

**DPI-342:Religion, Politics, and Public Policy in the U.S.**  
**(Cross-listed as HDS-2526)**

Richard Parker  
Spring, 2012  
Littauer 280  
Tuesday & Thursday, 2:40-4:00

**Class Overview**

Our ongoing debates about religion in public life and politics— over the Mormonism of Mitt Romney, the role of Islam post-9/11, and Religious Right activism, to name just three--have caused millions to realize that religion may well be the most powerful, yet least understood, force of our times. After World War II, academics took as a given that science, democratic disestablishment, and consumerism had stripped religion of most of its older claims to public authority in America. Yet, as we now know, religion hasn't disappeared from public life at all—and our once-assumed “post-religious” world never answered a host of difficult questions--and today is raising new ones.

This course is formulated around three of the most powerful, even daunting, of those questions. The first is this: whatever your beliefs (or non-beliefs), how should you--as you work in public life--assess and respond to the political and policy claims of religiously-based groups or issues? The second is how together we might conceive of, and organize, political and public space in ways that allow for vibrant and tolerant debate. The third is perhaps the greatest challenge: If you believe in God (or in humanly-transcendent forces that exercise moral claims, however defined), how can you--as a person in public life--live and act in concert with your beliefs?

Polls tell us America is, by far, the most religious of the industrial democracies, and our often-contentious politics reflect that: the debate over abortion and gay marriage, the 1980s rise of the Christian Right, President Bush's frequent invocation of religious guidance, and our still-heated clashes over "moral values" are only its more obvious manifestations. In truth, similar claims have suffused American history: the abolition, suffrage, and temperance movements all had deeply religious dimensions; the Progressive Era was powerfully shaped by the Social Gospel movement; many in the civil rights and anti-war efforts of the 1960s drew on deeply-held religious imperatives.

Today America, once overwhelmingly Protestant Christian, is the most religiously diverse country on the planet: all the major world religions (and innumerable minor ones) have adherents here, and Protestantism claims barely half the population today. While millions of Americans have "rediscovered" religious beliefs in recent years, millions have left organized religion in any form. But how should we understand these facts, and how should we treat simultaneous religious variety, religious revival, and abandonment of religion in the context of a pluralist society? And what impact will all this have on relations with the world in the years to come?

This class will examine not only the current extent and shape of American religious beliefs today, but its origins and evolutions in the nation's history. It will also--through a series of case studies--probe how religious ideas, values, and communities continue to arise and affect the law, politics, economics, journalism, public morality and social policy. Importantly, you will be asked to examine--and share with classmates--your own sense of belief and faith (or lack thereof) in examining those case studies, and share in the sometimes difficult work of "coming to judgment" about the appropriate role of religion in modern public life.

There will be a final paper (15-20 pp) plus a weekly "diary" you will keep in which to distill reactions to your readings, classroom discussions, and your own reflections about the issues raised, and which you'll turn in to the instructor twice during the course.

There won't be a midterm or final. You will, however, be expected to participate actively in the class itself. This course is an ongoing experiment in the fullest sense of the word--ten years ago it became the first class the Kennedy School ever offered with "religion" in its title--and your participation (and frank evaluation) will deeply influence its future and that of other courses that could take up these issues, especially on the international level.

### Schedule of Classes

#### Section One: Background and Origins Issues

**Shopping Day:** Thursday, January 19

**Week 1 (Tuesday, January 24 – Thursday, January 26)--What Americans Say They Believe About Religion--and Its Impact on Politics and Public Life**

We'll start by reading a Garry Wills essay on religion's surprisingly resilient role in modern American political life, then discuss in class the quite extensive polling data on American religious beliefs as our quantitative overview and starting-point. We'll then look at two political scientists' analysis of how religion and politics interacts in contemporary America in terms of class, region, and party.

As you read, ask yourself three questions (and record your answers as first entries in your diary):

- 1) Given the seeming strength and durability of religious beliefs, what accounts for the apparent "factual" ignorance of many about religiously important information? Is this, in your view, compatible? Why or why not?
- 2) What do you imagine explains the apparent durability of religious beliefs among

- Americans?
- 3) Protestants—who are 50%+ of Americans--seem denominationally highly divided, yet "clustered" in another way, conventionally described as "mainline" versus "evangelical" (or "fundamentalist"). What first thoughts do you have about why this seeming dichotomy exists, and the effects might it have on religious practices generally, including for non-Protestants?

