Religion, Democracy, and Human Rights

POLISCI 33S / RELIGST 35S
Stanford University
Summer Quarter 2014

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Course Assistant
(CA): James Redfield, Ph.D. Candidate
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Day and Time: Tuesdays, Thursdays, 3:15-5:05

Location: 420-050 (Jordan Hall)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 10-11am, Fridays 2-3pm, or by appointment with instructor
Ventura Hall 24

Course Description

What is the relationship between religion, democracy, and human rights? What is the status of religion within modern human rights regimes? Do religions have “special” rights in democracies? Why did the French outlaw the hijab (Islamic headscarf) and the Swiss the building of mosques—and is that good for human and democratic rights? What is (and what should be) the relationship between religious human rights and democratic self-determination? How do we balance between concerns over blasphemy and free speech, in the case of the Danish cartoon depiction of Mohammad, for example? Is the idea of “religion” even useful in human rights or democratic language anymore, as some now claim? These are just some of the questions students will take up as they are introduced to several important areas within the larger field of religion and international relations.

Readings are interdisciplinary in nature, and include case studies. No prerequisite. Open to all majors/minors, and will be particularly beneficial to students in International Relations, International Policy Studies, Political Science, and Religious Studies, as well as students with specific regional political interests where the themes of the course are especially relevant (e.g., Middle East, Latin America, Russia and Eastern Europe, Africa, and so on) and Pre-Law students.

Course Requirements
Preparation, Attendance and Participation (15% of course grade)

Students are required to prepare, attend and actively participate in every class session. Additionally, students are expected to complete the weekly common readings as assigned before class and in enough time to complete their weekly response papers (see below).

Current Events (20% of course grade)

Current Event Presentation: (15% of course grade) Students are required to research and prepare one 5-minute presentation on an event in the news in the past 3 years related to the course topics, according to the schedule prepared in class. Presentations must be accompanied by a one-page summary (bullet points, concise notes are preferable rather than lengthy narratives), which includes 2-3 questions for class discussion on the topics, and a one-page bibliography (4-6 relevant scholarly works and 1-3 relevant news sources) for further research on the topic. The presenter is responsible for bringing enough hard copies for each member of the class and the instructor on the day of the presentation.

The presentation schedule and topics will be determined early in the course. No two students may repeat a given topic. Because of the students’ commitment to the rest of the class, it is important that students not miss their presentation date. Late submissions are only permitted if given on the next class meeting, and will be penalized 50% of the maximum score (e.g., 50 points out of 100). A grade of zero is issued for a presentation not made within the originally-scheduled or subsequent class meeting.

Current Event Discussion: (5% of course grade) Following the presentation, the class will take approximately 5-10 minutes to discuss the topic just presented. Students will be graded on their contributions and participation to these discussions as well.

Response Papers and Oral Briefings (20% of course grade)

Students are required to prepare a 250-500-word response paper to the readings in 5 out of 6 weeks during Weeks 2-7 of the course. For the week when you use your "pass," please notify the instructor by email. Optional: Up to 3 of the 5 response papers may be substituted for a 3-5 minute Oral Briefing (audio file presentation containing the same information required of the response paper). This option is available for students who want to work on their oral briefing skills or oral presentation skills. (Audio quality is the responsibility of the student. Inaudible or garbled audio will be penalized.)

Response papers (in .rtf, .doc or .docx formats – no PDFs, please) or oral briefing files (in .wav, .mp3, or .mp4 formats) are to be posted to the Coursework website before 8pm the day before class. Late submissions will be penalized.

In your response papers, you should highlight what you found interesting, confusing, provocative, or noteworthy in the readings. The response papers should demonstrate your
reading and comprehension of the week’s material, and your critical engagement with that material.

- You will propose a thesis of no more than 2 sentences based on that week’s readings, underline it, and offer at least two pieces of evidence (or relevant examples / passages) from that week’s reading (cited appropriately) which support your thesis statement. Special attention should be paid to the topic or theme for that week’s class. Special attention should also be given to possible counterarguments—and especially counterarguments from the course readings. When cited, counterarguments should be placed in bold and refuted. Remember, your own argument’s strength is bolstered by your ability to identify strong counterarguments and withstand them. The response papers should also take into account the theoretical models introduced as the course proceeds.

- Additionally, you should include at least two questions or issues that you would like to address more fully in our discussion. Good discussion questions / issues raised are those that begin to critique, explore, and examine the readings in that particular class session and in the course in general.

- Oral Briefings must also clearly identify the thesis, the supporting evidence/arguments, any counterargument(s) taken up and refuted, and the two questions for further discussion.

