

POLS 4690: Religion and American Politics
University of Georgia
Fall 2018

Instructor:
Dr. Brittany Bramlett
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Office meeting times:
Before/after class
Or by appointment

Class meets:
Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays, 9:05am to 9:55am, Baldwin Hall, 0101D

Course description

The religious landscape has changed over the nation's history and so has religion's role in American politics. We'll explore the nation's religious diversity and how it relates to politics, uniting and dividing us. Ultimately, we will work towards an understanding of how America can be extremely devout, religiously diverse, and for the most part, tolerant of religious differences.

Course objectives

Students will:

- Study the diversity of religious life in American politics
- Understand the participatory and electoral consequences of religious activity in American politics
- Understand the historical role of religion in American politics
- Learn the course material by working independently and with a group
- Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering various political perspectives and communicating those views effectively

Course texts

You are required to gain access to the books listed below. They are available at the campus bookstore.

- *American Grace* (2010), Robert Putnam and David E. Campbell.
- *From Pews to Polling Places* (2007), Edited by J. Matthew Wilson.
- Other assigned readings will be made available to you via E-Learning Commons (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>)

Course structure

I'm assuming some level of interest in the subject matter because you signed up for this course. Readings will be provocative, and I look forward to your participation in class discussions. To do this, you should be engaging with the readings. If you don't read, discussion will be tiresome, and we all know what that means for a morning class. In sum, read!

¹ Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as needed.

Assignments and grading

Participation & attendance (15%)

You are expected to participate in class and group discussions and activities.

Exams (15% each, 30% total)

There will be two exams. Anything from the assigned readings and discussed during class is considered fair game to show up on the exam.

Writing assignment(s) (40%)

You will complete three writing assignments. For the first assignment (10%), you will submit two potential paper topics (making an argument) related to the role of religion in American politics. For the second (15%), you will choose one topic to focus on and submit an outline for your final paper with an annotated bibliography. For the final assignment (15%), you will write a 7 to 10 page paper on your topic citing in-class and out-of-class materials to support your argument. Additional details will be provided during the course of the semester.

Class discussion kickoff (15%)

You will sign up with your discussion group (established during the second week of classes) for a slot to kick off class discussion for the day. This involves leading class discussion for the first 20 minutes of class. Your tasks include 1) Find a recent news article highlighting the role of religion in American politics, 2) Inform the class about the particular news item, why you think it's important and explain consequences for American politics, 3) Establish a connection between the article's content and the material to be discussed in class that day, and 4) Finally, generate 2 to 3 discussion questions based on the news item for the class.

Administrative Items

ELearning

You will submit writing assignments and locate additional reading assignments for our class via the ELearning Commons (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>). You should sign into the ELearning Commons using your UGA MyId and password. If you are registered for the class, the course link should show up on your ELearning Commons homepage. I may post additional documents useful for your class, so you will want to check in throughout the semester.

Missed deadlines

If you have a conflict with a due date or will miss class repeatedly, please come talk to me about it as soon as you know about it. This way we can work something out and your grade may not suffer. If you have an emergency conflict (i.e. personal, family or medical emergencies), you should e-mail me within the week of the missed due date to discuss the timely completion of the assignment. Documentation is required for make-up exams. If you miss a deadline for a non-emergency, most assignments can still be completed and will be accepted for up to a week—but they will be penalized a letter grade for every additional day late.

Classroom safety

If the fire alarm sounds, we will exit the building and reassemble across the street (Jackson) to make sure everyone exited the building. If there is a tornado warning, we will move downstairs to shelter and account for everyone. If you have concerns about other emergencies or if you have special circumstances that I need to know about in case of an emergency, please speak to me after class. If you have questions about evacuation locations or shelter locations, contact OEP (Office of Emergency Preparedness).

Disability resource center

If you anticipate needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, you must register for services with the Disability Resource Center. Additional information can be found here: <http://drc.uga.edu/>

Withdrawal policy

Undergraduate students can only withdraw from four courses and receive a withdrawal-passing (WP) grade while enrolled at the University. Students can drop any class without penalty during the drop/add period at the beginning of every semester. Dropped courses during the drop/add period do not qualify as withdrawals. Instructors have the ability to withdraw a student from the class due to excessive absences. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <http://www.reg.uga.edu/policies/withdrawals>

UGA culture of honesty policy

The policy is in place to encourage academic honesty among students, faculty and other members of the university community. You and I are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism, cheating and much more. It's in your best interest to understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive an F for the course, and their names will be forwarded to the University. Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy>

Tentative Course Outline

Week 1.

Monday, August 13

- Review course syllabus

Wednesday, August 15

- “How Americans Feel about Religious Groups”
(<http://www.pewforum.org/2014/07/16/how-americans-feel-about-religious-groups/>)
- “If the U.S. had 100 people: Charting Americans’ religious affiliations”
(http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/14/if-the-u-s-had-100-people-charting-americans-religious-affiliations/?utm_content=buffer0209a&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer)

Friday, August 17

- *American Grace* 1

Week 2.

Monday, August, 20

- *American Grace* 2

Wednesday, August 22

- “Measurement error is sin”
(<https://religioninpublic.blog/2017/03/22/measurement-error-is-sin/>)
- “When You Ask People to Describe their Religion, Bad Things Happen”
(https://religioninpublic.blog/2017/10/11/when-you-ask-people-to-describe-their-religion-bad-things-happen/amp/?twitter_impression=true)

Friday, August 24

- Selections from *The Oxford handbook of church and state in the United States* edited by Derek Davis

Week 3.