Required Readings (Each week I list what must be read before each class):

- Tues**--Garry Wills, Under God: Religion and American Politics, introduction (packet 1)  
**Tues**--Selections from George Gallup, 100 Questions and Answers (packet 1)  
**Tues**--Selections from Pew's US Religious Values Survey  
[\(http://religions.pewforum.org/\)](http://religions.pewforum.org/)  
**Thurs**--Leege and Kellstadt, Rediscovering the Religious Factor, Ch. 1 (packet 1)

Further Readings (These are always optional, and most will be on reserve at HKS Library):

- US Religious Values Survey --the full report--at  
<http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>  
 Gallup and Castelli, The People's Religion  
 Diana Eck, On Common Ground: World Religions in America  
The Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches  
 Ted Jelen, Religion and Political Behavior in the U.S.  
 Jelen and Wilcox, Public Attitudes Toward Church and State  
 Kenneth Wald, Religion and Politics in the United States  
 Pippa Norris, Sacred and Secular  
 Garry Wills, Head and Heart

\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 2 (Jan. 31 – Feb. 2)--Where Americans' Beliefs Took Form, from the Colonial Era to the Civil War**

Having established the contemporary landscape of religious diversity, before we closely examine its interplay with political life and public policy today, we'll turn back to look at how the current American landscape is rooted in America's past--and how that past helps us unravel some of the questions Week 1 has raised.

Two hundred years ago, America was--for better or worse--a thoroughly Protestant country (non-Protestants were less than 1% of the citizenry), and moreover dominated by a handful of Protestant denominations. Over the 19th century, that reality changed dramatically--with powerful effects on America's religious and political landscape.

Peter N. Williams' America's Religions: From Origins to 21<sup>st</sup> Century is one of several standard guides, and we'll read selectively from it. (The field of American religious history is vast, so in Further Readings I point to a number of alternatives, both general and for specific topics.)

As you read, reflect on the dynamic evolution of religious beliefs alongside the country's national evolution. Watch carefully two potent trends.

First, note what happened to the three dominant denominations of pre-Revolutionary America--the Congregationalists (nee Puritans), Presbyterians, and Anglican/Episcopalians—and their vision of America as a “Benevolent Empire”; the rapid evolution of new frontier evangelical denominations (foremost, the Methodists and Baptists) and their pivotal role in the cleavage of 19th C. Protestantism, then b) a second cleavage introduced by science, industrialization, immigration, and ecumenism that will come to define the enduring “mainline” versus “evangelical” divide in American Protestantism.

Then watch what happened to America's 19<sup>th</sup> C. "New Arrivals": a) how the Irish transformed the tiny American Catholic Church they found, how in turn Catholicism interacted with dominant American culture (which becomes the famous "Americanism" debate), and then how Catholicism absorbed later, non-Irish immigrants, becoming in the process the most multicultural branch of Catholicism in the world; b) how Judaism's Reform movement, born in Germany but flowering in mid-19<sup>th</sup> C. US, powerfully shaped Jewish immigrant thought, and laid the grounds for assimilating later East European arrivals. Finally, we'll look at the emergence of America's black churches before and most importantly after the Civil War, and the "peculiar" place of the South—white and black alike--in America's religious and political landscape.

Questions to consider (and record in your diary):

- 1) How did America's territorial expansion interact with its religious beliefs? How did class, race, and ethnicity in turn interact?
- 2) What about the particular place of New England made it such a crucible for "modernizing" so many Americans' religious values?
- 3) In what sense did slavery shape more America's Protestant pluralism?
- 4) How did religious pluralism stimulate social reform?

Required Readings:

**Tues**--Williams, America's Religions, Part II (book at COOP)

**Thurs**—Williams, America's Religions, Part III

**Thurs**--Mary Cayton, "Social Reform from Colonial Period through the Civil War" (packet 1)

Further Readings:

Catherine Albanese, America: Religions and Religion

Martin Marty, Righteous Empire

Martin Marty, Modern American Religion (3 vols)

Perry Miller, The New England Mind

Alfred Kazin, God and the American Writer

Finke and Starke, The Churching of America

Steve Bruce, Religion and Modernization

Sidney Mead, The Nation with the Soul of a Church

James Reichley, Religion in American Public Life

Michael Walzer, The Revolution of the Saints

Sidney Mead, The Lively Experiment

Jerald Brauer, The Lively Experiment Continued

Alan Heimert, Religion and the American Mind

James Monroe, Hellfire Nation

Sacvan Bercovitch, The Puritan Origins of the American Self

**Week 3 (Feb. 7 – Feb. 9)--Constructing the Modern Religious Landscape from the Civil War to Great Depression**

In some sense, virtually all the important religious issues and alignments we encounter today in the 21st century were alive 100 years ago at the 20th century's beginning: the divisions between the "modernist" and "fundamentalist" views; the political/denominational divide between "liberals" and "conservatives"; the questions about how religion, politics, and policy should (and did, a different matter) interact; the tensions--albeit more directly expressed then than now--among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews, and between whites and blacks.

