions*, pp. 3-66 and 211-234.

\*Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 1-66.

\*Linell Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd (eds.), “Comparative Secularisms and the Politics of Modernity: An Introduction,” in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (New York: Palgrave, 2010).

\*De Vries, Hent. “Before, Around, and Beyond the Theologico-Political,” in Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, editors, *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 1-88 (skim).

*Recommended:*

Anders Berg-Sørensen (ed.), *Contested Secularism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

*Dædalus* (Journal of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences) *On secularism and religion* (Summer 2003).

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

Nikki R. Keddie, “Secularism and the State: Towards Clarity and Global Comparison,” *New Left Review* 226 (November-December 1997): 21-40.

Oct. 8 A secular age?

Taylor, *A Secular Age*, pp. 1-22 and 423-593.

Bennett, *The Enchantment of Modern Life,* Chs. 1, 4, and 8.

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Book review: *A Secular Age* by Charles Taylor.” *Political Theory* 36, no. 3 (June 2008): 486-491 (available through the library).

*Recommended*:

Dressler, Markus & Arvind Mandair, eds. *The Politics of Religion-Making*. New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2011.

Philip S. Gorski, “Historicizing the Secularization Debate: Church, State, and Society in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, CA. 1300 to 1700,” *American Sociological Review* 65 (February 2000): pp. 138-167.

Hent de Vries, (ed.) *Religion: Beyond a Concept* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad: Militancy, Morality, Modernity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

T.N. Srinivasan, (ed.) *The Future of Secularism* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

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

Rajeev Bhargava (ed.) *Secularism and its Critics* (Oxford, 2005, 2nd ed.)

Oct. 15 International and comparative politics

Hurd, *Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, Chs. 1, 2, 5, 6, skim 7 & 8.

\*Ahmet Kuru, “Introduction: Analyzing Secularism: History, Ideology, and Policy,” in *Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 6-40.

*Recommended:*

Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds.), *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming).

Jack Snyder (ed.), *Religion and International Relations Theory* (Columbia, forthcoming).

Sultan Tepe, *Beyond Sacred and Secular: Politics of Religion in Israel and Turkey* (Stanford, 2009).

Bruce K. Rutherford, *Egypt after Mubarak: Liberalism, Islam, and Democracy in the Arab World* (Princeton, 2008).

Daniel Philpott, “The Challenge of September 11 to Secularism in International Relations,” *World Politics* 55 (October 2002): 66-95.

Anthony Gill, “Religion and Comparative Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 4 (2001): 117-138.

Oct. 22 Gender and the politics of religion

Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*

*Recommended:*

Margot Badran, *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2009).

Nilüfer Göle and Ludwig Ammann, eds. *Islam in Public* (Istanbul: Bilgi University Press, 2006).

Karen M. Morin and Jeanne Kay Guelke (eds.), *Women, Religion, & Space: Global Perspectives on Gender and Faith* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007).

Oct. 29 Nationalism

\*Slavica Jakelic, Introduction, “When Religion is Not a Choice” in *Collectivistic Religions: Religion, Choice, and Identity in Late Modernity* (Ashgate, forthcoming).

van der Veer and Lehmann (eds.) *Nation and Religion*, pp. 3-177.

\*Connolly, “Liberalism, Secularism and the Nation,” in *Why I Am Not a Secularist*, pp. 73-96.

Asad, “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,” in *Nation and Religion*, pp. 178-196.

*Recommended:*

Anthony D. Smith, “The ‘Sacred’ Dimension of Nationalism." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29, No. 3 (2000): 791-814 (PDF available electronically through the library).

Tisa Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom* (University of North Carolina, 2009).

Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular and American Literature* (Princeton, 2007).

Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Princeton, 2001)

Nov. 5 Capitalism and empire

Connolly, *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*

Saba Mahmood, “Secularism, Hermeneutics, and Empire: The Politics of Islamic Reformation,” *Public Culture* 18, no. 2 (Spring 2006): pp. 323-347 (available electronically through the library).

*Recommended:*

“Critical Secularism: A Reintroduction for Perilous Times.” Special issue of *boundary 2*, vol. 31, no. 2 (Summer 2004).

Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Nov. 12 Methods: On the study of secularism, religion and politics

Russell T. McCutcheon, “They Licked the Platter Clean: On the Co-Dependency of the Religious and the Secular,” *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 19, no. 3-4 (2007): pp. 173-199 (available electronically through the library).

Douglas V. Porpora, “Methodological Atheism, Methodological Agnosticism and Religious Experience.” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 36, no. 1 (March 2006): 57-75 (available electronically through the library).

\*Andrew Davison, “Hermeneutics and the politics of secularism,” in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*, 25-39.

\*Cecelia Lynch, “A new-Weberian approach to religion in international politics,” *International Theory* 1, no. 3 (2009): 381-408.

\*Ian Shapiro, “Problems, methods, and theories in the study of politics, or: what’s wrong with political science and what to do about it,” in Ian Shapiro, Rogers M. Smith, and Tarek E. Masoud (eds.), *Problems and Methods in the Study of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 19-41.

\*Ann Norton, “Political science as a vocation,” in *Problems and Methods*,pp. 67-82.

Nov. 19 Law, public space, and democracy

Scott, Joan. *The Politics of the Veil*.

\*Talal Asad, “Trying to Understand French Secularism,” in Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 494-526.

*Recommended:*

Mirjam Künkler and Michael Meyer-Resende, Discussion Paper No.1,

*A Missing Link: Why Europe Should Talk about Religion When Promoting Democracy Abroad* (Democracy Reporting International, June 2009). Available at http://www.democracy-reporting.org/downloads/a\_missing\_link\_09.pdf

Geoffrey Brahm Levey & Tariq Modood (eds.), *Secularism, Religion and Multicultural Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

John R. Bowen, *Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves: Islam, the State, and Public Space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

Yolande Jansen, “*Laïcité*, or the Politics of Republican Secularism,” in Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 475-493.

Thomas Banchoff, ed. *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

T.N. Madan, “Secularism in its Place,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46, no. 4 (November 1987): 747-759 (available electronically through JSTOR).

Nov. 26 Thanksgiving Day. No class.

Dec. 3 International law and international human rights

Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, “Varieties of Legal Secularism,” in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*, 107-120.

Peter Danchin, “Of Prophets and Proselytes: Freedom of Religion and the Conflict of Rights in International Law,” *Harvard International Law Journal* 49, no.2 (Summer 2008): 249-321.

T. Jeremy Gunn, “The Complexity of Religion and Definition of ‘Religion’ in International Law,” *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 16 (2003). Available at: <http://www.law.harvard.edu/students/orgs/hrj/iss16/gunn.shtml>

Janis, Mark W. & Carolyn Evans, eds. *Religion and International Law*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1999.

Monday, Dec. 7 **Final papers due in my office (Scott 208) by noon.**