CC 204: Core Social Sciences II: Religion and Secularism

BOSTON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
CORE CURRICULUM . . . http://www.bu.edu/core/cc204

SPRING ’15 LECTURES  Thursdays 12:30-2 pm in CAS Room B-12, 685 Comm Ave

FACULTY
Kimberly Arkin, karkin@bu.edu, Dept. of Anthropology, 232 Bay State Road, Room 103-A
Margaret Litvin, mlitvin@bu.edu, Dept. of Modern Languages and Comparative Literature, 745 Comm Ave, Room 634
Simon Rabinovitch, srabinov@bu.edu, Dept. of History, 226 Bay State Road, Room 209

SEMINARS
B1  TR 2-3:30pm  in STH 636  with Prof. Litvin
B2  TR 3:30-5pm  in KCB 201  with Prof. Arkin
B3  MWF 11am-12pm  in CAS 114B  with Prof. Rabinovitch

Course description. What is religion, and can human societies live without one? Asking this question, it turns out, is a typically modern thing to do. With readings from the classics of social and political thought, this course will excavate the modern philosophical foundations of religious pluralism, the limits of religious tolerance, and the origins of the idea of a secular realm separate from religion. We will then turn our insights from these classic texts on some contemporary debates about religion and secularism, asking how these readings might transform what we see. We will consider case studies on Christian fundamentalism and Jewish personal status law in the United States, militant secularism in Turkey, Muslim integration in France, and Muslim democracy in Indonesia.
Grading. Your seminar instructor determines your final grade, based on the following components:

- Class attendance and participation: 15%
- Four short writing assignments: 30%
- Take-home midterm: 20%
- Pre-writing for final paper: 10%
- Final paper: 25%

The Core Writing Fellows are available for help throughout the semester. Fellows are graduate students who have been trained in grammar and compositional skills and are familiar with the works read in the Core. To make an appointment, consult the online reservation instructions at www.bu.edu/core/academics/tutoring, call 617-353-5404, or sign up in the Core Office, CAS 119.

On the Core website—www.bu.edu/core—students will find faculty profiles and office locations, reading lists, supplemental course material, a departmental activities and academic calendar, syllabi, Writing Fellow contact information and writing FAQs, and other resources.

Required textbooks are available at the BU Bookstore:

1. Thomas Hobbes: *Leviathan* (Hackett, 9780872201774)
2. Bartolomé De Las Casas: *In Defense of the Indians* (Northern Illinois University, 9780875805566)
5. Tanya Luhrmann, *When God Talks Back* (Vintage, 9780307277725)

All other texts can be found in PDF format at http://bu.edu/core/cc204.

Learning and testing accommodation. Boston University complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you are a student who needs academic accommodations because of a documented disability, you should contact your seminar leader and present your letter of accommodation as soon as possible. If you have questions about documenting a disability or requesting academic accommodations, contact the Office of Disability Services at access@bu.edu and 617-353-3658. Letters of accommodation should be presented as soon as possible to ensure that student needs are addressed from the start of the course. Learn more at http://www.bu.edu/disability/policies-procedures.

Academic Conduct. All members of the University are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity; we have the same expectations of each other in this course. Seminar leaders take the issue of plagiarism seriously and expect all the work you do in this course to be your own. If you have questions about what plagiarism is and how it differs from the appropriate use of other people’s work, speak with your instructor or consult the Academic Conduct Code at http://bu.edu/academics/cas/policies/academic-conduct.

HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS COURSE

I. Prepare, attend, participate

- The course is a collaborative enterprise. The discussion sections and weekly lectures build on each other; material is not repeated. If you don’t participate, you can’t learn. This means that you MUST attend class.
- Attendance and participation grades will be based on both your presence in class and the consistency and quality of your interventions. Complete the day’s reading PRIOR to class and be prepared to discuss it. Write all over your books, print out and mark up PDFs, take good reading notes, use Post-it notes to find key passages easily, and always bring the text to class.
- In discussion, don’t just “express your opinion”: listen carefully to your classmates and try to get a real conversation going. Practice mentioning a particular passage every time you comment.
- Make your presentations organized, responsible, and brief. Make a handout. Don’t ramble.
II. Write!
- CC 204 aims to prepare you to write a 10-page research paper on one tricky area or issue where religious and secular authority intersect. Rather than formulate your own research question and conduct your own field research (hardly feasible in a one-semester course!), you will analyze the ways that several established social scientists have approached the problem, the lenses they have used and the conclusions they have reached. After gaining some mastery of the historical and cultural context, you will engage different social science accounts of the issue or event. What presumptions, theoretical orientations, and methodologies underlie the divergent conclusions these social scientists reach? What are their blind spots, and why?
- The course also includes a number of smaller written projects, which are designed to help you learn to summarize and compare/contrast theoretical arguments.

III. Behave with academic integrity
- All your work for this course must be your own. You are expected to understand and follow the standards of academic conduct as elaborated in the CAS Student Academic Conduct Code. When in doubt, cite your source! It will make you look smarter and more sophisticated.

CC 204 SPRING 2015 COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1
Topic: Introduction to the course: assumptions about religion, where they come from, and how we might step outside them
Lecture: January 22, 2015
Lecturers: Margaret Litvin and Kimberly Arkin
- Jonathan Z. Smith “Religion, Religions, Religious”

WEEK 2
Topic: State power, religion, and tolerance in 16th century colonial Spain
Lecture: January 29, 2015
Lecturer: Clifford Backman (History)
Readings: - Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda Apology for the book on the just causes of war (typescript pp 1-25)
- Bartolomé de las Casas In Defense of the Indians (Preliminaries, Chap. 1-6; 24; 33-38; 56-63)
>> Short assignment #1 due January 30: a one-page summary of some of the key points of disagreement between Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de las Casas. What are the debate’s historical and theoretical origins? What is at stake?

