

POLS 4690E: Religion and American Politics
University of Georgia
Fall 2020

Instructor:

Dr. Brittany Bramlett¹
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Class meets:

ONLINE

Virtual office hours:

Email me at any time Monday – Friday. I will respond no later than 24 hours after the first contact and probably much sooner than that. It may take longer for a response if the student emails through eLC. If you email after 8pm, I probably won't respond until morning.

When a longer response is needed, the professor may respond with a screencast-o-matic recording. Zoom appointments will be limited.

Course description

Through online learning, students explore the religious landscape and how its role in American politics has changed over the nation's history. 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.

Technical requirements for the course

Having regular access to the Internet is necessary for completing course assignments. Reliable Internet service is also important because quizzes will be time sensitive. You will also need access to a computer where you can engage with course content like videos or podcasts.

Course objectives

- Participate in online learning throughout the course.
- 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 through online group discussion
- Improve critical thinking and communication skills by considering various political perspectives and communicating those views effectively

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

Course structure

On most Fridays by 5pm (unless otherwise noted), students will submit discussion posts and assignments for the week.

Students should also receive a weekly email from the professor on Friday afternoons. The email usually details what is due that day by 5pm and what is coming up for the next week. Module materials for the next week become available on Fridays at 8pm.

Course texts

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/>)

Learning Activities

Throughout the course, students should participate in the following learning activities: reading the text, viewing and interacting with the weekly outline and lectures, responding to discussion posts by professor and peers, completing weekly assignments, taking exams, and engaging with and responding to the scholarship of religion and American politics.

These activities will be graded and should be completed by the due date listed on the syllabus and on the eLC calendar.

Assignments and grading

Weekly assignments (10%)

The instructor will post an assignment every week, which pairs with a specific reading listed on the syllabus for each week. Students will not receive a letter grade for these, just a participation grade, noting that the student completed good, quality work. Students have the chance to redo the assignment if needed. Working through the assignments should supplement and help integrate the main outline work by the student—ultimately preparing students for the exams, which are open book/notes.

Weekly discussions (10%)

The instructor will post a discussion prompt (or two) every week. These pair with specific readings listed on the syllabus for each week. As with the assignments, students will receive participation grades for these. They can be redone in the event that the response is incomplete/unsatisfactory. Pay close attention to instructions. Responding to the discussion posts will help students better understand the readings, prepare for the exams, and most importantly, provide an opportunity for interaction with their classmates.

Exams (20% each, 40% total)

There will be two exams during the semester, taken through eLC. The exams will be timed and include a mix of different questions formats.

The exams are open book/notes. This means, students can reference the assigned books/readings for our class and their personal notes and outlines.

This does not mean: communicating with a friend about their notes, using notes through shared documents, and/or Googling (which doesn't usually work out well).

Writing assignments (40%)

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

Administrative Items**ELearning**

Students must become acquainted with eLearning Commons for this class (<https://uga.view.usg.edu/>). Sign into eLC using your UGA MyId and password. If registered for the class, the course link should show up on the student's eLC homepage.

All content will be available via eLC.

Students must check in to eLC multiple times a week.

Students will submit all assignments via eLC.

If you run into any problems with eLC, please contact the EITS Help Desk:

- 706-542-3106 (8am to 10pm M-Th, 8am to 6pm F, 1pm to 7pm Sat & Sun)
- helpdesk@uga.edu
- Submit a request for support at <http://www.eits.uga.edu/request>
- Chat with a representative from the Help Desk (8am to 5pm M-F), <https://confluence.eits.uga.edu/display/HDSH/Help+Desk+Support+%28HDS%29+Home>

Missed deadlines

Assignments are due by 5pm on the date noted on the syllabus, unless otherwise stated. A student who has a conflict with a due date should let the professor know ASAP. If done this way, typically things can be worked out, so the student's grade will not suffer. We are living during a pandemic. Flexibility is key, but communication also helps.

Disability resource center

If the student anticipates needing classroom or exam accommodations due to the impact of a disability or medical condition, they 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. Students and faculty 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.

Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy>

Mental Health and Wellness Resources:

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit <https://sco.uga.edu>. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) or crisis support (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies>).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (<https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga>) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center. Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App.

Agreement

As an enrolled student in this course, you are agreeing to the policies listed above and to doing good, honest work. You are also agreeing to work with Dr. Bramlett to have a positive course outcome and learn about civic engagement through course assignments and experiences.

Students agree to not collaborate on exams. Any student caught cheating will fail the course, and academic dishonesty will be reported to the University. Exams will be open book but they will be timed. Students should be prepared to complete the exam in the time allotted.

Please stay in touch throughout the course. Please communicate with Dr. Bramlett if a conflict arises.

Please indicate that you agree with these statements during the first week of class.

