Syllabus:

PUBLIC RELIGION AND POLITICS ACROSS CULTURES

In the aftermath of the Second World War, policy analysts and social scientists alike subscribed to the notion that the more a society becomes modern the less religion figures in its public life. Where it did not disappear entirely, modern religion, it was assumed, became a matter of private personal belief – not something that can or should be drawn into politics or the public square. This was the core premise of the secularization theory that dominated Western policy and social science from the 1950s to the 1990s. The assumption was in turn linked to another widespread in policy circles still today: Where a society does not secularize and privatize religion in this manner, the presence of religious institutions and actors in public life is a serious obstacle to democracy, social tolerance, and modernization.

Since the 1970s, however, religious developments in many societies have shown that, rather than becoming less influential in public life, religion in many societies has become a more powerful force. The world-wide Islamic resurgence, the growth of Hindu nationalism in India, Christian conservatism and civil-rights progressivism in the United States, Buddhist nationalism in Southeast Asia, and the wildfire spread of Pentecostal Protestantism in Latin America, Africa, the Pacific region, and, now, China – these and other developments indicate that religion in many national settings is not a declining influence, but a growing one. The global resurgence of religion raises questions as to how we are to understand the relationship of religion and politics in public life today. Is the resurgence a peculiar cultural effect of modernity and democratization? Or does public religion lead to intolerance and contradict the secularism required (some would argue) for genuine democracy? Can we live together peaceably in a world where religion has gone public?

In this course, we draw on anthropological, sociological, and political scientific case studies and theories of modern religion to provide a cross-cultural examination of the changing and contested role of religion in public life and personal subjectivity. We begin by examining earlier models of secularization and public life, determining just what we mean by the twin concepts of secularism and secularization. We then ask just what of these concepts remains relevant today for a cross-cultural understanding of modern politics and religion. Drawing on case studies, we discuss earlier and contemporary processes of religious and political change in Western Europe and the United States.

Having critically examined religion, politics, and secularization in the West, we turn in the remainder of the course to examine practical religion (i.e. religion as lived and enacted in real-world communities) and politics in different parts of the world. Our examples include the politics of secularism and citizenship in the U.S., France, and Turkey; Pentecostal and Evangelical Christianity and democracy in the global South; Muslim politics and the challenge of modernity in the Middle East, Europe, and Asia; the politics and culture of the religious resurgence in China and East Asia; new Buddhist movements in Thailand and Southeast Asia; Hindu nationalism and the “dark side” of democratization in India. Along the way, we will make many side comparisons, including to Israel and Judaism, Orthodox Christianity and Eastern Europe, modern “non-religious” spiritualism, and political agnosticism. We also explore several competing theories of religion, politics, and modernity. We finish the course by addressing two questions of vital importance for any student of modern religion and comparative politics: What is the future of public religion and politics? And what are the consequences of religion “gone public” for modern pluralism, subjectivity, and citizenship?
Requirements and Grading. In light of the breadth of our readings and discussions, it is essential that students attend all classes and participate actively in discussion.

1) Classroom participation will comprise 20% of your grade. Each class member will be asked at one or two points in the semester to present a eight-minute critical summary of reading, accompanied by a one page outline of key points. These presentations will account for half of your participation grade (or about 10% of your full grade).

2) The other half of your participation grade will be based on class attendance and participation in class discussion, including discussion of readings; so keeping up with the reading is important.

3) Grades will also be based on an in-class midterm examination (30% of your grade), a final examination (30%), and one outside research paper of approximately 2400 words (roughly eight double spaced pages) in length (20% of grade). The paper topic should reflect your own interests but be worked out in consultation with me, sometime prior to mid-semester.

Consultation. This course welcomes people from all disciplinary backgrounds. I also welcome and encourage discussion outside of class. My office hours are Monday and Friday, 1:00-3:00. My office is located at the Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs, 10 Lenox Street, first floor (tel: 3-9050; email: rhefner@bu.edu). I look forward to chatting with each of you.

A Note On Academic Conduct. The University has also asked all professors to remind students of the Boston University Academic Conduct Code. If you are not familiar with the code, please read it. Copies are available on-line at http://www.bu.edu/cas/students/graduate/forms-policies-procedures/academic-discipline-procedures/ http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/

More generally, remember that handing in someone else’s work or ideas as your own – even if at some point you worked as a group – constitutes plagiarism. Using someone else’s ideas or paraphrasing passages from an on-line source without proper attribution also constitutes plagiarism. The University takes plagiarism very seriously, and requires faculty to report any and all infractions of the Academic Conduct Code to the Dean for resolution by the Academic Conduct Committee.

Texts. You will read large parts of the following books in this course, all of which are available at the BU Bookstore:
Ahmet Kuru, Secularism and State Policies toward Religion: The United States, France, and Turkey
Robert W. Hefner, Global Pentecostalism in the 21st Century.
Robert W. Hefner, Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia.
Robert Weller, Alternate Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan.
Thomas Blom Hansen, The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India.
John R. Bowen, Can Islam be French? Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State.

Schedule of Topics and Readings
The reading for each week is listed in the first line of each week’s “Reading” below. The “Outside Referenced Reading” are not required – and not expected to be read this semester as such. However, I refer to these readings in our seminar discussion, and students interested in pursuing a particular issue further may wish to look into these readings (e.g. using a set of readings on a particular topic as the basis for your final paper).

Week 1: The Process of Secularization and the Modernization of Society: Multiple Religious Modernities?
Outside Referenced Readings (non-required reading, but for those interested in exploring the issues of this week more deeply): José Casanova, “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective,” in Hedgehog Review, Special

**Week 2: Containing Public Religion: Varieties of Modern Secularity & Religious Governance**

Talal Asad, “Religion, Nation-State, Secularism.” In Peter van der Veer and Hartmut Lehman, Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia, pp.178-96.
Michael Warner, Jonathan van Antwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, eds., Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age, especially Introduction, Chs. 8-12.

**Week 3: Varieties of Secularity: France, Turkey, and the Laicist/Assertive Secularist Model**

Jonathon Fox, A World Survey of Religion Theory and the State.

**Week 4: Public Christianity in the Non-Western World: Implications of the Global Surge of Pentecostal Christianity for Women, Citizenship, & Civility**


**Week 5: Pentecostalism: Anti-Modern Reaction or the Unintended & Democratizing Modern?**

Reading: Hefner, Global Pentecostalism, Chs. 5-8 & Afterword.

**Week 6: Muslim Traditions of Religion and State**

Reading: Hefner, Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia, Preface & Chs. 1-3.
Outside Referenced Reading: Alfred Stepan with Graeme Robertson, “An Arab more than a Muslim Democracy Gap,” Journal of Democracy, July 2003, pp. 30-44.

**Week 7: The Islamic Resurgence and Modernity: The Great Exception or the Fourth Wave of Democratization?**

Outside Reference Reading: Bubalo, Fealy, & Mason, Zealous Democrats: Islamism and Democracy in Egypt, Indonesia and Turkey (the Lowe Institute, Australia; available as a PDF file on line).

**Week 8: Religious Resurgence and Democratization in China and Taiwan.**

Reading: Robert Weller, Alternate Civilities: Democracy and Culture in China and Taiwan (read full book).

**Week 9: Buddhism, the State, and the Politics and Economics of Religious Resurgence**  

**Week 10: Religion, “Spirituality,” and the New Middle Class**  
Reading: *Nirvana for Sale*, pp. 89-187.  

**Week 11: Hinduism, Religious Nationalism, and Democratization**  
Reading: Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, pp.3-89.  

**Week 12: Can Democratization Cause Religious Violence?**  

**Week 13: Public Religion and Varieties of Citizenship in the Modern West: Western Liberalisms and the Question of Public Religion**  

**Week 14: Religion, Secularity, and Modernity, Revisited**  
Jonathon Fox, *A World Survey of Religion and the State*. 