The class will be divided at the beginning of the quarter so that approximately half the class will ordinarily submit their responses Monday evenings and the other half on Wednesday evenings. Swapping of due dates in a given week is only permitted if swapping with another consenting student who ordinarily submits on the other due date. How to swap due dates in a given week:

Both students must email the Course Assistant before Monday of the week in question, cc’ing the other student as well, for the change to be considered official. If both students do not email the CA and cc the other student, the change is not official. Late penalties will be assessed according to the original schedule if the change is not executed correctly, or according to the new schedule if it is.

**Short Paper** (20% of course grade)

Students will write a 1000-1250-word paper, due on Saturday, July 19, on a topic from a provided list of options. Topics will be made available on Tuesday, July 8, and will cover material from the first four weeks of the course.

Paper details: 1000-1250 words, not including bibliography or footnotes, 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, double-spaced, numbered pages. Submission via Coursework in .rtf, .doc or .docx formats only (no PDFs, please). Further details will be discussed in class as the date approaches. The Paper is designed to evaluate your grasp
of the major themes and concepts of the course readings, lectures and class discussion from the first half of the course and to give you an assessment of your research and writing skills ahead of the final paper.

**Late Submissions** for Short Paper: For each day a short paper is late, the grade will be penalized one full letter grade.

**Final Paper** (25% of course grade)

4000-4500-word Critical Paper

Topic is of the student's choosing, selected in consultation with the instructor or CA, and approved by email **BEFORE** Friday, August 1. 4000-4500 words, not including bibliography or footnotes, 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1-inch margins, double-spaced, numbered pages. Submission via Coursework in .rtf, .doc or .docx formats only (no PDFs, please). Further details will be discussed in class as the date approaches. The Paper is designed to evaluate your ability to research and construct an extended argument related to the course subject in light of the course material and discussions. **Due Saturday, August 16.**

**Late Submissions** for Final Paper: For each day a final paper is late, the grade will be penalized one full letter grade.

**Note on Coursework Submissions**

All Coursework submissions for the course must be complete, on time, and in .rtf, .doc or .docx formats (no PDFs, please), if written work, or .wav, .mp3, or .mp4, if audio work. It is recommended that students copy the text of their submission into the body of an email to the CA as a backup in cases of forgotten attachments or corrupt files. In such cases, the text in the email will be accepted as an on-time submissions and prevent the student from having their grade penalized for a late submission. (Note that audio files may be sent to the CA by email as well, but this does not protect the student against corrupt files, for which s/he is still responsible and may be penalized.)

**Academic Honor Code and The Fundamental Standard**

At all times in the course, students are expected to adhere to Stanford University’s Academic Honor Code and The Fundamental Standard. All work in the course is subject to the Honor Code, and it is the student's individual responsibility to ensure they are familiar with its contents and adhere to it faithfully. (Remember, your instructor is a veteran Academic Integrity Officer and has these responsibilities at Stanford as well. It is not wise to fall below the highest standards of academic integrity in your work.)
Learning Differences and the Office of Accessible Education

Students with learning differences or who feel they may need learning accommodations who have not already contacted the Office of Accessible Education (http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/dae) should do so as soon as possible, as approval of appropriate accommodations may take significant time. All such accommodations must be approved by the Office of Accessible Education.

Class Schedule

Introducing the Field(s) of Religion and Human Rights: Circumscribing the Course

Discussion: Outline and Expectations of the Course; Positioning the course topics within the wider discussion of religion and human rights; matters not taken up/for further research; the possibility of untangling the various strands of the field—history, law, morality, politics; illustrative cases.

Tuesday, June 24

Introduction to Course, Syllabus Review, Info for Response/Briefing and Current Events Schedule

Religious Roots of Rights

Discussion: What is the classic view of the arising of rights in the West against which Witte, Tierney and Bloom are writing? What is the (his)story they are telling instead? Assess the differences between Sen’s pan-Asian argument and the treatment of the specific traditions in the rest of the week’s readings. What are we to make of Sen’s argument in light of the diversity we see in the subsequent readings? Are there any general conclusions we can draw about the religious roots of rights after these readings? What are we to make of the often-heard claim that rights are a “Western invention”? Have these authors convinced you otherwise, or do we have reason(s) to retain this characterization?

Thursday, June 26

Readings:

RELIGION, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS
Religion in the Modern Human Rights Regime(s)

Discussion: What does Morsink argue is the historical basis for the consensus of the rights in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)? What, finally, are the grounds declared in the UDHR for the grounding of the rights? What are the other options that are set aside and why? What role do duties and responsibilities have in the UDHR? Offer an assessment of the rights of religious communities that made it into the UDHR versus those which were debated but ultimately left out. What impact on religion (either individuals or communities) does the decision about the special minority rights article have? Compare the UHHR with the other documents that Lerner discusses. Are there particular improvements that you see in these other documents over the UDHR? What concerns arise regarding the other documents explored? Does the Convention on Racial Discrimination meet the challenge left by the absence of the minority rights article in the UDHR? What gaps remain, if any?