Tentative Course Outline

Course intro. August 21

- Welcome module:
 - Welcome video
 - Course syllabus
 - Student survey

Week 1. August 24 – 28

Introduction & the Religious Landscape

- Module 1 material
 - *American Grace* 1
 - “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)
- Due Friday, August 28
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week
 - Email instructor, indicating agreement to terms in syllabus

Week 2. August 31 – September 4

Introduction & the Religious Landscape

- Module 2 material
 - *American Grace 2*
 - “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)
 - “Do we have any idea who evangelicals are?”
(<https://religioninpublic.blog/2017/12/14/do-we-have-any-idea-who-evangelicals-are/>)
- Due Friday, September 4
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 3. September 9 – 11 (Labor Day, holiday: Monday, September 7)

Introduction & the Religious Landscape

- Module 3 material
 - Selections from *The Oxford handbook of church and state in the United States* edited by Derek Davis
 - Film: *Meet the Press* episode
 - “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)
- Due Friday, September 11
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week
 - Writing assignment 1

Week 4. September 14 – 18

History of Religion in America & the Christian Right

- Module 4 material
 - *American Grace 5*
 - *American Grace 6*
- Due Friday, September 18
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 5. September 21 – 25

History of Religion in America & the Christian Right

- Module 5 material
 - Selection from *Onward Christian Soldiers*
 - *With God on Our Side* film
- Due, Friday, September 25
 - Exam 1
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 6. September 28 – October 2

History of Religion in America & the Christian Right

- Module 6 material
 - *American Grace 3*
 - *American Grace 4*
 - *From Pews to Polling Places 3*
- Due Friday, October 2
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 7. October 5 – 9

The Intertwining of Religion and American Politics

- Module 7 material
 - *From Pews to Polling Places 10*
 - “‘Nones’ on the Rise” (<http://www.pewforum.org/2012/10/09/nones-on-the-rise/>)
- Due Friday, October 9
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week
 - Writing assignment 2

Week 8. October 12 – 16

The Intertwining of Religion and American Politics

- Module 8 material
 - *American Grace* 10
 - *American Grace* 11
 - *American Grace* 12
 - “When Politicians Determine Your Religious Beliefs”
(<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/11/opinion/religion-republican-democrat.html>)
- Due Friday, October 16
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 9. October 19 – 23

Religion Identity, Affiliation, and Tradition

- Module 9 material
 - *American Grace* 7
 - *American Grace* 8
- Due Friday, October 23
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 10. October 26 – 28

Religion Identity, Affiliation, and Tradition

- Module 10 material
 - *American Grace* 9
 - *From Pews to Polling Places* 6
 - “The religious composition of the two major parties”
(<https://religioninpublic.blog/2019/04/25/the-religious-composition-of-the-two-major-parties/>)
- Due Wednesday, October 28
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 11. November 2 – 6

Religion Identity, Affiliation, and Tradition

- Module 11 material
 - *From Pews to Polling Places* 4
 - *From Pews to Polling Places* 7
 - “Why are Catholics overrepresented in Congress?”
(<https://religioninpublic.blog/2019/03/21/why-are-catholics-overrepresented-in-congress/>)
- Due Friday, November 6
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 12. November 9 – 13

Religion Identity, Affiliation, and Tradition

- Module 12 material:
 - *From Pews to Polling Places* 9
 - *From Pews to Polling Places* 8
 - “100 years ago, American talked about Catholics the way they talk about Muslims today”
(<https://www.vox.com/2017/1/18/14312104/islamophobia-catholics>)
 - “The 2016 Jewish Vote and the Culture Wars”
(<https://religioninpublic.blog/2017/10/31/the-2016-jewish-vote-fragmenting-or-consolidating/>)
- Due Friday, November 13
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 13. November 16 – 20

Religion Identity, Affiliation, and Tradition

- Module 13 material:
 - *From Pews to Polling Places* 5
 - “The two kinds of American Latter-day Saints: a Mormon typology”(<https://religioninpublic.blog/2018/09/26/the-two-kinds-of-american-latter-day-saints-a-mormon-typology>)
 - Writing workshop
- Due Friday, November 20
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 14. November 23 (Thanksgiving break, holiday: November 25 & 27)

- Due Monday, November 23
 - Writing assignment 3

Week 15. November 30 – December 4

Elections, Speeches, & Wrapping Up

- Module 15 material:
 - “Civil Religion in America” by Robert N. Bellah (<https://www-jstor-org.proxy-remote.galib.uga.edu/stable/pdf/20028013.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A21c90a9b5464ed8f036e5c36615c9207>)
 - Speeches by John F. Kennedy, Barack Obama, and Mitt Romney
 - *American Grace* 13
- Due Friday, December 4
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Week 16. December 7 – December 9

- Module 16 material:
 - *American Grace* 14/15
 - Complete course evaluation
- Due Wednesday, December 9
 - Exam 2
 - Submit your assignment for the week
 - Submit your discussion post for the week

Finals period, Friday, December 11 – Thursday, December 17

List of Important Dates

- Email instructor, indicating agreement to terms in syllabus, Friday, August 28
- Writing assignment 1, Friday, September 11 by 5pm
- Writing assignment 2, Friday, October 9 by 5pm
- Writing assignment 3, Monday, November 23 by 5pm
- Exam 1, Friday, September 25, anytime between 8am and 11:59pm
- Exam 2, Wednesday, December 9, anytime between 8am and 11:59pm
- Submit your weekly assignments and discussion responses – typically by 5pm on Friday, but not always!***