We'll look particularly at how the rise of "ecumenical" religious movements interplayed with the rise of the Progressive Era professional, how the modern idea of "public reason" was advanced, and what reactions it set off--not just in the rise of a new "Fundamentalism," but the birth of Pentecostalism, and a redefinition of "Evangelical." We'll also examine how Catholic "separatism" was addressed, and how figures such as Cardinal Gibbon of Baltimore, and Fr. John Ryan, pioneered transformation of that relationship. We'll see too how by the Thirties, in a reaction to a burst of American anti-Semitism as well as the rise of European Fascism, America's conception of itself was consciously and deliberately shifted from that of "Christian" nation to "Judeo-Christian," with important implications for religious pluralism.

Questions to consider:

- 1) To what extent was Mainline Protestant adaptation to science, professionalism, and ecumenical social activism costly to its religious strength? What benefits were gained?
- 2) Viewed historically, to what degree has Catholicism been fully "integrated" into American culture--and to what extent, and in what ways, does it stand apart, if it does still?
- 3) If American Judaism adapted powerfully under the impact of East European integration, in what ways did its equally powerful integration into a larger non-Jewish mainstream affect it?
- 4) What were the factors that created the encompassing nature of the Black Church, and how did they interact?

Required Readings:

**Tues**--Williams, America's Religions, part IV (book)

John Mayer, "Social Reform, Civil War to Great Depression" (packet 2)

**Thurs**--Lipset and Raab, Jews and the New American Scene, intro & chs. 1-3 (packet 2)

Raboteau, "Black Christianity in North America" (packet 2)

Further Readings:

Martin Marty, Modern American Religion

Martin Marty, Righteous Empire

John McGreevy, Catholicism and American Freedom

Charles Morris, American Catholics

Mark Silk, Spiritual Politics

Lipset and Raab, Jews and the New American Scene

Seymour Lipset, American Exceptionalism: a Double-Edged Sword  
 William Hutchison, The Modernist Impulse  
 Kenneth Cauthen, The Impact of Religious Liberalism  
 James Turner, Without God, Without Creed  
 Dorothy Brown, The Poor Belong to Us

\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 4 (Feb. 14 – Feb. 16)--American Religion and its Role in Politics and Policy : Toward a "Post-Protestant" Religious World, or Secular Pluralism?**

We'll look now at the current religious landscape, and how the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century helped create it. We'll look at religion's growth in the post-war 1950s; its role in the 1960s' debates over civil rights and Vietnam; the appearance of a "new" Christian fundamentalism; debates over the role of women, family, sexuality, and abortion; and in the 1990s, the "new" interest in religion among both professionals and the young, two groups once thought "lost" to religion in a "secular age."

Questions to consider:

- 1) Was the growth of religion after World War II "unusual"--or part of a longer trend? What explains the drop-off in membership that began in the Sixties?
- 2) How does the involvement of religious groups in civil rights and anti-Vietnam struggles, and then in feminism and gay rights, represent continuity or discontinuity with pre-World War II involvements?
- 3) How successfully have ecumenical efforts been in softening inter-religious and inter-denominational tensions?

Required Readings:

**Tues**--Williams, America's Religions, Part V (book)  
**Thurs**--Deane Fenn, "Religious Thought Since World War II" (packet 2)  
 Glenn Bucher, "Social Reform Since the Great Depression" (packet 2)

Further readings:

Will Heberg, Protestant-Catholic-Jew  
 John Courtney Murray, We Hold These Truths  
 Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society  
 John Patrick Diggins, Why Niebuhr Now?  
 Christopher Lasch, The True and Only Heaven  
 Robert Wuthnow, Restructuring of American Religion: Society and Faith Since WWII  
 William McCready & Andrew Greeley, Ultimate Values of the American Population  
 Andrew Greeley, Denominational Society  
 Andrew Greeley, The Catholic Myth  
 Nathan Glazer, We Are All Multiculturalists Now  
 Charles Silberman, A Certain People: American Jews and Their Lives Today  
 Jack Wertheimer, A People Divided: Judaism in Contemporary America

Doland and Wind, New Dimensions in American Religious History  
 C. Eric Lincoln, The Black Church in African-American Experience  
 Garry Wills, Papal Sins  
 James Carroll, Constantine's Sword  
 Mark Noll, The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind  
 Andrew Delbanco, The Death of Satan

---

Your Class Diary--covering the first four weeks--is due into me in class or at my office, Taubman 256, no later than 5PM on Friday, February 17th. I want a first look at how you're doing, so I can also give you some feedback.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Section Two: Elementary Issues

### Week 5 (Feb. 21 – Feb. 23)--If Religion is Important to Public Life, Why?

Given the apparent strength of religious commitments to Americans, how do such commitments intersect political and civic life? Peter Berger's argument is a modern classic, updating both Durkheim and Weber, on why religion exists--and persists--as a deep claim on human life in the modern world. Robert Bellah's work looks at the ways in which religious institutions operate at two quite different levels--denominations and congregations--to instill, reinforce, and activate civic engagement of the kind Robert Putnam and others worry is declining in America.

