

**University of Toronto**

**Department of Political Science  
Department for the Study of Religion**

**JPR 458/2058 – POSTSECULAR POLITICAL THOUGHT  
SYLLABUS 2017  
Spring Term - Tuesday, 4:00-6:00, Room 317 JHB**

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**Hours:** Weds. 9:30 -11 or by appointment

**THEMES:**

If the genealogy of political modernity has its roots in Europe, its institutions and central concepts are now universally shared. Thinking about political life anywhere in the world today thus means thinking about the ways in which political concepts such as the state, sovereignty, democracy, citizenship, civil society, the public sphere, the subject, the individual, the human, human rights and the rule of law, remain tied not only to long European intellectual and theological traditions, but also a process of elaboration through colonial conquest and imperial rule. One of the most enduring conceits of European thought is the idea that political modernity is entirely a European creation, as if its concomitance with imperialism, European encounters and engagements with colonial ‘others’ were a mere footnote in the story of its intellectual development. Another enduring hallmark of the Enlightenment heritage is the assumed centrality, indeed necessity, of a secular, rationalist model of the human for progressive and democratic thought, and of the ideological and institutional arrangements of secularism. For most of the 20th century, leading social and political theorists worked under the assumption that secularization and the decline of religion would be an inevitable, and desirable, global consequence of political ‘modernization’. However the resurgence of religion as a public, political force around the world has helped reveal the ideological or “mythological” nature of the secularization narrative. The ongoing salience of religion, the visibility of old and new politico-religious entanglements, especially as read in the light of over a century of engaged colonial and postcolonial scholarship, profoundly challenge these assumptions, and open the question of the “postsecular.” Post-secular ‘criticism’ entails, among other things, an interrogation of the post-Enlightenment assumptions and binaries that inform the doctrine of secularization and the category of the secular, new questions about history, time and the subject, and a questioning of the politics of scholarly ‘religion-making’. The urgency of this interrogation is underscored by a growing crisis in democratic politics and the inability of liberalism to respond to the challenges of the religious.

The term “postsecular” is highly ambiguous, employed in multiple ways across a range of disciplines, and thus may prove to have little critical or analytic value. Here it simply stands as a place-holder that might mark a new theoretical ‘problem-space’ that prompts a range of questions: about the relationship between the religious and the political, about colonial and post-colonial difference and history, about the politics of knowledge-making, about reading ‘in translation’, about the ‘grounds’ of comparison, about expanding lexicons of political and religious reflection, among others.

## **AIMS:**

This interdisciplinary course will take-on the problem-space of postsecular thought from the perspective of the shared global time-space of the colonial and postcolonial, by focusing on thinkers, texts and movements in the colonial and postcolonial world that offer a direct, and often radical engagement with European, colonial and imperial categories, theoretical traditions, institutions and modes of governance. The aim is to enable the recognition of political modernity as a violent venture whose universalization does not entail a relation of exteriority between a “hyper-real” ‘West’ and the ‘rest’, but rather a complex, albeit profoundly unequal, collaboration. Such a relation of exteriority is the colonial premise par excellence, and lives on even today in many intellectual projects in political theory and religious studies that have as their aim to ‘de-orientalize’, expand, diversify, or decolonize their fields. The course aims are considerably more modest than an “impossible” project of “provincializing Europe,” since, as Chakrabarty argues, such a project refers to a history “which does not yet exist”, and “‘Europe’ cannot after all be provincialized within the institutional site of the university.” Rather, the course hopes to open students up to the problems and questions such a project poses, and to:

1. introduce students to a selection of seminal thinkers, texts and movements in the colonial and post-colonial world, attending to the ways in which they refuse, contest or engage with the secular premises of modern political concepts and institutions, elaborating new and challenging visions of the political in the light of pre-colonial and colonial histories and religious traditions.

2. consider how to read these thinkers and contemplate this period of history in order to gain critical purchase on the pieties of secular rationalism, political liberalism and the futures of democracy, emancipation, justice.

3. begin to learn how to read differently, with attentiveness to the implicit political and epistemological assumptions of projects of comparison and translation and to consider what is or is not required to read, understand or “know” these texts, and what such understanding demands of us ethically and politically, as well as intellectually.

