

**RELIGION & POLITICS IN AMERICA**  
**Political Science/Religion 325, Spring 2009**  
Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30 – 9:50 am, Old Main 207

Instructor: Dr. Chris Gilbert  
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**Chris's Office Hours:** Monday, 10:30 – 11:25 am, 2:00 – 4:00 pm  
Wednesday, 10:30 – 11:25 am  
and by appointment

**COURSE OVERVIEW:** The phrase "separation of church and state" helps to describe the official relationship between governmental institutions and religious ones, but it does not begin to cover the myriad connections found between organized religion and government at all levels and in all historical periods of American society. This course will consider the political impact of religion in the United States, both historically and today. *The primary goals are first, to understand how the interrelationships between religion and politics in America have developed; and second, to explore how religion in various forms continues to affect American public life, the workings of key political and social institutions, and the lives of citizens.*

**THIS COURSE COUNTS FOR . . .:** This course serves as an introduction to religion and politics for advanced majors in political science and religion, and for any other interested students. It counts as an elective for the political science major and the religion major (Religion, Culture, and Society area). This course also counts for Curriculum I SOSCI general education credit. SOSCI courses are concerned with *human behavior and social institutions*. In this course, by the end of the semester you will have studied the following:

- what social scientists know about how religion affects politics at both individual and group levels;
- how that information has been gathered and organized;
- how these findings bear on social and political issues in contemporary U.S. politics and culture.

**CLASS FORMAT:** The course will be conducted as a seminar; brief lectures will occur occasionally, but primarily we will discuss with one another each class period, usually in class but occasionally online. In order for you to contribute meaningfully and comprehend more in class, reading assignments should always be completed in advance. Questions, comments, and ideas are always welcome in class. My goal is to talk **WITH** you throughout the semester, as opposed to merely talking to you or at you. Make it your goal to talk with, listen to, and learn from each other.

**CLASS HOME PAGE:** <http://www.gustavus.edu/~cgilbert/p325/randp.htm>

This webpage will have links to class handouts, useful websites on religion and politics, and the online discussion forum (blog); midterm and final exam study guides will also be posted here. Bookmark the URL and use it as often as necessary!

**BOOKS:** All of these are available in Book Mark, and all are required.

- Randall Balmer, *God in the White House, a History: How Faith Shaped the Presidency from John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush*
- John C. Green, *The Faith Factor: How Religion Influences American Elections*
- R. Marie Griffith and Melani McAlister, eds., *Religion and Politics in the Contemporary United States*
- Mark A. Noll and Luke E. Harlow, eds., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the Present* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)
- Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (5<sup>th</sup> edition)
- J. Matthew Wilson, ed., *From Pews to Polling Places: Faith and Politics in the American Religious Mosaic*

**OTHER READINGS, HANDOUTS, ETC.:** If there is any other reading (I doubt we need more) I will post it on the class webpage and/or give you a paper copy.

**GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:**

Midterm exam (April 2)	20%
Final exam (May 25)	25%
Church journals (due May 19)	15%
Class participation/attendance	15%
Research paper (due May 20)	25%

**GRADING SCALE:**

A =	93.000 average and above
A- =	90.000 through 92.999
B+ =	87.000 through 89.999
B =	83.000 through 86.999
B- =	80.000 through 82.999
grades C+ and lower calculated on same scale; minimum avg. for passing (D) = 60.000	

**ASSIGNMENT DETAILS**

**MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS.** The midterm exam (which is actually scheduled the week after spring break) covers the first half of the course. The final exam covers the second half and will probably have a short cumulative section, too. Both exams will have a mix of question types (most likely paragraph identifications and essays). Study guides to both exams will be posted on the class website about a week before each exam date; the study guides will contain complete information about the question format and material to be covered.

**RESEARCH PAPER:** “Religion and politics in America” covers a very broad range of topics, and the research paper assignment encourages you to explore any aspect you wish. This can include aspects of religion and politics outside the United States (although the U.S. should somehow still constitute one facet of such a paper). The term "research" means that a personal, reflective essay on some topic is not acceptable; however, your personal reflections and views may be incorporated into this paper in appropriate ways (e.g. making an argument for a specific point of view on some relevant topic). *Discussing the topic in advance with me is not required but may be a smart idea*; I am also very happy to assist you in finding sources.