Thursday, July 3

Readings:


Tuesday, July 8

Readings:


Questions about the Concept of “Religion” for Religion and Human Rights

Discussion: Describe the four critiques of the use of “religion” in this section’s readings, and assess each—what are their strengths? Where do they fall short? What have they omitted? Is the concept of “religion” worth employing at all in the field, or should we look for another term/way to frame the conversations at hand? If so, do you have a suggestion for a preferable option?

Thursday, July 10

RELIGION, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS
Readings:
*D. Peterson and D. Walhof, “Rethinking Religion,” in Peterson and Walhof, eds. The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History, 1-16

Tuesday, July 15

Readings:

Religion and Cultural Rights

Discussion: What arguments are given for granting cultural rights? Special minority rights (review your notes on Morsink’s description of this debate in the drafting of the UDHR as well)? On what grounds does Habermas seek to link religious tolerance and cultural rights? Is he convincing on this point? What is his assessment of postmodern liberalism? Do you agree? Explain Barry’s concern about the use of “culture.” How does it relate to Okin’s argument? Where are they in agreement and where do they diverge? Finally, where do you land on the question of group rights, cultural rights or minority group rights? And what relevant issues do you not see discussed in this week’s readings?

Thursday, July 17

Readings:
*J. Habermas, “Religious Tolerance as Pacemaker for Cultural Rights” and “Equal Treatment of Cultures and the Limits of Postmodern Liberalism,” in Between Naturalism and Religion, 251-311

Saturday, July 19 – Short Paper Due
Tuesday, July 22

Readings:


*S. Moller Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?” in S. Moller Okin et al, Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?, 7-26


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Religious Liberty

Discussion: What features of the various documents presented in the Steiner and Alston selection stand out? Where do you see problems with the interpretations of religious liberty being offered? What is Little’s concern about the use of the term “religious human right”? What changes would you recommend for the 1981 Declaration, if any? What does Nussbaum see as the distinctive feature of the U.S. liberty of conscience tradition? Why does she argue this is the preferable model compared to the other available ones? Is she convincing, and why or why not?

Thursday, July 24

Readings:


Tuesday, July 29

Readings:


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RELIGION, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Discussion: What is the concern/are the concerns expressed over the Hijab? What are the principles that France has applied to the case? How do they differ from the two countries that you also skimmed, if at all? How, if at all, does the French approach differ from the U.S. approach to religious liberty (think back to Nussbaum from last week)? Which model would you advocate if you were on a Constitutional Convention right now, and why? What are the relevant documents that we have seen throughout the course which could apply to the Hijab example (including but also thinking beyond those documents that McGoldrick himself points to)?

Thursday, July 31

Readings:
*D. McGoldrick, Human Rights and Religion: The Islamic Headscarf Debate in Europe, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 9 (p.1-33, 237-287), and skim Ch. 10 (288-310)
*Recommended: Rest of Book

Contemporary Question: Blasphemy and Free Speech

Discussion: Explain the position of each author, and the questions they have of each other. How does each define the key concepts of their position (blasphemy and free speech, in particular)? From time to time one hears certain speakers argue that blasphemy is a type of “psychological terrorism” carried out against the religious. Evaluate this claim in light of the authors we read this week. What are the boundaries of free speech, if any, that you would advocate for, and why? Is either free speech or blasphemy a category with which you are so unhappy that you would recommend throwing it out entirely? If not, would you make any changes to how they are used in human rights law, and especially in human rights law concerned with religion? (In-class presentation of the Westboro Baptist Church case that came before the U.S. Supreme Court and was decided in March 2011.)

Tuesday, August 5

Readings:

Thursday, August 7

Readings:

Contemporary Questions: Health Care or Religious Freedom in the U.S.?

Tuesday, August 12

Readings:
*The Economist:*
*Selections from post-ruling discussion, if available (TBA)
Religion, Democracy, and OR Human Rights: The Problem of Illiberal Religious Democratic Rule

Discussion: How does the rise and fall of the Morsi government in Egypt illustrate the fundamental problems at the nexus of religion, democracy, and human rights thought and practice? Where do you come down on the liberal-illiberal democracy debate? What do we make of Habermas’ view of democracy and rights as co-originating in light of these readings? Is there a model that you see in the Cesari review that you prefer? Or another model we have seen in the course? Are rights-concerned democrats obligated to support the overthrow of an illiberal democracy? And does adding a religious element to the illiberal democracy change your answer?

End of Course Review

Thursday, August 14

Readings:


Final Paper Due: Saturday, August 16