Secularism, religion, and politics

WWS 556c

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Conceptually, the secular is always a term of contrast: it is what is left over when we create and populate the category of religion. Taxonomists call such leftovers “paraphyletic categories.” A paraphylum is a category formed by the objects left over in the construction of another category. The category “invertebrate,” for instance, is constructed by defining the class of vertebrates, animals with backbones, leaving behind a paraphylum of creatures as diverse as earthworms, mosquitoes, crabs, octopuses, and coral, which have nothing in common except their spinelessness.

--Gregory Starrett, “The Varieties of Secular Experience,” 645-6

This course assesses the implications of rethinking secularism for international law and politics. Conventional understandings of international politics, focused on material capabilities and strategic interaction, exclude from the start the possibility that the politics of secularism and religion could be a significant force in international politics. Yet a range of factors have prompted a re-evaluation of long-standing research programs based on the assumption that secularism signifies merely the absence of religion, that religion is easily defined, and that it is declining or disappearing. The course is organized into three sections each with a distinctive set of themes: an introduction to the study of secularism, religion and politics; sovereignty, nationalism, public order and democracy; and religion, law and globalization.

Course 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. Oral presentations of course materials will be required. No late work is accepted without a written medical excuse.

# Seminar participants are asked to read the blog *The Immanent Frame: Secularism, Religion, and the Public Sphere*: <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/>. Other online resources that may be of interest include:

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States of Devotion: http://hemisphericinstitute.org/devotion/

Religion and International Law Consortium: <http://beta.religlaw.org/>

Religion Dispatches: <http://www.religiondispatches.org/>

Killing the Buddha: http://killingthebuddha.com/

Presentations

Each participant is responsible for one 15-20 minute presentation. The presentation should summarize central themes from the readings and pose questions for discussion. On the day of the presentation the presenter should submit a 5-page written “reader’s response” in class, which may also serve as the basis of the 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 applying insights from the course to your own research interests is due on the first day of finals week. The objective is to present a short but solid argument that could be revised into a publishable essay.

## Evaluation

Final grades will be based upon 1) attendance and participation, including the presentation (25%); 2) 2 reader’s response essays (25%); and 3) final 10-page paper (50%).

## Required Texts

Articles for the course will be available on the ereserve list. The following texts should be purchased:

Bender, Courtney and Pamela E. Klassen, *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement* (Columbia, 2010).

Cady, Linell E., and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, eds. *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age*. (Palgrave, 2010).

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

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

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

# **Seminar Topics**

# ***Part I: Introduction to secularism, religion and politics***

# Feb. 1 Introduction

# Feb. 8 Approaching religion, legally

Sullivan, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom*, all

*Recommended:*

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

Feb. 15 Politics of pluralism

Bender & Klassen, eds. *After Pluralism*, Introduction, Chs. 3-4 and 8-10.

Feb. 22 Politics of secularism

Slavija Javelic, “Secularism: A Bibliographic Essay.” *The Hedgehog Review* (Fall 2010). Available at:

http://www.iasc-culture.org/publications\_article\_2010\_Fall\_Jakelic.php

Charles Taylor, “The Polysemy of the Secular,” *Social Research* 76.4 (Winter 2009): 1143-1166.

Craig Calhoun, “Rethinking Secularism.” *The Hedgehog Review* (Fall 2010). Available at:

<http://www.iasc-culture.org/publications_article_2010_Fall_Calhoun.php>

José Casanova, “The Secular and Secularisms,” *Social Research* 76.4 (Winter 2009): 1049-1066.

John Bowen, “Secularism: Conceptual Genealogy or Political Dilemma?” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 52 (July 2010): 680-694.

*Recommended:*

Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (eds.), *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

March 1 Foreign policy and global politics

Hurd, *Politics of Secularism in International Relations*, Chs. 1-6.

*Recommended*:

Jack Snyder (ed.), *Religion and International Relations Theory* (Columbia UP, 2011).

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

March 8 Comparative secularisms

Cady & Hurd, eds. *Comparative Secularisms*, Introduction, Chs. 1-4, 7, 10 & 13.

*Recommended*:

Janet Jakobsen and Ann Pellegrini, eds. *Secularisms*. (Duke, 2008).

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

March 15 Spring break.

***Part II: Sovereignty, nationalism, public order and democracy***

March 22 Secularism, sovereignty, governance

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

James McDougall, “The Secular State’s Islamic Empire: Muslim Spaces and Subjects of Jurisdiction in Paris and Algiers, 1905-1957.” *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 52, no. 3: 553-580.

Hussein Ali Agrama, “Secularism, Sovereignty, Indeterminacy: Is Egypt a Secular or a Religious State?” *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 52, no. 3 (2010): 495-523.

*Recommended:*

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

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

March 29 Secularism, nation, citizenship

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

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

Talal Asad, “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism,” in Peter van der Veer & Hartmut Lehmann, *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia* (Princeton, 1999),

pp. 178-196.

*Recommended:*

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

April 5 Secularism, public order, democracy

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

*Recommended:*

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.

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

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.

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

***Part III: Religion, law and globalization***

April 12 Secularism, religion, law

Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, “We are all religious now. Again.” *Social Research* 74, no. 4, (Winter 2009): 1181-1198.

David M. Engel, “Globalization and the Decline of Legal Consciousness: Torts, Ghosts, and Karma in Thailand,” *Law and Social Inquiry* 30, Issue 3 (July 2005): 469-514.

Nandini Chatterjee, 2010. “English Law, Brahmo Marriage, and the Problem of Religious Difference: Civil Marriage Laws in Britain and India.” *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 52, no. 3: 524-552.

April 19 International law, Islamic law, religion, rights

Mark Weston Janis, “Religion and International Law.” ASIL Insights, American Society of International Law, Nov. 2002. <http://www.asil.org/insigh93.cfm>

Halleq, Wael.

(ANGIE INSTEAD?) Modirzadeh, Naz K. 2006. “Taking Islamic Law Seriously: INGOs and the Battle for Muslim Hearts and Minds,” *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 19: 191-233.

Lombardi, Clark. 2007. “Islamic Law in the Jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice: An Analysis,” *Chicago Journal of International Law* 8, no. 1: 85-118.

*Recommended:*

Danchin, Peter G. 2010. “Islam in the Secular *Nomos* of the European Court of Human Rights,” *University of Maryland Legal Studies Research Paper* No. 2010-41.

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

April 26 US foreign policy and the politics of religious freedom

Danchin, Peter. “The Emergence and Structure of Religious Freedom in International Law Reconsidered,” *Journal of Law and Religion* 23 (2008): 455-534.

Asad, Talal. 2003. “Redeeming the ‘Human’ in Human Rights,” in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 127-158.

Castelli, Elizabeth A. “Theologizing Human Rights: Christian Activism and the Limits of Religious Freedom.” In *Non-Governmental Politics*, Michel Feher with Gaëlle Krikorian and Yates McKee, eds. (New York: Zone Books, 2007): 673-687.

Cozad, Laurie. “The United States’ Imposition of Religious Freedom: The International Religious Freedom Act and India.” *India Review* 4, no. 1 (January 2005): 59-83.

McAlister, Melani. MERIP article.

**Tuesday, May 10th: Final papers due electronically to eshurd@northwestern.edu by noon.**