This course considers the relationship between religion and modernity. We examine the complex entanglements of religion with human life, law, politics, and public culture in the US and in other contexts. Beginning with legal controversies over yoga, the public display of crèches in the United States, and the religious history of the United States, we then turn to the question of who is a Jew legally in the United Kingdom, before moving further afield to reflect on a series of dilemmas involving the intersections of law, religion, and politics. The course traverses disciplinary, geographic, and secular-religious boundaries, drawing on readings from politics, socio-legal studies, religious studies, indigenous studies, anthropology, history, and popular culture. Students also will consider their own experiences of living with religious diversity, as we explore tools and strategies to think in new ways about the place of religion in the contemporary world. Students are encouraged to attend scholarly lectures on Feb. 1 and Feb. 16 in the Buffett Global Politics & Religion Faculty Research Group speaker series.

Learning Objectives
Through taking this course, students will:

- Engage with literature, research, and/or theories related to social and religious inequalities and diversities, situating the American experience in global and comparative perspective
- Better understand the impact that histories, institutions, and social structures have on local issues and individual experiences and identities, including their own
- Demonstrate an ability to think and write more critically about political, social, scientific, economic, and cultural issues related to social inequalities and diversities

Course Requirements
Students are expected to come to class prepared for active participation. Take notes on the readings, bring them to class and use them to participate in discussion. Attendance and participation are crucial components of the final grade. Students will also develop a final paper, in consultation with the instructor, to be submitted at the end of the quarter.

Written Assignments
There will be five written assignments over the course of the quarter: two 1-page reader's responses, two 3-page papers, and one 5-7-page final essay.

Policy on Use of Personal Technology
Personal computers and mobile devices are not permitted in class. This is a discussion-based course and students are required and requested to listen to others and participate actively in discussion.
Grading and Academic Integrity
Final grades will be based on: 1) attendance and participation, including two 1-page reader's response essays (20%); 2) short paper #1 (20%); 3) short paper #2 (20%); and 4) final essay (40%). No late work will be accepted without a written medical excuse.

Any student who violates the University's principles of academic integrity will automatically fail this course and be referred to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies' office for further action by the University. The Dean's policy for WCAS is available here: http://www.wcas.northwestern.edu/advising/academic.html

Formatting Guidelines for Written Assignments
Double-space your essay Use 12-point Times New Roman font Number the pages Use one-inch margins Give your paper a title Include your full name and the date at the top of the first page

Disability Accommodation
Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide the professor with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Readings
All readings are posted on Canvas Course Reserves with the exception of those that are open access (links below). You may purchase the following two books from Beck's Books (716 Clark St., Evanston) or check them out on 2-hour reserve at the Main library.


Course Schedule:
5 January Introduction
10 January Studying religion: three perspectives


12 January  
Is yoga in US public schools constitutional? Is that the right question? What is religion, and who decides?


http://religiondispatches.org/is-downward-dog-the-path-to-hell/

http://frequencies.ssrc.org/2011/10/13/iyengar/

http://religiondispatches.org/protesting-yoga-in-schools-but-welcoming-bible-study/

http://religiondispatches.org/claiming-yoga-for-india/

http://aeon.co/magazine/society/erik-davis-is-yoga-a-religion/


**Reader's response #1:** Bring to class a 1-page reader’s response paper addressing the following question: What is your response to this debate as reflected in these pieces? What struck you as interesting or unexpected? Have you experienced a similar controversy in your educational or community institutions? If so, describe it.

17 January  
**Inventing a Christian America**

Green, *Inventing a Christian America*, Preface, Intro., & Chap. 4 (pp. vii-xi; 1-19; and 154-198).

19 January  
**Christmas in America (or more precisely Pawtucket, Rhode Island)**

*Lynch v. Donnelly*, Chief Justice Burger’s Opinion for the Court, Justice O’Connor’s concurring opinion, and Justice Brennan’s dissent, all available through this link: 

Green, *Inventing a Christian America*, Chap. 5 & Conclusion (pp. 199-243).

24 January  
**Christmas in America, II**


26 January  
**The Jews’ Free School (JFS): Who is a Jew in the UK, and who decides?**
This UK Supreme Court case involved a dispute over the grounds for and regulation of the criteria of admission to an oversubscribed Jewish secondary school in north London. The case involves asking (and, for some, answering) questions such as: “Who is a Jew? And who has the authority to make that determination? Does the Orthodox Jewish practice of determining Jewish status by matrilineal descent violate the Race Relations Act of 1976?”


References/further reading:
Judgment: R (on the application of E) (Respondent) v Governing Body of JFS and the Admissions Appeal Panel of JFS (Appellants) and others. Supreme Court of the United Kingdom. 16 December 2009.


31 January  
Jews’ Free School, II


References:


2 February  
**First 3-5 page paper due**

Topic: How would you have decided the JFS case and on what grounds? Imagine that you are the judge and explain your reasoning. Incorporate examples from your own life experience or those of your friends, family or acquaintances into your opinion.
We will discuss your papers in class. Come prepared to state your position in 4-5 minutes, and to respond to others’ viewpoints and perspectives.

**7 February  Religion, indigeneity, empire**


Greg Johnson, “Materializing and Performing Hawaiian Religion(s) on Mauna Kea,” in the *Brill Handbook of Contemporary Indigenous Religion(s)*, edited by Siv Ellen Kraft and Greg Johnson, forthcoming 2017. [Note: this text is filed under “Course Documents” on Canvas.]

**9 February  Indigenous religion as an analytical category: uses and limits**


For discussion: what are the stakes of designating a way of life as a ‘religion’ or ‘indigenous religion’? Where do we see this category used today?

**14 February  Rule of law, citizenship, globalization**


**16 February  ‘God and Government’ religion and politics on the air**

‘God and Government’ is a public radio series on the politics of religious diversity in 14 nations around the world. The series homepage is here: [http://interfaithradio.org/godandgov](http://interfaithradio.org/godandgov)

Listen to the Egypt, Thailand, and China country shows (click on “Full series” at the top of the homepage for a pull down menu). Be sure to listen to the entire program, including both the in-country reporter’s segment and the panel discussion. The musical selections are optional. You may also listen to other country programs if interested.

**Reader’s (listener’s) response #2:** Write a one-paragraph summary of each of the shows, highlighting the two most interesting features of the show. Were there aspects of the show or characters or points of view that you related to or that you found particularly interesting?

**21 February  Politics of religious freedom**

Contrast with the posts on this website: http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/rfp

Come to class prepared to compare and contrast these two approaches to and understandings of religious freedom.

23 February    Politics of religious freedom, II


28 February    **Second 3-5 pg. paper due in class**

Topic: Choose one of the country reports from the State Department, Annual Report on International Religious Freedom 2015, available online. Research and describe your country’s recent religious and political history. Write a critical assessment of the State Department report, drawing on course readings as appropriate. Your paper should discuss and draw on at least two of the chapters in the *Politics of Religious Freedom* volume. Be prepared to present and discuss your paper in class.

2 March        The US security state, Islam and the ‘war on terror’


7 March        No class today.

9 March        WCAS reading week.

13 March       Final papers due in my office (Scott 209) or by email (eshurd@northwestern.edu) by noon.