

University of Toronto
Department of Political Science
Department for the Study of Religion

JPR374 Religion and Power in the Postcolony Fall 2023

Time: Tuesday, 5-7pm

Instructor: Sean Capener

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Office Hours: TBA

TA: Christina Pasqua

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND AIMS

Over the past two decades, many post-colonial societies have experienced a religious effervescence unseen since the colonial period. Religious violence has risen significantly and religious discourses increasingly colonize public spaces. The most visible and successful forms have emerged from within transnational Christianity and Islam, yet this period has also witnessed the dramatic rise of variety of other religious and spiritual forms. This course will examine the relationship between religion and power in post-colonial contexts, with a view to better understanding these recent developments and the histories that have contributed to them.

Drawing on readings from politics, sociology, anthropology, post-colonial studies and history, the course will introduce students to central approaches to understanding the relationship between religion and power in post-colonial societies, focusing on a critical and comparative understanding of the various ways in which religion has been crucially embedded in cultural, social and political processes. Students will acquire a critical understanding of the interplay in post-colonial societies between religion and a variety of themes and issues: colonialism, anti-colonialism, postcolonialism, decolonialism; secularization theory, modernization and development theory; race, gender, ethnicity, identity politics; transnational religious movements, the globalization of capitalism; violence and terror, peace and justice. Students will be introduced to a variety of religious forms and practices, with an emphasis on Christianity and Islam, but also forms of spiritual practice such as witchcraft and magic. Students will gain insight into the place of religion in post-colonial societies, as well as a more critical understanding of the role religion plays in contemporary political and social issues in the West.

This course is offered jointly by the Departments of Political Science and Study of Religion, and seeks to transcend disciplinary boundaries, creating a critical and open

learning environment where students will be enriched by a broad range of approaches to the issues, as well as exchanges with their peers from other areas of study.

LEARNING

As this is a third year course, students should be ready to take active responsibility for their own learning. The instructor's pedagogical approach is one of learning facilitation, rather than the imparting of wisdom from on high. The more active a role you take in the course, through reading, discussion, writing, research, reflection and questioning, the more you'll get out of it and the better you do. I am happy to meet during office hours to discuss aspects of the course content or themes on which you would like clarification or further discussion.

REQUIREMENTS

1. Course Structure

This course is structured on the model of a guided seminar. Most weeks will see our two-hour session divided roughly in half. For the first portion of class, I'll give a brief lecture on topics addressed by our readings, providing historical and political context for the readings where necessary and pointing to a few central themes, concepts, and issues that our readings are either responding to or putting on the table. For the second portion of class, I'll open it up to you to discuss the readings themselves.

2. Reading

Careful and critical reading of the assigned materials before class is essential. You will not be able to complete the weekly assignments or participate in discussions without a good understanding of the required readings. Please bring your reading materials with you on the day they will be discussed.

3. Attendance/Discussion: 10%

You will be expected to raise questions, share your knowledge and views with other class members and actively participate in class discussion. In the second hour of our meeting, discussion will focus on the week's postings, and students should be ready to ask questions, be involved in group discussions, and engage with the materials. For those unable or uncomfortable with the live participation format, there is a Blog set up on Quercus where you can post your ideas and reflections.

If you become ill and it affects your ability to do your academic work, consult me right away. Normally, I will ask you for documentation in support of your specific medical circumstances. This documentation can be an Absence Declaration (via ACORN) or the University's Verification of Student Illness or Injury (VOI) form. The VOI indicates the impact and severity of the illness, while protecting your privacy about the details of the nature of the illness. If you cannot submit

a VOI due to limits on terms of use, you can submit a different form (like a letter from a doctor), as long as it is an original document, and it contains the same information as the VOI (including dates, academic impact, practitioner's signature, phone and registration number). For more information on the VOI, please see <http://www.illnessverification.utoronto.ca>. For information on Absence Declaration Tool for A&S students, please see <https://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/absence>. If you get a concussion, break your hand, or suffer some other acute injury, you should register with Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

**4. Response Papers – 2 per term – 500-750 words/2-3 pages double-spaced. 40%
Due October 17 and November 21.**

You will be responsible for submitting two short papers, each of them a critical reflection on the ways in which the reading and the primary material (text, image, video etc.) relate to one another and help us understand the theoretical arguments and their implications. If you want to get extra points, you may also choose your own primary material to relate to the reading. Be sure to critically engage with the material, not simply sum up the reading. As short as they might seem, each paper is meant to be a coherent and elegant piece of writing. They will be graded on the quality of the writing and critical engagement. Examples will be available on Quercus.

