

Politics of Religious Diversity

Northwestern University
Political Science 382/Religion 379
Fall 2018

Prof. [Elizabeth Shakman Hurd](#)

Tues./Thurs. 11-12:20, Tech L221

Office hours: Wed. 2-3:30, Scott 209

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Teaching Assistants:

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This course is an introduction to the study of the politics of religious diversity at home and abroad. It examines and reconsiders dominant narratives about how religion relates to law, politics, and public culture in the US, US foreign policy, and elsewhere. We begin with legal controversies over yoga, the public display of crèches in the United States, and the religious history of the American project. 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 around the world. We conclude by returning to the U.S. to consider the place of Islam and Muslims in the U.S. today. The course crosses disciplinary, geographic, and secular-religious boundaries, drawing on readings from politics, socio-legal studies, religious studies, indigenous studies, anthropology, history, and popular culture. Students will also consider their own experiences of living with religious diversity as we explore strategies to think anew about religion in the contemporary world.

Learning Objectives

Through taking this course, students will:

- Engage with literature, research, and theories related to social and religious diversity, situating the American experience in global and comparative perspective
- Understand the impact that histories, institutions, and social structures have on local issues and individual experiences and identities, including their own
- Develop an ability to think and write critically about political, religious, economic, and cultural issues related to social inequalities and diversities
- Demonstrate an ability to communicate effectively with student colleagues who may have different religious, economic and political backgrounds and experiences

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 and TAs, to be submitted at the end of the quarter.

Written Assignments

There will be three written assignments over the course of the quarter: two 3-page response papers and one 5-7 page final essay.

Policy on Use of Personal Technology

Personal computers and mobile devices are discouraged but permitted in class. 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 (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 fail this course and be referred to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies' office for further action by the University.

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 with an asterisk next to them (*) are available in the reading packet, which can be purchased at Quartet Copies (825 Clark).

Links are provided below to readings that are open access.

You may purchase the following three books from Beck's Books (716 Clark St., Evanston) or check them out on 4-hour reserve at the Main library:

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

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017 (paper).

Nadia Marzouki, *Islam: An American Religion*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

Course Schedule

9/27 Introduction

10/2 Studying law, politics and religion: four perspectives

*Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, "Law," eds. Robert A. Segal and Kocku von Stuckrad, *Vocabulary for the Study of Religion*, Vol. 2, F-O. Leiden: Brill, 2015, 323-330.

*Kathleen M. Sands, "Tracking Religion: Religion through the Lens of Critical and Cultural Studies," *Bulletin of the Council of Societies for the Study of Religion*, Vol. 31, no. 3 (September 2002): 68-74.

*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.

*Talal Asad, "The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam," *Qui Parle*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Spring/Summer 2009), pp. 1-30.

Recommended:

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

10/4 Body politics: Is yoga in US public schools constitutional? Is that the right question? What is religion, and who decides?

Kyla Calvert, "Promoting Hinduism? Parents demand removal of school yoga class." NPR Morning Edition (Jan. 9, 2013).

<http://www.npr.org/2013/01/09/168613461/promoting-hinduism-parents-demand-removal-of-school-yoga-class>

*Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division One, State of California, *Stephen Sedlock et al. v. Timothy Baird et al* (Superior Court Case No. 37-2013-00035910-CU-MC-CTL).

Erik Davis, "Is Yoga a Religion?" *Aeon* (May 3, 2013).

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

10/9 Body politics, part II

*Sunila S. Kale and Christian Lee Novetzke, "Legal Yoga" June 2016 (forthcoming).

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/>

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/>

10/11 Inventing a Christian America?

(Nathalia and Safa lead discussion)

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

10/16 Christmas in 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>

10/18 Christmas in America, again

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

Recommended: 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.

10/23 JFS: Who is a Jew, 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 (JFS) in north London. The case has us ask: "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.

*Marc Galanter, "A Dissent on Brother Daniel," *Commentary* (July 1963): pp. 10-17.
<https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/a-dissent-on-brother-daniel/>

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/>

10/25 JFS, continued

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

*J.H.H. Weiler, "Discrimination and Identity in London: The Jewish Free School Case," *Jewish Review of Books* no. 1 (Spring 2010).

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/>

Jonathan Calmus, "Jewish girl's King David place goes to non-Jew," *The Jewish Chronicle* (June 11, 2010). <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/jewish-girl-s-king-david-place-goes-to-non-jew-1.16146>

Michal Kravel-Tovi, "Who Needs Conversion? Jewish Conversion in a Time of Shattered Boundaries." *The Immanent Frame*, May 29, 2018.
<https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/05/29/who-needs-conversion/>

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).

10/30 *First 3-page paper due in class. No additional readings.*

Topic: How would you have decided the JFS case and on what grounds? Put yourself in the position of the judge and explain your reasoning. Incorporate examples from your own life experience or those of your friends, family or acquaintances into your opinion.

Come to class prepared to explain your position and respond to others' viewpoints.

11/1 "The simple faiths of a savage race:" religion, race, empire

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

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

*J. Brent Crosson, "What Obeah Does Do: Healing, Harm, and the Limits of Religion," *Journal of Africana Religions*, Vol. 3, Number 2, 2015, pp. 151-176.

11/6 Interlude. '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 nations around the world. The series homepage is here:
<http://interfaithradio.org/godandgov>

Listen to the Egypt, China, Thailand and Guatemala 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. Music is optional.

11/8 Politics of religious freedom

John Kerry, "Religion and Diplomacy: Toward a Better Understanding of Religion and Global Affairs," *America* (September 14, 2015).

<https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/religion-and-diplomacy>

Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom*, pp. ix-xii and 1-64.

Marzouki, *Islam: An American Religion*, pp. 168-194.

11/13 Religious freedom at the State Department

Hurd, *Beyond Religious Freedom*, pp. 109-127.

Marzouki, *Islam: An American Religion*, pp. 195-210.

11/15 *Second 3-page paper due in class. No additional readings.*

Topic: Choose a country report from the State Department's 2017 Report on International Religious Freedom, available online. Write a critical assessment of the State Department report drawing on at least two ideas you read about in *Beyond Religious Freedom* or *Islam: An American Religion*.

11/20 Politics of Islam in the United States

Marzouki, *Islam: An American Religion*, pp. 1-68.

11/22 Thanksgiving (no class)

11/27 Politics of Islam in the United States, II

Marzouki, *Islam: An American Religion*, pp. 106-167.

***11/28 Required film screening: "The Feeling of Being Watched"** (Block Cinema, 7pm, directed by Assia Boundaoui) This documentary film takes an insider's look at a local Muslim American community that has been under FBI surveillance since the 1990s.

11/29 Discussion of the film. Final paper thesis statement due in class.

12/4 & 12/6: Reading week

12/10 Final papers due in my office (Scott 209) or electronically (eshurd@northwestern.edu) by noon.