*Specific requirements for research paper:* 12-15 pages in length, double spaced with normal margins and font size; your paper should also have a title (separate title page is optional). All sources used should be appropriately cited in the body of the paper using any standard citation method (the method is your choice; just use one method consistently and don't leave out the citations!), with a bibliography or works cited page provided at the end. This paper should **not** depend on class readings for the bulk of the material – I expect you to go beyond class materials and find new and additional resources on your topic. Finally, read your paper very, very closely before turning it in; the final product should have as few grammatical and typographical errors as humanly possible!

*Relevant dates:* To help keep you on track, note that the schedule section of the syllabus has three pertinent dates for this assignment:

Thursday, March 19 – submit to me your research paper topic (you can change it after this date, but I do expect you to give me your best guess as of this date)

Thursday, April 30 – submit an initial list of sources you are using/plan to use

Wednesday, May 20 (last day of classes) – papers due by 12 noon

**CHURCH JOURNALS.** You will also be expected to attend some form of religious worship service at least 4 times during the semester; you can certainly attend more. Daily chapel services at Gustavus do not count, nor should Sunday Gustavus chapel services be used. Your goal is to find out what goes on in a congregation that could be considered "political," and to reflect on such activities in your journal entries. We will also discuss these experiences in class and/or online during the semester. You are encouraged to attend church services together with other class members, to experience a variety of faith traditions beyond your own, and/or to stick with several visits to the same church. Listings of St. Peter and Mankato area churches are available in any phone book and the *St. Peter Herald*; many area churches now have service times and other information on websites, too. Several houses of worship are within short walking or driving distance of campus.

Pages 6-7 in this syllabus detail all expectations for the church visits and journal entries.

**ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION.** I expect you to attend every class session and to participate in online discussions when these are assigned; if you cannot attend or post your thoughts, please notify me (in advance when possible) and I will give you opportunity to make up any missed class/online discussion in some reasonable manner of my choosing.

**Participation** in a seminar class certainly involves more than just talking; listening to your classmates and professor, and showing your engagement with the course material and classroom work, are also forms of participation that I will take note of.

One formal way in which everyone will participate: **students will lead class once during the**

**semester, either alone or working with one other student.** Leading class consists of opening class by talking briefly (no more than 2-3 minutes each) about something you found particularly interesting or puzzling about the day's reading, and preparing some activity and/or set of discussion questions to guide that day's session (some set of discussion questions **MUST** be prepared). Do not spend any time summarizing what everyone is expected to have read; assume we have read the material and proceed accordingly. Sign-up for leading class is on a first-come, first-served basis and will be completed by the end of February.

**Online discussions?** Yes. From time to time, and particularly early in the semester, we will 'discuss' online using my blog, which will be linked from the class home page. Online discussions for the most part will **replace** class meetings, although one or two of our online discussions will supplement class meetings. I will post complete instructions for these sessions, which will give you a window of time in which to post your thoughts and to respond to your classmates and to me.

### **OTHER PERTINENT CLASS POLICIES**

*CELL PHONES, IPODS, and other such electronic devices:* Turn them OFF when class is in session – no ringing/vibrating/texting/IM, no distractions for yourself, your classmates, or your professor.

*SCHEDULE CONFLICTS:* Students with advance notice of schedule conflicts (e.g., school-related activities that conflict with our class time) should present a list of these to Chris at the beginning of the semester. There should be few or no schedule conflicts that cannot be resolved in ways acceptable to you and to me – the key is early notification. The Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the *College Catalog* exists to inform you of your obligations and to help us work out any problems.

*POLICY ON EXCEPTIONS:* It is expected that all exams will be taken at the appointed time and all other work will be completed by indicated due dates. Because of events beyond your control (e.g. a major illness), I realize that sometimes this is not possible despite good-faith efforts on your part. Therefore, exceptions and extensions will be considered on an individual basis.

**NOTE: nonacademic personal commitments and end-of-semester travel plans are NOT valid reasons for requesting extensions or exceptions. Nor are activities scheduled well in advance, e.g. extracurricular activities or obligations for other classes.** As with class attendance, please inform Chris well in advance of such conflicts. This policy is consistent with the Academic Schedule Conflicts policy found in the *College Catalog*.

*ACCOMMODATIONS for students with documented disabilities:* Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990) work together to ensure "reasonable accommodation" and non-discrimination for students with disabilities in higher education. A student who has a physical, psychiatric/emotional, medical, learning, or attentional disability that may have an effect on the student's ability to complete assigned course work should contact Laurie Bickett, the Disability Services Coordinator in the Advising Center ([lbickett@gustavus.edu](mailto:lbickett@gustavus.edu) or x6286), who will review the concerns and decide with the student

what accommodations are necessary. Following this review, the student and I will determine specific, reasonable accommodations for our course, maintaining confidentiality throughout the process.