Questions to consider:

- 1) How persuasive is Berger in his claim, given that Europe--in contrast to America--seems much more secular than religious today?
- 2) Are the associations Bellah traces between belief and civic engagement coherent in terms of causality? Or is there a plausible alternative that associates the two with education, race, religious tradition, and socio-economic status? If so, how different are both the religious and civic commitments of different socio-economic groups?

Required Reading:

**Tues**--Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy, chs. 1-2 & 5-7 (book)

**Thurs**--Robert Bellah, The Good Society, intro & chs. 1, 2, 5, 6 (book)

Further Reading:

Robert Bellah, Habits of the Heart

Peter Berger, A Rumor of Angels

Robert Wuthnow, Acts of Compassion

Robert Wuthnow, Rediscovering the Sacred

Raab, Covenant for a New Creation

Wood and Davis, The Role of Religion in Making Public Policy

Merkel and Smart, Religion and Politics in the Modern World

Rowner, Civil Religion and Political Theology

Jelen and Wilcox, Public Attitudes Toward Church and State  
 Rubenstein, Spirit Matters

\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 6 (Feb. 28- March 1)--The Tensions Around Religious Engagement in Politics and Policy**

Although the Bill of Rights guarantees non-establishment and free exercise as protections against government interference in religion, in many ways it offers no simple guidelines about religiously-motivated claims on government. In what ways do religions act to organize political beliefs? How do such beliefs become mobilized into voting and political activism? How does such mobilization sharpen or soften religious and denominational conflict, let alone larger political conflict? Should public officials treat religiously-inspired political actors and actions differently than others? How and why?

A related set of problems involves public officials themselves. A difficult and delicate issue faces those in public service who hold strongly-felt religious beliefs. How can one meet the compromises and conflicts which public service inherently entails? How can one tolerantly work with others whose own quite different views may be as strongly held--for religious or non-religious reasons--as your own? At what point does one's faith commitment supersede one's institutional obligations--and what then is to be done?

Questions to consider:

- 1) What might explain the wide varieties of commitment levels and kinds of commitments made within a congregation or denomination, or between different congregations and denominations?
- 2) When the larger society reaches consensus about, for example, the strict legal equality of men and women, whites and non-whites, gays and straights, should the internal practices and beliefs of faiths which don't affirm such things be expected to change as well? Should the state ever exercise its powers in such regard--if, say, a denomination prohibits black membership, or segregates women and assigns them lower status?
- 3) When a public official finds his or her religious beliefs in conflict with policies or programs of the administration he or she serves, what is to be done? What are the differences between public and private disagreement, and what are the limits to each? Do different public roles--serving as an elected official, a civil servant or staffer, a judge, or a member of the military, for example--require different responses to these questions?

Required readings:

- Tues:** Robert Wuthnow, "Mobilizing Civic Engagement: The Changing Impact of Religious Involvement" (packet 2)  
**Thurs:** Dean Kelley, "Rationale for the Involvement of Religion in the Body Politic" (packet 2)  
 Mark Tushnet, "Limits of the Involvement of Religion in the Body Politic" (packet 2)

Further readings:



Richard John Neuhaus, The Naked Public Square  
 Richard John Neuhaus, In Defense of People  
 Peter Berger, A Far Glory: the Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity  
 Harvey Cox, The Secular City  
 Kenneth Wald, Religion and Politics in America  
 Jelen, Religion and Political Behavior in the U.S.  
 Stone, Reformed Faith and Politics  
 Bellah and Greenspahn, Uncivil Religion  
 Birtel, Religion, Science and Public Policy  
 Canavan, Ethical Dimensions of Political Life  
 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"  
 Kent Greenawalt, Religious Convictions in Political Choice  
 Ken Winston, "Religious Convictions of Public Officials"  
 Ron Sider, Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger

\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 7 (March 6 – March 8)--Dealing With the Challenges of the World--America, Religion, and Life After September 11th**

"Everything changed" after September 11th--or did it? Nearly a decade on in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and with Osama bin Laden dead, the role of militant Islam--not to mention religiously-inspired militancy of other faiths--presents a series of direct challenges to American foreign policy, domestic life, politics, and fundamental values.

One set of issues involves the US posture abroad, another at home. Can the question of terrorism be solved through military means? What else is involved--and what should Americans be weighing as we move forward, in terms of analysis and response? What

At home, what trade-offs are involved in heightening security while maintaining both openness and tolerance. Islam is a rapidly-growing religious presence in America--estimates of the number of American Muslims range from 1.5 million to 10 million. What issues are involved in their presence, and how will a generally religiously-tolerant society reconcile its tradition when American security seems threatened?

