Course Description:

The central aim of this course is to examine the interaction between the spheres of religion and politics. In particular, we seek to understand religion as a social phenomenon and how religious identities and institutions affect the political world. The first part of the course focuses on secularization, economic development, social cohesion, democracy, political parties, social movements, fundamentalism, and violence. The second part of the course focuses on the relationship between the state and religion. The lectures and materials for this course are comparative, empirical, and analytical. While most of the readings are centered around the comparative politics of religion, the course also includes some classic studies in the sociology of religion, as well as work that is more anthropological. The empirical materials span many regional and religious settings with a strong focus on the developing world.

Course Requirements:

1. Lectures: The lectures will provide the analytical framework for the course. They will build on and supplement the readings. Attendance at all lectures is mandatory.
2. Readings: The readings are substantial, usually averaging more than 120pp. per week. Students are expected to come to the lectures and conferences having done the readings beforehand. The course emphasizes intensive reading of several important books in the fields of the sociology and politics of religion.
3. Conferences: Conferences are very important because they provide a venue for discussion of course materials that are complex and debatable, and
sometimes controversial. There are 10 conferences for which attendance is mandatory. However, you are allowed to miss 1 conference for any reason – illness, extracurricular activity, etc. – without having to give an explanation.

~Your conference grade will be based on three variables: attendance, a weekly précis, and quality of participation. To get full points for attendance you must have attended at least 9 conferences and handed in a précis each week. (If you attend all 10 conferences and hand in a précis for all 10 conferences, you will be given extra points). The précis is a 1-paragraph typed response to a question that will be provided on MyCourses. You must hand in the précis to your TA at the beginning of conferences. The grade for attendance will be based on presence in class and the précis. You will only be marked for attendance if you are present and hand in a précis. If you do only one or the other, you will not get a point for attendance.

~The précis will be marked with a check, a check minus, or a check plus, depending on its quality.

~To get full points for participation, you must participate consistently and thoughtfully.

~Note that attendance is extremely important because it is one means of assessing how seriously a student engages with the course. There will be a significant penalty for missing conferences on a regular basis: missing half of the conferences (5, not including the 1 free pass) will result in a “O” for the conference grade.

4. Midterm in-class exam: Tuesday, March 12. The exam will be based on identifications and one essay.

5. Final paper: Monday, April 22, by 4:00pm. This paper should be a 10-page analysis of the relationship between the state and religion. The paper is an exercise in analytical thinking that also requires research beyond the works assigned in the syllabus. I will provide a set of questions, from which students will pick one, related to the theme of state and religion and focusing on the particular cases we will discuss in depth in the second half of the course. To answer these questions, students will have to analyze a book or set of articles assigned in the course, as well as do extra research. I will provide the set of questions on Thursday, March 21. I encourage you to meet with me or with the teaching assistant to discuss your paper. Papers handed in late and without medical justification will automatically be deducted 10 points per day.

Grade Distribution:

1. Attendance, précis, and quality participation at conferences 10%
2. Midterm Exam 40%
3. Final Paper 50%
Please note:

The content and evaluation of this course are subject to change in the case of unforeseeable events.

Statement on Academic Integrity:

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

Policy on Missed In-Class Midterm Exam:

If you are unable to take the midterm in-class exam due to illness, you must notify me in person or via email before the exam. You must then provide me with a formal note from a doctor. I will reschedule one make-up exam for all students who missed the exam several days after the formal date. There will be only one makeup exam date.

Anyone who misses the exam without notifying me before the exam will not be allowed to write the make-up. Consequently, their grade on the midterm will be a 0. There are no exceptions to this rule.

Policy on Laptops in Class:

Research has shown that the use of laptops and other mobile devices in university lecture halls leads to lower focus and retention of materials. This is because multitasking – such as surfing the internet – undermines concentration. Therefore, laptops and cell phones are not allowed in the lecture hall and in the conferences. Only students with a documented disability for whom typing on a laptop is essential will be exempted from this rule. Some articles to read about this:


Contact during the Semester:

The best way to get in touch with me is right after class or during office hours on Wednesday, 1:00-3:00pm. Since I receive countless emails every day, I much prefer that you talk to me in person rather than email me. However, if you have a brief question that I can answer quickly, feel free to email me. If your query is lengthy or
of a more substantive nature that I cannot address briefly via email, then my strong preference is for you to discuss this with me in person during office hours.

This is a large lecture course, which makes it difficult for the professor to know the students and vice versa. The only way around this is for students to make an effort to talk to me after class or during office hours. I encourage you to ask questions during the lecture or after the lecture and to discuss any interests you have about religion and politics with me. I am also open to any ideas about readings that you come across that are related to the course, or issues that you would like to discuss during conferences, or any matters that may help improve the course and engage its substance.

MyCourses:

The course will have a MyCourses component. Students are encouraged to use MyCourses to discuss issues in the course as well as contemporary events that are related to the course topics. I also encourage students to post articles from newspapers or other contemporary sources that are relevant to the course.

Lecture Series on Catholicism and Public Life

With Professor Dan Cere in the School of Religious Studies, I run a Lecture Series on Catholicism and Public Life. This semester, the Lecture Series will include some prominent scholars who write on the relationship between sociology, politics, biology and Catholicism. I will provide more information on these talks, which you are strongly encouraged to attend.

Disabilities:

If you have any learning disabilities that will affect your progress in this course, please contact me as soon as possible so that proper arrangements can be made.

Stress:

I understand that university life can be very stressful. If you find that you are unable to complete the work assigned for this course due to personal difficulties, it is better if you inform me or the teaching assistant as early as possible. There are also university resources to which I can direct students going through difficult circumstances.
Books to Purchase:

Six books have been ordered at Paragraphe Bookstore on 2220 McGill College Avenue. There is no coursepack for this course. All journal articles or book chapters that are not part of the six books to purchase will be available on MyCourses. All six books will be placed on reserve in the McGill Library.


COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 8, 10): Introduction to the Course / Defining Religion


Week 2 (January 15, 17): The Secularization Thesis


Recommended:


Week 3 (January 22, 24): Religion, Capitalism, and Economic Development

*Conferences begin this week*


Recommended:


Week 4 (January 29, 31): Religion and Social Cohesion

**Week 5 (February 5, 7): Religion and Democracy**


**Recommended:**


**Week 6 (February 12, 14): Religious Parties**


**Recommended:**

Mona El-Ghobashy, “The Metamorphosis of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood,”

Week 7 (February 19, 21): Religion, Fundamentalism, and Violence


Recommended:


Week 8 (February 26, 28): Religion and Social Movements


Recommended:


Week 9 (March 12, 14): MIDTERM and Documentary

Midterm is in class on Tuesday, March 12.
Documentary screening on Thursday, March 14.
No conferences this week.

Week 10 (March 19, 21): State-Church Relations / The French State and the Islamic Veil


Recommended:


Week 11 (March 26, 28): Catholicism and the State in Latin America

Recommended:


**Week 12 (April 2, 4): Islam and the State in Southeast Asia**


Recommended:


**Week 13 (April 9, 11): Islam and the State in the Middle East**


Recommended: