Religion, Politics & State in Comparative Perspective

**Course ID**
SOC-UA9970003/POL-UA9994001/RELST-UA9613001

**Instructor Details**
Moshe Berent
mosheb@openu.ac.il
036427167
0546876802

**Class Details**
Fall 2011
Thursday 4:30-7:30pm

**Prerequisites**
none

**Class Description**
Only until recently the question of the relation between religion and state, or religion and public life, had been considered anachronistic. The answer to this question, so it seemed, was that religion belonged or should belong to the private sphere and consequently had no public role. This 'privatization of religion' thesis was supported by two important myths: one suggested that in liberal democracy there was (or should have been) “Walls of Separation” between State and Religion (or between State and Church), the other, the ‘Secularization Thesis’, suggested that since the dawn of the modern era, humanity in general, and western societies in particular, have been going through a process of secularization which eventually will lead to the disappearance of religion from public life.

Recently, the question of the relation between religion and public life has regained interest because of several processes. One was the spread of democracy in the ‘Third Wave of Democratization’ to Catholic, Orthodox and non-Christian societies which had raised the question of the relation between religion and democratic political culture. The second was the immigration of non-Christians to the western ‘Christian’ nations which tended to underline the Christian foundations of these national states. A third influence was the resurgence of religious fundamentalism. All of these cast doubt on both the privatization of religion and the secularization of the state theses. It seems that religion plays an important role in the formation of regimes and political patterns; that religious establishments and religious communities are occasionally involved in political struggles; and that recurrently religions introduce powerful symbols of identification which could mobilize the public for political purposes.

**Course Objectives**
The purpose of this course is to examine the relation between religion and public life in both western and non western societies. Among the issues that will be discussed are:

1. The Secularization and Privatization Debates.
2. Fundamentalism, Modernism and Secularism
3. Religion and Democracy
4. Civil Religion and Political Religion
5. Religion and Nationalism
6. Religion, Conflicts and Revolutions
7. Religion, Church and State
9. Religious Voting
10. Religion and Public Policy
11. Religion and State in Israel – The Religious Aspect
12. Religion and State in Israel - The National Aspect
13. Religion and State in the Middle East
Grading and Assessment

- Midterm Essay/Research Paper (1250 – 1500 words) 30%
- Essay/Research Paper (2500 – 3000 words) 50%
- Participation 20% *

*To be fully engaged in class and participate in the discussion and show Failure to submit or fulfill any required course component results in failure of the class.

Required Text(s)
none

Supplemental Texts (not required to purchase)
none

Internet Research Guidelines

It is hard to overestimate the importance of the internet, or its contribution, to the build up of contemporary knowledge of the world around us. Albeit it needs to be used wisely. This means that one must be selective and careful when relating to internet-based sources, identifying and distinguishing opinions from facts, and journalism from academics. Most importantly, one should make clear reference to internet sources, allowing the reader the opportunity to consult these resources as and if required.

Please also note that the ‘world-wide web’ – www – exists in many languages. Many sources about Israel in English, for instance, will be aimed at tourists or readers living primarily in English-speaking regions of the world. Sources might differ when reading them in other languages. Use the internet critically.

You can never be too safe, so do ensure both the reader and yourself that you know well what your internet sources are.

Introduction: The Secularization and Privatization Debates


*Furseth Inger and Pal Repstad. 2006. “Religion in the public Sphere”, in Introduction to the Sociology of Religion,

Further Readings


Session 2

**Fundamentalism, Modernism and Secularism**


Further Readings


Session 3

**Religion and Democracy**


Further Readings


Session 4

**Civil Religion and Political Religion**


**Further Readings**


[Click and enter essay deadlines/work due]

[Click and enter co-curricular activities, etc.]

**Session 5**

Religion and Nationalism


**Further Readings**


**Session 6**

Religion Conflicts and Revolutions


**Further Readings**


**Session 7**
Religion Church and State


Further Readings


Religious Parties, Movements and Organizations


Further Readings


Religious Voting


Religion and Public policy


Religion and State in Israel   - The Religious Aspect)


Further Readings


Session 12

**Religion and State in Israel – The National Aspect**


Further Readings


Yifatachel, Oren 1999 “‘Ethnocracy’: the politics of judaizing Israel/Palestine”, *Constellations*, vol. 6 no. 3, pp. 364-390.
Session 13


**Further Readings**


Lewis, Bernard, *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East* (Schocken 2001)


Session 14

Concluding discussion

Final Exam/Project

Details will be provided in class