One of the main methodological problems in writing about religion scientifically is to put aside at once the tone of the village atheist and that of the village preacher, as well as their more sophisticated equivalents, so that the social and psychological implications of particular religious beliefs [and organizations] can emerge in a clear and neutral light. And when that is done, overall questions about whether religion is “good” or “bad,” “functional” or “dysfunctional,” “ego-strengthening” or “anxiety-producing,” disappear like the chimeras that they are, and one is left with particular assessments, and diagnoses in particular cases.

– Clifford Geertz, 1973, The Interpretation of Cultures, 123.

Course Description: Despite the scientific predictions of modernization theorists, the heartfelt longings of secularists, and the deliberate neglect of structural realists, religion has not withdrawn from the world’s political stage. To the contrary, religion continues to shape individual values, social organizations, state institutions, and international relations. This has led to a re-evaluation of long-standing research programs that were based on the assumption that religion would either decline or disappear altogether. Scholars of world politics are now struggling to articulate a vision for the role of religion in public life, in the policies of states, and in global politics. This course is part of that process.

Course Objectives: By drawing on readings from international relations (IR), comparative politics (CP) and anthropology, this course will begin charting a path toward understanding the place of religion in contemporary world affairs. The outcome of this class will not be a new paradigm for IR, nor will it be a unified theory of the role of religion in politics. Rather, by the end of the course, students should possess:

- A historical understanding of the contingent nature of the Westphalian system and its ideational progeny: sovereignty, nation-states, realism, and liberal internationalism.
- A critical perspective on secularization and modernization theory.
- A descriptive understanding of select twentieth century religious-political movements.
- A theoretical grasp of key concepts in IR and CP.
- A set of causal hypotheses about the role of religious actors in democratization, political party formation and moderation, war, and humanitarianism.

By the end of the course, students should have the vocabulary and knowledge to discuss the role of religious actors in world politics. This skill will be obtained through writing, critical thinking, and seminar discussions, and should be useful both inside and outside the classroom.
**Required Texts:** The following books are required for the class and may be purchased at the BU bookstore or online. Article and chapter-length readings can be accessed through the course Blackboard site.


**Recommended:**


**Course Requirements**

Participation (15%): The course will be run as a seminar. This format requires students to attend regularly, read diligently, and participate actively in class discussions.

Response Papers (5 x 5% = 25%): Student will write five short (2-3 pages, double-spaced, 1 inch margins) analytical response papers (RP) over the course of the semester. I will provide the paper prompt one week before they are due on 9/18, 10/16, 10/30, 11/20, and 12/4.

Midterm Exam (20%): One 4-5 page take-home essay exam will be given at the end of class 10/2 and returned via email by noon on 10/4.
Final Exam (Undergraduates Students: 40%): The final exam is a take-home essay, 7-8 pages in length. The exam will be handed out at the end of class on 12/11 and must be returned via email by noon on 12/18.

Research Paper (Graduate Students: 40%): In lieu of a final exam, graduate students are required to write a 20-page research paper. Students must meet with me the week of October 23 to present an abstract and preliminary list of sources. Papers are due via email by noon on 12/18.

Late Work: Late submission of assignments will penalize your grade by incurring an automatic full-grade deduction per day beginning with the assignment deadline. Make up examinations will be granted only in exceptional cases.


Special Needs: If you have any special needs or circumstances, such as a learning disability or health concern, please do not hesitate to speak with me and we can discuss suitable accommodations and assistance.

Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism and cheating are serious offences and will be punished in accordance with BU’s Academic Conduct Code: http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/

Electronic Communications in Class: Please close all email accounts, cell phones, instant messaging programs, homing pigeons, and any other communication devices for the duration of class. These are serious distractions to the instructor and your fellow students.

Dates and Readings

September 4 Our Framework
Key terms: comparative politics, tradition, international relations, secularism, sovereignty


September 11 Historical Contingency and Moral Authority
Key terms: nation-state, empire, feudalism, territorial sovereignty, civil society, moral authority

Opello and Rosow, The Nation-State and Global Order, Introduction - ch. 3 (1-74).

**September 18**    **The Peace of Westphalia [visit by Daniel Philpott, RP due]**

Key terms: reformation, modernity, sovereignty

Opello and Rosow, *The Nation-State and Global Order*, ch. 4-7 (77-163).


**September 25**    **Beyond Westphalia**

Key terms: colonialism, nation-state, post-modernity, deterritorialized politics


Recommended:


**October 2**    **After Secularization [Midterm distributed, due 10/4 at noon]**

Key terms: secularization, privatization, differentiation, decline of belief, nationalism


October 9    Religion and Democracy
Key terms: separation of religion and state, democracy, modernization, twin tolerations


Recommended:


October 16    Religion and the Secularism in the Public Sphere [RP due]
Key terms: public sphere, counter-public, public/private distinctions, da’wa


Recommended:


**October 23**  
**Religion and Social Movements [Meetings w/graduate students]**  
Key terms: moderation-inclusion, social movements, political party formation

Rofesky Wickham, The Muslim Brotherhood, ch. 1-4 (1-95).


**October 30**  
**Religion and Political Parties [RP due]**  
Key terms: moderation-inclusion, institutions

Rofesky Wickham, The Muslim Brotherhood, ch. 5-9 (96-288).


Recommended:


**November 6**  
**Sectarianism**  
Key terms: sectarianism, authoritarianism, clientalism, social welfare, ethnic entrepreneurs


**November 13**  
**Religion and Civil War**  
Key terms: assimilation, cooperation, polarization, pogrom, secession, religious organizations


Recommended:


**November 20**  
Religion and Suicide Bombing [RP due]


**November 27**  
No Class - Thanksgiving Break!

**December 4**  
Humanitarianism [RP due]


**December 11**  
Sacred Economies, Cosmopolitanism, and Time  
[Final exam distributed at the close of class]


**December 18**  
Final exam and graduate student papers due at noon