

Religion and Politics Beyond Freedom and Violence

Northwestern University
Humanities 370-5-20/Political Science 390-0-23
Winter 2017

Tues./Thurs. 11:00-12:20

Professor [Elizabeth Shakman Hurd](#)

Office hours: Tuesday 1-3, Scott 209

eshurd@northwestern.edu

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.

Steven K. Green, *Inventing a Christian America: The Myth of the Religious Founding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, Saba Mahmood and Peter G. Danchin, eds., *Politics of Religious Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Course Schedule:

5 January Introduction

10 January Studying religion: three perspectives

Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," chap. 4, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Fontana Press, 1973), 87-125.

Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27-54.

Robert A. Orsi, "Afterword: Everyday Religion and the Contemporary World: The Un-Modern, Or What Was Supposed to Have Disappeared But Did Not," in Samuli Schielke and Liza Debevec, eds. *Ordinary Lives and Grand Schemes: An Anthropology of Everyday Religion* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 146-61.

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

Peter Van der Veer, "The Spiritual Body," chap. 7 of *The Modern Spirit of Asia: The Spiritual and the Secular in China and India*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 168-192.

Andrea R. Jain, "Is Downward Dog the Path to Hell?" *Religion Dispatches* (Dec. 10, 2010). <http://religiondispatches.org/is-downward-dog-the-path-to-hell/>

Melani McAlister, "Iyengar." *Frequencies: A Collaborative Genealogy of Spirituality* (Oct. 13, 2011). <http://frequencies.ssrc.org/2011/10/13/iyengar/>

Katherine Stewart, "Protesting Yoga in Schools, but Welcoming Bible Study." *Religion Dispatches* (February 25, 2013). <http://religiondispatches.org/protesting-yoga-in-schools-but-welcoming-bible-study/>

Andrea R. Jain, "Claiming Yoga for India." *Religion Dispatches* (Dec. 15, 2014). <http://religiondispatches.org/claiming-yoga-for-india/>

Erik Davis, "Is Yoga a Religion?" *Aeon* (May 3, 2013). <http://aeon.co/magazine/society/erik-davis-is-yoga-a-religion/>

Andrea R. Jain, "Fake, Evil, Spiritual, Commodified; What's the Truth about Popular Yoga?" *Religion Dispatches* (Jan. 29, 2015). <http://religiondispatches.org/fake-evil-spiritual-commodified-whats-the-truth-about-popular-yoga/>

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:

<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?court=US&vol=465&invol=668>

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

24 January Christmas in America, II

Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *Paying the Words Extra: Religious Discourse in the Supreme Court of the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), chaps. 3-5, pp. 79-156.

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?”

Heather Miller Rubens, “Something Has Gone Wrong”: The JFS Case and Defining Jewish Identity in the Courtroom,” *Maryland Journal of International Law*, vol. 29, (2015): 361-418. Look under “Politics of Religious Freedom: Case Studies” in Canvas course reserves or see here: <http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/mjil/vol29/iss1/>

Marc Galanter, “A Dissent on Brother Daniel,” *Commentary* (July 1963): pp. 10-17.
<http://marcgalanter.net/Documents/papers/scannedpdf/ADissentonBrotherDaniel.pdf>

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.

Peter Danchin, Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Saba Mahmood & Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Introduction to Politics of Religious Freedom: Case Studies,” Special Issue, *Maryland Journal of International Law*, vol. 29 (2015), 288-99.
<http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/mjil/vol29/iss1/>

31 January Jews’ Free School, II

Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *In My Father’s Court* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991, Author’s Note & Chapters 1-5 (pp. 3-34).

J.H.H. Weiler, “Discrimination and Identity in London: The Jewish Free School Case,” *Jewish Review of Books* no. 1 (Spring 2010).
<http://www.jewishreviewofbooks.com/publications/detail/discrimination-and-identity-in-london-the-jewish-free-school-case>

Caren Chesler, “What Makes a Jewish Mother?” *The New York Times*, June 3, 2013.
<http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/03/what-makes-a-jewish-mother/>

References:

Michael L. Satlow, *Creating Judaism, History, Tradition, Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 1-63.

Christopher McCrudden, “Multiculturalism, Freedom of Religion, Equality, and the British Constitution: The JFS Case Considered,” University of Oxford Legal Research Paper Series, Paper No. 72/2010 (November 2010).

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

David Chidester, "Enduring Empire," chap. 10 of *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014, 287-313.

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

Bjørn Ola Tafjord, "Indigenous Religion(s) as an Analytical Category," *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 25 (2013): 221-243.

Interview with Jason Josephson, "The Invention of Religion in Japan." Religious Studies Project Podcast (May 25, 2015). <http://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/the-invention-of-religion-in-japan/>

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

Noah Salomon, "The Ruse of Law: Legal Equality and the Problem of Citizenship in a Multi-Religious Sudan," in *After Secular Law*, eds. Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Robert Yelle and Mateo-Taussig-Rubbo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 200-220.

David Engel, "Globalization and the Decline of Legal Consciousness: Torts, Ghosts, and Karma in Thailand," *Law & Social Inquiry* 30 (2005): 469-514.

16 February 'God and Government:' religion and politics on the air

'[God and Government](http://interfaithradio.org/godandgov)' 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>

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

Sullivan et al, *Politics of Religious Freedom*, Introduction and Part I ("Religion"), pp. 1-98.

Contrast with the posts on this website: <http://berkeleycenter.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

Politics of Religious Freedom, Part IV (“Freedom”), pp. 265-334.

Radio interview with Winnifred Fallers Sullivan: “Ambassador of Religious Freedoms: The Sunday Edition with Michael Enright,” CBC Radio, Feb. 24, 2013:

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thesundayedition/ambassador-of-religious-freedoms-1.2904471>

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’

Alireza Doostdar, “How not to understand ISIS.” Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion (October 2, 2014). <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/how-not-understand-isis-alireza-doostdar>

Darryl Li, “A Jihadism Anti-Primer.” Middle East Research and Information Project 276, vol. 45 (Fall 2015). <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer276/jihadism-anti-primer>

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, “Expert Religion: The Politics of Religious Difference in an Age of Freedom and Terror.” Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies Research Paper No. RSCAS 2015/97 (2015). Note: this text is filed under “Course Documents” on Canvas.

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.