## **REQUIREMENTS:**

### **1. 5 response papers to readings, maximum 700 words.**

**Weight: 30%**

Students will write bi-weekly critical reflections based on the week’s readings. The object of these reflection papers is to: 1. demonstrate your grasp of central issues in the week’s readings; 2. bring the readings into critical conversation with one another and with the central themes of the week and the questions opened up by the first two weeks’ readings; 3. develop a critical evaluation of one or more of the readings’ central contributions. Papers should NOT summarize readings, but demonstrate a critical engagement with them. Response papers must be posted on Blackboard’s Discussion Forum **no later than 6:00 p.m. on the day before class** and are to be read by all clas members before critical discussion. You must indicate which group you intend to post in before the second week of class – the class will be divided into two equal groups. Group 1 will begin posting in Week 2, Group 2 in Week 3. Once you have opted for a group, you must stick to the bi-weekly schedule.

### **2. Active participation in discussion**

**Weight: 15%**

Students are expected to attend every class prepared to critically discuss the required readings, and to participate fully in the discussion through both attentive listening and speaking. Missed classes require a documented excuse.

**3. Final Paper, 20-25 pp. Due: at 5 p.m. April 11**

**Weight: 55%**

**Late work and papers will NOT be accepted.** If you require an extension for serious, documentable reasons, you must arrange it in good time with the instructor.

**WEB SITE & EMAIL:**

The Blackboard web site will be used to post the syllabus, some readings, response papers, discussions, announcements, and other relevant items. You must have a valid UTOR email registered on Blackboard and should consult Blackboard regularly. I'm happy to answer emails about the course, but please don't expect me to respond to requests for information available on Blackboard. Matters of substance concerning the course material, essays or personal issues should be discussed in person during office hours, or by appointment.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will be dealt with accordingly. Students must read "Tips for Avoiding Academic Misconduct" <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students/avoid-misconduct/tips-for-avoiding-academic-misconduct> and the University's "How not to Plagiarize" document, <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize> and are encouraged to discuss with the instructors if they are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty. Plagiarism does not only apply to essays, but of course the reading responses as well.

**UNDERGRADUATE SECTION POLICY:**

This is primarily a graduate seminar with an undergraduate section, and thus the level and quantity of the readings are primarily selected with graduate students in mind. Undergraduates in the JPR458 section are expected to do the same amount of reading and written work as graduate students, and participate as actively in discussion. The grading scale will be modified to take into account their undergraduate status. Undergraduates who are willing and able to put in the extra time and effort will find being in a class at this level a very exciting and enriching learning experience.

**READING LIST: (SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION/UPDATING)**

**All readings listed below are required, and you must read all the readings for each week before the class.** Readings average around 150 or so pages per week, so plan your reading in advance. There will be a course Tumblr where you will find many of the readings – instructions on how to access it will be given in class. Those not posted there or on Blackboard are available online through the library, or as otherwise indicated.

**Much of the material is challenging, and you must be prepared to read and re-read attentively. Your ability to discuss in class and your participation grade depend on a good familiarity with the readings. Do not come to class without the week's reading materials, as we will refer to the texts throughout the class.**

## WEEKLY THEMES AND READINGS:

### Week 1: Jan. 10 - Introduction to course themes.

### Week 2: Jan. 17 – Problems, Questions, Methods I

Jurgen Habermas. “Notes on a post-secular society” 18/06/2008

<http://www.signandsight.com/features/1714.html>

Charles Taylor “Why We Need a Radical Reconceptualization of Secularism” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) pp. 34-59.

James Beckford “SSSR Presidential Address: Public Religions and the Postsecular: Critical Reflections.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*. (2012) 51(1):1–19

Arvind-Pal Mandair, Markus Dressler “Modernity, Religion-Making and the Postsecular” in Mandair, Dressler, *Secularism and Religion Making* (Oxford: OUP, 2011) 3-24.

Ananda Abeysekara “Thinking the Un-improvable, Thinking the Un-inheritable”, and “Aporias of Secularism” in *The Politics of Postsecular Religion* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 2008). 1-83.

### Week 3: Jan. 24 - Problems, Questions, Methods II

Dipesh Chakrabarty, Introduction (to page 16), and Chapter 1 “Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History”, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. (Princeton: PUP, 2000) 3-16; 27- 46.

Arvind-Pal Mandair “Mono-theo-lingualism: Religion, Language and Subjectivity in Colonial North India” in *Religion and the Spectre of the West: Sikhism, India, Postcoloniality and the Politics of Translation*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009) 46-105.

Tejaswini Niranjana “Introduction” *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1992). 1-46

Andrew March, “What Is Comparative Political Theory?” *Review of Politics* 71(2009): 531-65.