*ACADEMIC HONESTY:* Plagiarism or cheating in any form corrupts the intent of all that we do as a community of scholars. Consistent with the Gustavus Academic Honesty Policy (found in the *College Catalog*) and the Honor Code (also in the *College Catalog*), the policies and procedures for this course are as follows:

- Violations of the Academic Honesty Policy will result in at least a grade of 0 for the specific assignment, and failure for the course in the case of egregious violations. Students accused and/or penalized for these violations, AND students who become aware of such violations, have specific rights and responsibilities, as outlined in the Honor Code section of the *College Catalog*.
- Each exam and graded paper will contain the statement "**On my honor, I pledge that I have not given, received, or tolerated others' use of unauthorized aid in completing this work.**" Students are required to sign on each exam or paper; typing the statement on a paper submitted electronically is equivalent to signing.
- Students CAN consult with each another and with the professor while working on assignments and preparing for exams; these are examples of "authorized aid." Individual papers should consist only of each student's (or students', if the assignment is a group project) own work.
- Under the Honor Code, proctoring of exams is at the instructor's discretion. Generally I prefer to be present during exams in order to answer questions that may arise.

## GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH JOURNALS

As noted earlier in the syllabus, you are expected to attend some form of religious worship service **at least four times during the semester**. Your goal is to observe what goes on in a church that could be considered "political" in any way, and to record and reflect on these observations in your journal entries. In effect, you are doing field work to see religion and politics (if present – sometimes it will not be present) within congregations, using these personal observations to further stimulate and illuminate our class discussions about this subject.

You are encouraged to attend services together with other class members, to experience faith traditions besides your own, or to stick with making several visits to the same church. Attending your "home church" back home is acceptable and students have often found it interesting to observe their "home church" through the lenses described here.

### *General guidelines*

Journals may be handwritten (legibly!) or typed. It is usually a very good idea to include printed material you obtain at the church - the service bulletin or other information you find there. If you attend the same service with other class members, it is acceptable for you to "share the load" with each person looking for different types of political manifestations, but each person should write his/her own comprehensive journal entry for the visit. Also, if there are only limited amounts of some printed material, it would be ok if only one of you took the material and shared with other classmates, so there are copies left for the congregation!

Remember that even though you have been given a specific task, never forget that you are attending a church service! You should participate in the worship only to the extent that you feel comfortable. Be respectful of the practices and actions of the congregation members. Note taking during the service (in order to remember things for later) should be done **very discreetly** if at all (best advice: listen a lot, but don't try to write a lot on the spot; this has worked well for students in the past).

Finally, while your journal will include some of your personal reactions to what you have observed, this isn't a "service review": you should **not** focus on critiquing the minister's sermon, praising the service music, or criticizing the political messages uncovered; your focus is on observation, recording, and relating what you see to what we are reading and discussing in class.

**DUE DATES:** Please make at least one visit and turn in at least the first entry (based on guidelines below) by **Tuesday, March 31**. At least one more visit and entry should be turned in by the **end of April**, with the entire journal (including these first entries) due on **Tuesday, May 19** (our last class meeting).

## GUIDELINES FOR CHURCH VISITS/JOURNAL ENTRIES

### FOR ALL VISITS

- service date and time
- name and location of congregation (e.g. First Lutheran Church, St. Peter)
- classmates also present (if observed)

**QUESTIONS FOR FIRST VISIT** (and for any visit to a new house of worship; repeat visits to the same place can follow these general guidelines without repeating everything)