Questions to consider:

- 1) Bernard Lewis raises a number issues arising from the historical relations between major Islamic cultures and the West, while Barakat offers an intriguing assessment of Arab Muslim culture in particular. Identify those issues as succinctly as possible, then offer your own brief personal reaction/assessment of their arguments. However, do react to at least one of them at greater length.
- 2) The polling data we'll examine tells a fascinatingly complex story of American's reactions both to Muslim Americans and to Muslims abroad today. Reflect on the responses, and in particular discuss the different reactions Americans depending on the religious blocs they belong to. Comment on what you see as continuities – and as discontinuities – here with what we've learned to date about these blocs already. And here again give me your own reactions to the polls' questions based on where you personally locate yourself in our system of blocs (including what may be

consistent or inconsistent between your views and those of “your” bloc).

- 3) Muslim-Americans as a group turn out to be far more heterogeneous than many might imagine. Comment on that heterogeneity, and on the issues Smith raises about the challenges assimilation poses for these communities. Are there different communities? How are the challenges similar and/or different from challenges faced by immigrant Catholics, or Jews, or by freed African-American slaves, in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and why?

Required Readings:

- Tues:** Bernard Lewis, “The Revolt of Islam” Online link  
[http://www.travelbrochuregraphics.com/extra/revolt\\_of\\_islam.htm](http://www.travelbrochuregraphics.com/extra/revolt_of_islam.htm)  
 Halim Barakat, The Arab World, Ch. 12 (packet 2)
- Thurs:** Pew Center, “Religion More Prominent” Online link:  
<http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=144>  
 Pew Center, “Benedict XVI Viewed Favorably But Faulted on Religious Outreach, pp 4-8 only. Online link: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=358>  
 Jane Smith, Islam in America, Chs. 4, 6. and Resources (packet 2)

Further Readings:

Samuel Huntington, Clash of Civilizations  
 Halim Barakat, The Arab World  
The American Journal of Islamic Studies  
 Yvonne Haddad, The Muslims of America  
 C. Eric Lincoln, Black Muslims  
 Jack Shaheen, Arab and Muslim Stereotyping in American Culture  
 Gilles Kepel, Jihad: the Trail of Political Islam  
 Olivier Roy, Globalized Islam

---

**SPRING BREAK MARCH 10-18 ENJOY!**

---

**Section Three: Case Studies of Specific Arenas Where  
 Religion Engages Public Policy and Politics**

**Week 8 (March 20 - March 22)--The Religious Right: The Intersection of Religion and Party Politics**

The appearance of Jerry Falwell and the Moral Majority in the 1970s and then Pat Robertson and the Christian Coalition in the 1980s paralleled a period of heightened conservatism in American politics. The shift prompted a vigorous debate not only among politicians and journalists, but among political scientists, about the significance of this religious-political

movement--not to mention sparking alarm among many who feared it as a new outbreak of religious intolerance.

But now both the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition have effectively disbanded--and many Christian Right figures (Cal Thomas, eg.) have called for a reassessment of the intersection of politics and religion. Additionally, many in the evangelical Protestant movement are now wrestling with, and working on, "social justice" questions that in the past leaders such as Falwell and Robertson viewed as unacceptably "liberal" or "non-religious." Can we explain why the movement emerged when and where it did? Is it now in decline—or temporary eclipse, subsumed (perhaps) in the new Tea Party movement, but likely to reappear independently soon enough? Is it part of the world of global fundamentalisms that figures like Samuel Huntington point to as endangering the future? Or are there other ways not only to view the movement as a whole, but discern divergent elements within it?

Questions to consider:

- 1) What role has this Christian Right played in America's allegedly increasingly rightward shift politically? To what degree does it represent a long-term change in American politics, versus a "spike" that is already leveling out or even declining?
- 2) How representative of fundamentalists and evangelicals as a whole is the Christian Right? What explains the conservatism of this era's fundamentalists versus their populism in the late 19th Century? Why then do political scientists find that on "economic" versus "social" issues, even today many fundamentalists are more "liberal" than "conservative"?

Required reading:

**Tues**--Clyde Wilcox, Onward Christian Soldiers (book)

**Thurs**--Jim Wallis, "Who Speaks for God" (packet 2)

Cal Thomas, Blinded by Might excerpt (packet 2)

Ron Sider, "Towards an Evangelical Vision Political Philosophy and Agenda for Christians..." (packet 2)

David Kirkpatrick, "Evangelical Crack Up" NY Times Magazine, 10/28/07

Online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/28/magazine/28Evangelicals-t.html>

Tobin Grant, "Tea Party and Christian Conservatives: Similar But Not the Same," Christianity Today, August 26, 2011, Online:

[http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctpolitics/2011/08/tea\\_party\\_and\\_c.html](http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctpolitics/2011/08/tea_party_and_c.html)

Further reading:

Martin Marty, Fundamentalisms and the State

Marty, Fundamentalisms and Society

Clyde Wilcox, God's Warriors: Christian Right in 20th C.