5. Final Research Essay Proposal- 10% Due November 14

You will hand in a Thesis Statement and Paper Outline of no more than 500 words accompanied by an Annotated Bibliography (3-4 sentences per work) including at least 6 academic articles or books. (The annotations are not included in the 500 word count) These outlines/bibliographies will be group work-shopped in class on November 28.

6. Final Research Essay: 3,000-3,500 words, or 12-15 pp. 40% Due December 5

Students will write a research-based paper investigating one of the issues or topics covered during the term, giving you the opportunity for exploring it in more depth, or a related topic. Students are expected to develop their own essay topics. They should take up some question or argument with reference to the intersection of religion and power in colonial and postcolonial contexts. Essays may either be predominantly theoretical or empirical and they may focus on one particular setting (country, region, institution), event or issue or compare two or three – though it is important to keep the topic focused and manageable. More detailed instructions will be posted on Quercus and discussed before Reading Week. Essays will be no more than 3,500 words, or 12-15 pp double-spaced.

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 also more informal forms of writing.

SUBMITTING THE FINAL ESSAY

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

Students are permitted, under our conditions of use, to opt-out of using the University’s plagiarism detection tool. If you plan to do so, please contact me well in advance of submission to make alternative arrangements.

EVALUATION

Participation	10%
Reflection Papers (2 papers per term)	40%
Final Essay Outline	10%
Final Essay	40%

ESSAY WRITING:

Clear, well-organized, and articulate writing is an indispensable feature of the analytical process, and this course assumes that you are prepared to work on improving your capacity to communicate in prose. Please consult the “Writing at U of T” link www.utoronto.ca/writing to access a wide array of university-wide resources. Each college also has a writing workshop, and I will be available during my office hours for consultation on any part of the essay-writing process. Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will not be tolerated. Trust your own ability to think and write, and use this course as an opportunity to refine your skills.

REQUIRED READING LIST:

All reading listed under each week is required reading. In addition to the items listed, a secondary primary source item may be posted on Quercus and treated as required for each week. Content is subject to modification. You can find all the course readings posted each week on Quercus.

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

September 12: Introduction

Introduction, presentation of course themes, review of requirements.

September 19: The Colonial Mirror

G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 173-190.

Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), 1-15; 94-108.

September 26: Religion and the Rise of Racial Capitalism

Sylvia Wynter, "New Seville and the Conversion Experience of Bartolomé de Las Casas, Part One," *Jamaica Journal* 17, no. 2 (1984): 25-32;

Sylvia Wynter, "New Seville and the Conversion Experience of Bartolomé de Las Casas, Part Two," *Jamaica Journal* 17, no. 3 (1984): 46-55.

October 3: Hall of Mirrors, Play of Light

Michael Taussig *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, (University of Chicago Press, 1987) Chapter 1 – Culture of Terror, Space of Death. pp. 1-36.

October 10: Consuming the Past

Christopher Bracken. Selections from *The Potlatch Papers: A Colonial Case History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). pp. 1-3, 167-208, 227-23.

October 17: Do You Believe in Magic? – **First Reflection Due**

Adam Ashforth. Chap. 11 in *Witchcraft, Violence and Democracy in South Africa*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) pp. 248-273.

October 24: Political Spiritualities

Ruth Marshall "Destroying Arguments and Capturing Thoughts: Spiritual Warfare Prayer as Global Praxis." *Journal of Religious and Political Practice*. 92-113.

October 31: So-Called Syncretism

Colin Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 237-256.

Aisha Beliso-De Jesús, *Electric Santería: Racial and Sexual Assemblages of Transnational Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). "Chapter Four: Scent of Empire," 147-182.

November 7: READING WEEK – NO CLASS

November 14: Can Settler Colonialism Have a 'Post-?' – Paper Proposal Due

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40;

Tapji Garba and Sara-Maria Sorentino, "Slavery is a Metaphor: A Critical Commentary on Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's 'Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,'" *Antipode* 52 (2020): 764-782.

November 21: The Politics of Piety – Second Reflection Due

Saba Mahmood Chapter 1, "The Subject of Freedom" *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). pp. 1-39.

November 28: Paper/Proposal Workshopping – No Reading

December 5: Shoot Sartre! ' – Final Paper Due

Houria Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us: Toward a Politics of Revolutionary Love* (South Pasadena: Semiotext(e), 2017). "Shoot Sartre!," 19-32; "Allahou akbar!," 127-140.