Farah Godrej, “Response to ‘What is Comparative Political Theory?’” *Review of Politics* 71(2009): 567-582.

### Week 4: Jan. 31 – Ghandi on Swaraj, Democracy and Ethics

Mohandas Gandhi, *"Hind Swaraj" and Other Writings*. Ed. Anthony Parel. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009 (available online through UofT Libraries). Selections from *Hind Swaraj*

Akeel Bilgrami, “Gandhi, the Philosopher”. *Economic and Political Weekly* 38/39 (2003): 4159-4165.

U.S. Mehta, “Gandhi on Democracy, Politics and the Ethics of Everyday Life”, in Faisal Devji, Shruti Kapila, eds. *Political Thought in Action, The Bhagavad Gita and Modern India*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2013) 88–106.

### **Week 5: Feb. 7 – The Bhagavad Gita and Modern Political Thought**

Mohandas Gandhi *The Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2009) Available online. Selections.

From Faisal Devji, Shruti Kapila, eds. *Political Thought in Action, The Bhagavad Gita and Modern India*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2013). Online through the Library. Also available online as a special edition of *Modern Intellectual History*, Volume 7, Number 10, 2010:

F. Devji and S. Kapila, "Introduction" ix-xv

D. Chakrabarty, & R. Majumdar, "Gandhi's Gita and Politics as Such", 66–87.

F. Devji, "Morality in the Shadow of Politics", 107–126.

A. Kumar, "Ambedkar's Inheritances". 127–154

V. Chaturvedi, "Rethinking Knowledge with Action: V. D. Savarkar, the Bhagavad Gita and Histories of Warfare", 155–176

S. Kapila, "A History of Violence", 177–199.

### **Week 6: Feb. 14 – Reconstructing Islam, Imagining Pakistan**

Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*, with an Introduction by Javed Majeed, (Stanford University Press, 2013). Selections

Wael Hallaq "What is Shari'a?" *Yearbook of Islamic and Middle Eastern Law*, Vol. XII (2007): 151-180

TBA

### **Feb. 21 – Reading Week. No Class**

### **Week 7: Feb. 28 – Emergent Islamist Thought**

From *Princeton readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, eds. Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Zaman. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009):

Introduction – 1-46

Chapter 2 - Hasan Al-Bana, 1906-1949; 'Toward the Light' – 49-56

Chapter 3 – Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, 1903-1979; 'The Islamic Law' – 56-79

Roxanne Euben "In Praise of Disorder: The Untidy Terrain of Islamist Political Thought," in *Radical Futures Past: Untimely Essays in Political Theory*, ed. Romand Coles, Mark Reinhardt, and George Shulman. (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 2014) [https://www.academia.edu/5239753/In\\_Praise\\_of\\_Disorder\\_The\\_Untidy\\_Terrain\\_of\\_Islamist\\_Political\\_Thought](https://www.academia.edu/5239753/In_Praise_of_Disorder_The_Untidy_Terrain_of_Islamist_Political_Thought)

TBA

### **Week 8: Mar. 7 – Sayyid Qutb, Radicalism and the Limits of Rationalism**

Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (available online, edition TBA)

Introduction to Qutb from *In the Shade of the Qur'an*. in *Princeton readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, eds. Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Zaman. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009)

Roxanne Euben *The Enemy in the Mirror: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Limits of Modern Rationalism*. (Princeton: PUP, 1999) Selections

**Week 9: Mar. 14 – The Islamic Revolution: State and Democracy**

“Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini 1902-1989”, Chapter 6. *Princeton readings in Islamist Thought: Texts and Contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, eds. Roxanne Euben and Muhammad Zaman. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009): 155-162.

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini *Islamic Government* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1981) Selections

‘Abdolkarim Souroush *Reason, Freedom and Democracy in Islam* (Oxford: OUP, 2000) Selections.

TBA

**Week 10: Mar. 20 – Indigenous thought from Turtle Island**

TBA

**Week 11: Mar. 28 – Liberation Theology in Latin America**

Gustavo Gutierrez *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, Salvation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1988 [1971]) Selections

Enrique Dussel *Ethics of Liberation: In the Age of Globalization and Exclusion* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013) “Introduction: World History of Ethical Systems” 1-52.

**Week 12: Apr. 4 - The Pentecostal ‘Revolution’ in Africa**

Ruth Marshall *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009) Selections

Nimi Wariboko *Nigerian Pentecostalism* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2014). Selections