Frances Fitzgerald, Cities on a Hill (Ch on Falwell)

John Green, Religion and the Culture War: Dispatches from the Front

Christian Smith, American Evangelicalism

Paul Boyer, When Time Shall Be No More

Grant Wacker, Heaven Below

---

**Week 9 (March 27 – March 29)--Economics, Work, and Justice: The Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on the US Economy**

The impact of Occupy Wall Street last fall was to elevate the subject of economic inequality into the center of the political debate, though proposed remedies were (and are) far from specific. In the 1980s, the Catholic Bishops issued a powerful pastoral letter that provoked heated debate over the Church's willingness to criticize modern American capitalism and to offer specific remedies.

Influenced both by the Catholicism's traditional social teachings and by Vatican II and the Liberation Theology movement, American bishops sought a clear statement of responsibilities Catholics ought to share in relation to economic processes and outcomes. The battles around reaching that statement, and the debates it provoked, offer object lessons in how religious leaders struggle not only to articulate public policy goals that can affect broader political behavior, but how resistance within denominations (and from outside) act to constrain and shape such actions.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Although denominations are inherently "free" to press such claims on the larger society, does the fact that they are faith-based claims somehow "weaken" their influence in a multicultural society? That is, should the bishops have worked, less visibly and openly, with existing political organizations to encourage their claims for such goals? Does one denomination's claim to authority merely encourage other denominations to issue countervailing claims, and do the resulting competing claims by religious organizations thereby "remove" the very subject from a larger "political" arena, rather than advance it?
- 2) Given the obvious divisions among both the Church's leaders and its members, do the arguments of conservative Catholics who opposed the Bishops' letter make sense? Under what other circumstances--or on what other topics--might they make sense? Is there argument specific to Catholicism, or relevant to other denominations and faiths in America?
- 3) What do you find persuasive (or not) in Birnbaum's critique?

Required Reading:

**Tues**-- Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Economic Justice for All: Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy" (book at the Coop OR online at [http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic\\_justice\\_for\\_all.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/upload/economic_justice_for_all.pdf))

**Thurs**-- Norman Birnbaum, "The Bishops in the Iron Cage," (packet 2)

Further Reading:

Jean Yve Calvez, "Economic Policy Issues in Roman Catholic Social Teaching"

Fred Herzog, Justice Church

Michael Harrington, Politics at God's Funeral

Michael Novak, Freedom with Justice  
 Ronald Stone, Paul Tillich's Radical Social Thought  
 Don Pellote, John Courtney Murray: Theologian in Conflict  
 Charles Morris, American Catholics  
 Michael Novak, Toward a Theology of the Corporation  
 Vicchio, Perspectives on the American Catholic Church  
 Gower, Religion and Economic Ethics  
 Douglass, Deeper Meaning of Economic Life

---

**Deliver the second installment of your class diary to my office by 5PM, Friday, March 30<sup>th</sup>. At the same time, you should submit a brief (half-page to one page) outline of the 15-20 page final paper due at end of the term. Do NOT turn either of these in late without prior permission.**

---

\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 10 (April 3 – April 5)--Race, Gender, Identity and Faith: How Religion Shapes the Views of its Believers--and the Implications for Public Policy**

Religion acts powerfully to inform and re-enforce its members' beliefs about themselves and others--the history of Protestant antagonisms toward Catholics, Christian anti-Semitism, the deep divide over slavery that splintered some of America's largest denominations, the current debate over homosexuality and over women's place in various faiths all bespeak a centrality to the importance of religion in shaping attitudes toward identity that exercise powerful claims in turn in the world which all of us share in common.

We'll look at three issues: the current debate over the "apologies" of several major denominations for their historic role in racism; the Catholic Church's recent statement encouraging a more compassionate understanding of homosexuality; and the heated debate over the mission of the Southern Baptists to convert Jews as examples of enduring tensions in a multi-religious landscape. We'll then close the course by examining two important recent statements on how in fact to accommodate our differences even as we seek common ground.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Gomes presents you with a sequence of interconnected issues, moving from what were once controversial topics in American religion and politics (such Prohibition, slavery, anti-Semitism) to what are today's controversial topics, especially homosexuality. Gomes's order here is purposeful, designed to win your assent to his conclusion at each stage, then using that assent to prepare you to assent to the next stage.
- 2) Given what you know already about the differing importance of Biblical text in America's various denominational blocs, explain why you think Gomes adopts this strategy, and what about each of the major blocs would make it more or less responsive to this style of argument.
- 3) Compare the Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter to Gomes, and explain what makes its

conclusions different from Gomes? In what ways are its arguments similar to – and different from – Gomes's approach? Why?