Monday, August 27

- Film: *Meet the Press* episode

Wednesday, August 29

- “In Becerra, Conservative Christians Win With Liberal Legal Arguments”
(https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/26/opinion/becerra-trump-hawaii-christians.html?rref=collection%252Fsectioncollection%252Fopinion&action=click&contentCollection=opinion®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=sectionfront)
- Class discussion kick off 1

Friday, August 31

- *American Grace* 5

Week 4.

Monday, September 3 – Labor Day, No class

Wednesday, September 5

- *American Grace* 6

Friday, September 7

- *American Grace* 3
- Class discussion kick off 2

Week 5.

Monday, September 10

- *American Grace* 4

Wednesday, September 12

- Selections from *Onward Christian Soldiers* 1
- “The Real Origins of the Religious Right”
(<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133>)

Friday, September 14

- Selections from *Onward Christian Soldiers*

Week 6.

Monday, September 17

- “Is the Christian Right Driving Americans Away from Religion?”
(https://psmag.com/.amp/news/is-the-christian-right-driving-americans-away-from-religion?_twitter_impression=true)
- Class discussion kick off 3

Wednesday, September 19

- *From Pews to Polling Places* 3

Friday, September 21

- *From Pews to Polling Places* 10

Week 7.

Monday, September 24

- “‘Nones’ on the Rise”
(<http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>)
Class discussion kick off 4

Wednesday, September 26

- *With God on Our Side* film

Friday, September 28

- *With God on Our Side* film continued

Week 8.

Monday, October 1

- Catch up day

Wednesday, October 3

- Exam 1

Friday, October 5

- “When Politicians Determine Your Religious Beliefs”
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/opinion/religion-republican-democrat.html>)
- Class discussion kick off 5

Week 9.

Monday, October 8

- *American Grace* 10 & 11

Wednesday, October 10

- *American Grace* 12

Friday, October 12

- *American Grace* 7
- Class discussion kick off 6

Week 10.

Monday, October 15

- *American Grace* 8

Wednesday, October 17

- *American Grace* 9

Friday, October 19

- *From Pews to Polling Places* 6
- Writing assignment 1 due

Week 11.

Monday, October 22

- *From Pews to Polling Places* 4

Wednesday, October 24

- “U.S. Catholics View Pope Francis as a Change for the Better”
(<http://www.pewforum.org/2014/03/06/catholics-view-pope-francis-as-a-change-for-the-better/>)
- Class discussion kick off 7

Friday, October 26 – Fall break, No class

Week 12.

Monday, October 29

- *From Pews to Polling Places* 9

Wednesday, October 31

- “Muslims are the least popular religious group in the U.S. They’re disliked even more than atheists” (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/02/23/muslims-are-the-least-popular-religious-group-in-the-u-s-theyre-disliked-even-more-than-atheists/?utm_term=.8a50150c59e8)
- Class discussion kick off 8

Friday, November 2

- *From Pews to Polling Places* 8

Week 13.

Monday, November 5

- *From Pews to Polling Places* 5
- Writing assignment 2 due

Wednesday, November 7

- *From Pews to Polling Places* 7

Friday, November 9

- Selections from *The End of White Christian America* by Robert P. Jones
- Class discussion kick off 9

Week 14.

Monday, November 12

- “A Religious Test All Our Political Candidates Should Take” by Damon Linker in the *Washington Post*, September 19, 2010
- Speeches by John F. Kennedy, Mario Cuomo, Barack Obama, and Mitt Romney

Wednesday, November 14

- “How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis” (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>)
- “How the Faithful Voted: 2014 Preliminary Analysis” (<http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/05/how-the-faithful-voted-2014-preliminary-analysis/#>)

Friday, November 16

- “Despite porn stars and Playboy models, white evangelicals aren’t rejecting Trump. This is why” (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/03/26/despite-porn-stars-and-playboy-models-white-evangelicals-arent-rejecting-trump-this-is-why/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.2655b1177275)
- “Do we have any idea who evangelicals are?” (<https://religioninpublic.blog/2017/12/14/do-we-have-any-idea-who-evangelicals-are/>)

- “Many evangelicals don’t hold evangelical beliefs”
(<https://lifewayresearch.com/2017/12/06/many-evangelicals-dont-hold-evangelical-beliefs/>)
- Class discussion kick off 10

Monday, November 19 to Friday, November 23 – Thanksgiving break, No class

Week 15.

Monday, November 26

- *American Grace* 13
- Class discussion kick off 11

Wednesday, November 28

- *American Grace* 14

Friday, November 30

- *American Grace* 15

Week 16.

Monday, December 3

- Exam 2

Tuesday, December 4

- Catch up day
- Writing assignment 3 due

**Final exam period is Thursday, December 6 through Wednesday, December 12
List of Due Dates**

Exam 1 – Wednesday, October 3

Exam 2 – Monday, December 3

Writing assignment 1 – Friday, October 19

Writing assignment 2 – Monday, November 5

Writing assignment 3 – Tuesday, December 4

Class discussion kickoff dates:

Wednesday, August 29
Friday, September 7
Monday, September 17
Monday, September 24
Friday, October 5
Friday, October 12
Wednesday, October 24
Wednesday, October 31
Friday, November 9
Friday, November 16
Monday, November 26