- Who was there? Generally describe the *composition* of the congregation and the service leaders (rough estimate of attendance, how full was sanctuary; audience breakdown by age, gender, race; who led the service).
- What political *symbols* were present in the sanctuary or elsewhere in the building? Specify where these were located.
- Was any printed *political information* available? Look for a table with newsletters, denomination publications or other handouts, bulletin boards, announcements in the church bulletin - anything that informs congregation members about some political issue or event.
- Is there evidence of any *groups* within the congregation devoted to some political issue or activity? The service bulletin, newsletter, or church website may list such groups and their events for the upcoming week or month.
- Did the *sermon* have any political content? Be as specific as possible here – what did the minister/priest/rabbi/preacher say that you considered to be political in any way? Also try to give a sense of whether these political messages (if you heard any) were a major or minor theme of the sermon.
- Did any other *parts of the worship service* have political content? For example, many churches pray for national leaders, sometimes for the U.S. president specifically.
- How similar or different was this worship service (all of it, not just the political stuff) from your usual worship experience? I am especially interested in your perceptions if/when the church you visit is of a different denomination or faith tradition than your own, and whether you feel your observations and reactions were in any way affected by your own religious beliefs and background (or by your lack of these, if applicable).
- If you discussed any of these items with your fellow classmates who also attended, it is fine (but not necessary) to tell me what you talked about and what others perceived.
- Finally, was there more or less political content than you expected to find, and what was your *personal reaction* to whatever political content you observed? This may be a good place to bring in any readings or discussions we have had in class, too, that might be relevant.

## DAILY SCHEDULE - TOPICS, READING ASSIGNMENTS

The web version of this syllabus will have links to any handouts distributed in class; click on links in the "Topics covered" column for the handouts. Exam study guides will also be linked from the web version of the schedule below. If this schedule changes for some reason, the web version will be changed and should be considered the "official" schedule. I will always alert you (ahead of time whenever possible) if/when our schedule changes.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topics covered</i>	<i>Readings/activity/announcements</i>
T February 10	Intro to religion and U.S. politics	None
Th February 12	Religion in America, intersections with politics	Wald 1, 2, 3; online discussion of readings
T February 17	Historical roots, part I	Noll 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; in-class group discussions, to be summarized and continued online
Th February 19	Religion, politics, and impending civil war	Noll 6, 7, 8; online discussion of readings
T February 24	Post-Civil War movements and changes	Noll 9, 10, 11; in-class group discussions, to be summarized and continued online
Th February 26	Church-state relations, Supreme Court rulings	Wald 4; Griffith 39-65; Chris should be back today, online discussion if Chris is not back
T March 3	Religion and political activism	Wald 5, 6; Wilson 1
Th March 5	Religion and public opinion	Wald 7; Green 2, 3
T March 10	Catholic political behavior	Wald 9 (pp. 247-267); Noll 15; Wilson 4; Griffith 143-155  Dates to lead class begin today
Th March 12	Presidential politics, JFK through Ford	Balmer 1, 2, Appendix 1, 2, 3
T March 17	Evangelical political behavior, part I	Balmer 3, Appendix 4; Wald 8; Noll 13
Th March 19	Evangelicals, part II	Noll 14; Griffith 119-142, 465-489; Balmer 4, Appendix 5  Midterm exam study guide posted by today; submit research paper topic to Chris by today

March 21-29	<b>No class – Spring break!</b>	
T March 31	Mainline Protestants in retreat	Wald 9 (pp. 267-274); Wilson 2, 3 First church journal due today
Th April 2	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	
T April 7	Jewish political behavior	Wald 9 (pp. 274-282); Wilson 8; Griffith 281-306
Th April 9	Women, religion and politics	Wald 11 (pp. 313-329); Noll 16; Griffith 97-118
T April 14	Mormons and Muslims	Wald 10; Wilson 5, 9; Griffith 67-96
Th April 16	African Americans, Latinos	Wilson 6, 7; Griffith 259-280, 331-355
T April 21	Gay and lesbian activism, secular Americans, and Oprah's book club	Wald 11 (pp. 329-347); Wilson 10; Griffith 491-515
Th April 23	Recent presidents	Balmer 5, 6, Appendix 6, 7; Noll 17B, 17C
T April 28	Religion and U.S. foreign policy	Griffith 185-209, 233-257, 307-329
Th April 30	Religion and politics in congregations	One reading to be posted; in-class group discussions, to be summarized and continued online  Submit research paper source list to Chris by today  Second church journal due by today
T May 5	Religion and the 2004 election, part I	Green 1, 4, 5
Th May 7	Religion and the 2004 election, part II	Green 6, 7; one reading to be posted
T May 12	Religion and the 2008 election	Green 8; other readings to be posted
Th May 14	Final considerations, part I: projecting the future of religion and politics in America	Noll 19, 20; Griffith 357-383, 443-463  Final exam study guide posted by today

T May 19	Final considerations, part II	Wald 12; Wilson 11  Course evaluation today in class  <b>Final church journals due today in class (submit all)</b>  <b>Research paper due Wednesday, May 20 at noon</b>
<b>Monday, May 25</b>	<b>FINAL EXAM 8:00 – 10:00 am Old Main 207</b>	