- 4) The Southern Baptist Convention's mission to the Jews represents another example of text, traditions, and the problem of pluralism intersecting. Whatever your own personal view or conclusion here, first try to state the respective arguments on both sides – from each side's own point of view. Then offer your own argument about the choices being made here and the political/policy, recognizing that resort to law or public regulation as a solution is not an option (as it would be were government taking a position here).

Required Reading:

**Tues**--Peter Gomes, The Good Book (book), chs. 4-8

**Thurs**--NCCB, "Always Our Children: Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children" Online: <http://www.usccb.org/laity/always.shtml>

**Thurs**--Jeffrey Goldberg, "Some of Their Best Friends Are Jews," New York Times Sunday Magazine, March 16, 1997  
[http://www.jeffreygoldberg.net/articles/nyt/some\\_of\\_their\\_best\\_friends\\_are.php](http://www.jeffreygoldberg.net/articles/nyt/some_of_their_best_friends_are.php)

Further Readings:

Martin Marty, The One and the Many

Ron Thiemann, "Toward an American Public Theology: Religion in a Pluralistic Democracy," in Constructing a Public Theology

Bruce Chilton et al., Forging a Common Future: Catholic, Judaic, and Protestants

Michael Harrington, The Politics at God's Funeral

\*\*\*\*\*

**Week 11 (April 10 – April 12)--Religion, Public Education, and Welfare Reform: the Clinton Administration's Guidelines on Prayer and the Schools--and the "Charitable Choice" Debate over a New Role for Religious Institutions in Welfare Delivery**

In the past several years, two quite seminal debates have broken out that touch deeply on the "separation of church and state" question. Conservatives, long hostile to a series of Supreme Court rulings that seemed to limit both prayer and religious education in public schools, have sought to pass a constitutional amendment permitting both; to forestall it, and to provide greater clarity about what can and cannot be done on this sensitive issue in public schools, the Clinton Administration issued a set of guidelines and advisories, which we'll examine.

We'll also look at the recent welfare reform debate--and the question of voluntary associations as an alternative to direct government services to the poor--by examining how religious groups may now participate in delivery of various welfare programs, whether or not this threatens First Amendment separation, and whether such private voluntaristic services can even effectively supplant public delivery.

Questions to consider:

- 1) What ambiguities do you find in the Clinton guidelines? Why are some conservatives still pressing for a constitutional amendment? What about the guidelines still alarms civil libertarians?
- 2) How does "charitable choice" differ from earlier public financial support for faith-based organizations? Why is it so controversial? How do you assess its strengths and weaknesses as an issue of public policy?

Required reading:

**Tues:** Clinton Administration Guidelines on Religion and Schools

Online: <http://www.ed.gov/Speeches/04-1995/prayer.html>

**Thurs:** Heritage Foundation, "HR 7" online at:

Michele Estrin Gilman, "Fighting Poverty with Faith: Reflections on Ten Years of Charitable Choice" can be found online through Harvard's Library System: Hollis

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Week 12 (April 17 – April 19)--Religion and the Environment: Clashing or Compatible Faiths?**

Some environmentalists see in America's dominant religious beliefs the justifications for a human-centered and environmentally-hostile world of consumption and pollution. Others have argued for seeing the elements of environmentalism fully within those dominant beliefs. We'll examine a range of arguments, from advocates of "gaia" spirituality to those who trace environmentalism at least back to Transcendentalism, and beyond.

Questions to consider:

- 1) White gives a compelling picture of the evolution of western religious attitudes toward nature, but is his handling of the tradition--either historically or contemporaneously--compelling as a characterization of practice, rather than ideals?
- 2) Weiskel arrays arguments, drawn from Biblical examples, which interweave themselves into a radical indictment of market practices--in particular, how economics treats the environment as "externalities". How persuasive do you find his argument?

Required Reading:

**Tues:** Lynn White, "Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" Online:

<http://www.zbi.ee/~kalevi/lwhite.htm>

**Thurs:** Timothy Weiskel, "Selling Pigeons in the Temple" Online:

<http://ecojustice.net/Coffin/ops-008.htm>

Further Reading:

**On the Web:**

<http://divweb.harvard.edu/csvpl/ee> (Environmental Center website)

<http://divweb.harvard.edu/csvpl/ee/ecojustice> (Eco Justice site)

<http://divweb.harvard.edu/csvpl/ee/bib> (Environmental Ethics bibliography)

<http://divweb.harvard.edu/ee/bib/titles.htm> (Environmental Ethics Bibliography by topic)

<http://ecoethics.net/bib/1997/enca.001.htm> (Bibliography by author)

<http://ecoethics.net/bib/1997/encc-001.htm> (Bibliography by chronology)

Devall and Sessions, Deep Ecology

Bill McKibben, The End of Nature

Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind

Richard John Neuhaus, In Defense of People: Ecology and the Seduction of Radicalism

**Week 13 (April 24 – April 26)--Final Class Overview**

Thurs, Dec 4: We'll spend class in review, summarizing key issues and discussing questions you bring in for further reflection and critique. (Your participation will be noted; this won't be a study hall break).