WEEK 3
Topic: Culture, religion, and tolerance in 16th century Jesuit missions to China
Lecture: February 5, 2015
Lecturer: Eugenio Menegon (History)
Readings: - Eugenio Menegon “European and Chinese Controversies over Rituals”
- Nicolas Standaert, “Matteo Ricci: Shaped by the Chinese” (http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20100521_1.htm)
- Matteo Ricci, The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (Intro, Chap. 1, 2, and 7)

WEEK 4
Topic: Protestant Reformation, European states, and the transformation of “religion”
Lecture: February 12, 2015
Lecturer: Margaret Litvin (MLCL)
Reading: Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan (Book I: 12, III: 32, 33.21-25, 35.1-14, 37.7-13, 38.6-13, 39, 42.5-13, 19-31, 37, 63-73, 78a-80, 123, 43.1-5, 20-23 and Book IV: 44.1-10, 45.1-7, 19-22, 26-28, 34-38, 46.1-13, 35-37, and 47).
WEEK 5
Topic: Tolerance and the privatization of religion
Lecture: February 19, 2015
Lecturer: Elizabeth Pritchard (Religion, Bowdoin College)
Reading: John Locke “A Letter Concerning Toleration”
>> In-section exercise: Hobbes-Locke Debate
>> Short writing assignment # 2 due February 20: a two-page paper comparing and contrasting the scope and limits of tolerance in Hobbes and Locke

WEEK 6
Topic: Can religion ever be private? Religion as necessary to society
Lecture: February 26, 2015
Lecturer: Christopher Lehrich (Religion)
Reading: Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (Intro, Book I Chap. 1 & 4, Book II Chap. 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7, all of Book III)

WEEK 7
Topic: Secular, Secularization, Secularity?
Lecture: March 5, 2015
Lecturer: Robert Hefner (Anthropology)
Readings: - Talal Asad, “What might an anthropology of secularism look like?”, in Formations of the Secular
>> Take-home midterm due March 6

WEEK 8
Topic: Trends in American Christianity and the study of American religion and politics
Lecture: March 19, 2015
Lecturer: Nancy Ammerman (Sociology)
Readings: - Tanya Luhrmann, When God Talks Back (Chap. 1-3, 7, and 10)
- José Casanova, Chap. 7 from Public Religions in the Modern World

WEEK 9
Topic: ‘Secular’ France’s problem with Islam
Lecture: March 26, 2015
Lecturer: Kimberly Arkin (Anthropology)
Readings: - Jonathan Laurence & Justin Vaisse, Integrating Islam (Intro, Chap. 1 and 3)
- Mayanthi Fernando, The Republic Unsettled (Intro)

WEEK 10
Topic: Library orientation: how to do social science research
Lecture: April 2, 2015
Lecturer: BU research librarians
Readings: TBA

WEEK 11
Topic: Islam, Nationalism, and Politics in Southeast Asia
Lecture: April 9, 2015
Lecturer: Jeremy Menchik (International Relation, Pardee School)
Readings: - Anies Baswedan “Political Islam in Indonesia: present and future trajectory”
- Edward Aspinall “From Islamism to nationalism in Aceh, Indonesia”
- Rachel Rinaldo “Envisioning the nation”
>> Short writing assignment #3 due April 9: Bring in keywords generated from research tool on library website, and a one-page proposal for your final paper in which you identify a contentious research issue and explain its relationship to course themes
>> April 10, 13, 14, 15: individual meetings with research librarians to discuss your research topic
WEEK 12
Topic: What is Judaism, who is a Jew, and how can a state be Jewish?
Lecture: April 16, 2015
Lecturer: Simon Rabinovich (History)
Readings:
  -- Part I, Ruth Gavison, “Constitutional Anchoring of Israel’s Character” (report to the Minister of Justice)
  -- Part II, draft bills for a Basic Law clarifying Israel’s character
  -- Part III, interpretive essays

>> Short writing assignment #4 due April 17: Annotated bibliography that highlights the contrasting social science perspectives you are going to engage.

WEEK 13
Topic: State politics, secularity and Islamism in Turkey
Lecture: April 23, 2015
Lecturer: Jenny White (Anthropology)
Reading: Jenny White, Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks (Intro-Chap. 3)

WEEK 14
Topic: Student presentations of final research projects
Lecture: April 30, 2015

>> Draft of final paper due April 30
>> Research paper due on May 6 by 5 PM

No final exam.

ABOUT THE FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT

Choose a contemporary issue somewhere in the world where religious and political forces are intersecting (colluding or colliding) in an interesting way. In 10 to 12 tightly written pages, analyze the situation. Your analysis should include:

1. Description of the situation. Who are the competing sides and where did they come from? What is at stake? What are the religious dynamics? What are the political dynamics? What is the historical background? What are the political forces? (4 pages)

2. Analysis of two scholarly or journalistic works on this issue. What approach does each scholar/journalist take? What questions does each of them ask or notably fail to ask? What theoretical perspectives do you find informing the questions they ask, the data they gather, and the conclusions they reach? (3-5 pages)

3. OPTIONAL: If it’s a controversy: Your own analysis of the arguments on each side of the issue. What kind of intellectual history can you trace for these arguments and the situation as a whole? Be sure to invoke at least two of the theorists we’ve read this semester.

4. Your own insight into the issue (1 page)