Tues, Dec 9: I'll finish with an overview of the future of the issues we've studied and make the case for a new way to study them; you'll complete student evaluations and we'll share refreshments.

---

**Hand in your entire class diary--covering the entire course, not just the last installment-- and your 15-20pp course paper no later than Friday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, at 5PM.**

---

**DPI-342: Housekeeping and Related Notes**

1. **How to reach me, my faculty and our course assistants:**

Office is 256 Taubman; phone 617-495-8692, fax 495-8696; email is [richard\\_parker@harvard.edu](mailto:richard_parker@harvard.edu)

My Faculty Assistant is: Kristina Mastropasqua, at [Kristina\\_mastropasqua@harvard.edu](mailto:Kristina_mastropasqua@harvard.edu) or 617-496-3557.

**Course Assistant is:** Brooke C. Davis, at [Brooke\\_Davis@hks13.harvard.edu](mailto:Brooke_Davis@hks13.harvard.edu)

2. **Office hours** are, for Prof. Parker, at his office Tuesday, 4:30-5:30, or by arrangement.

3. Your **Class Diary** is important, and as much as possible, should be kept up to date. I need it in



typed, not handwritten, form, double-spaced, normal margins, pages numbered. It is meant to include your reflections on course readings and discussions, and—as you become more self-confident—thoughts of your own that move beyond the questions in the syllabus to deeper reflection. How long should it be? That's for you to determine; you're graduate students. I'm going to assess it for intelligence and for your commitment to read, participate in, and reflect. (With your prior permission only, I may want to share excerpts of some diaries with the class to promote discussion.) I'LL PUT SOME STUDENT DIARIES FROM PAST CLASSES AT THE KSG LIBRARY, UNDER DPI-342 RESERVE.

4. The **course paper** should be 15-20pp, double spaced, with the usual provisions obtaining regarding style, originality, etc. If in doubt, use The Chicago Manual of Style. Topics should include a public policy or political dimension, obviously, but I'm willing to entertain historically comparative, thematic, case model, or philosophic approaches to your topic. Feel free to schedule time with me, especially before the paper proposal is due (Wed., April 2), to discuss topics and approach. I'll make available a number of bibliographies during the term, and place them on reserve, to help your research. You should think about exploring the Internet, where a fascinating array of topics related to the themes in this course are increasingly available. I will also place some useful bibliographies on file at the KSG Library. SAMPLE PAPERS FROM PREVIOUS YEARS WILL ALSO BE PLACED AT THE KSG LIBRARY, IN THE PAL-122 CLASS FILE.

5. On **grading**, because there's no midterm or final, I will be assessing your paper, diary, and class participation. I will grade on a class curve, using KSG distribution standards. How much will I weight the elements? If you desperately need a quantitative measure, assume that about 40% will go to the diary, 40% to the final paper, and 20% to participation,.

6. **Mark these dates in your calendar:**

**Friday, February 17th**--FIRST DIARY: First installment of your class diary due.

**Friday, March 30th**--SECOND DIARY AND BRIEF OUTLINE OF FINAL PAPER: Second installment of your class diary due; a brief proposal outlining your 15-20pp course paper is also due.

**Friday, May 4th**--3RD DIARY AND FINAL PAPER: Final class diary due, covering entire course. Hand in the two previously-submitted installments, already reviewed by me, so that I can assess your growth--and mine--during the course.

Your final course paper is also due then. Extensions granted only in rarest circumstances, with written requests made no later than final day of classes, Thursday, April 26th

7. **Outside speakers**: I'll announce any guest speakers several weeks in advance of their appearance.

8. **Books, packet, and handouts**--You're expected to read each week's "required readings" by the appropriate class of that week. Those readings marked "books" are at the Coop, those marked "packet" are in the CMO packet, and those marked "handout" will be distributed in class a week ahead; there may occasionally be additional handouts not indicated in the syllabus. "Further readings" are mostly materials readily available in the Harvard Library system, and I'll try to have many of them at HKS Library Reserve.

9. **Finally, our commitment to one another:**

This is a class on a subject that will involve for many their deepest feelings and beliefs. Let me therefore say for the record that two crucial commitments are expected of all of you.

First, no one should presume--or ever respond as if--anyone else in the class intended to wound or denigrate another person or belief; neither should your own words or conduct ever carry such intentions.

Second, what we say in class is to remain in class; the vitality of this course in part depends on our willingness to explore our own confusions, doubts and beliefs, and some may not wish to have those shared outside the classroom.

If you don't feel you can meet such standards, please do not enroll. For any reason, if you believe that these commitments have been violated during a class, please see me immediately afterward.