

University of Toronto

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

**JPR 419 SECULARISM AND RELIGION
SYLLABUS 2019**

**Fall Term - Monday, 6:00-8:00
OISE, Room 7-192**

Instructor: Sean Capener
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Hours: TBA or by appointment
Office: TBA

THEMES:

Secularism and the secularization narrative are at the heart of conceptions of Western modernity and the West's political self-understanding. For most of the 21st century, leading social theorists worked under the assumption that the decline of religion was an inevitable global consequence of 'modernization'. However, the failure of the secularization narrative is increasingly evident, especially in the post-9/11 world - with the internal religious diversification of Western societies, the resurgence of religious voices in public spheres and policy debates across the globe, and the growth of religiously motivated violence. This context has prompted a broad questioning of the post-Enlightenment assumptions that inform the doctrine of secularization and the category of the secular. But what does 'secularism' really entail - as a historical development, a mode of experiencing the world, as a political doctrine? What sort of presumptions about religion does secularism imply? How do the cardinal political values associated with secularism - freedom of conscience and speech, toleration, emancipation, human rights - relate to religion and maintain an ongoing relationship with it?

This seminar will engage with this broad questioning by revisiting the genealogy of secular political doctrines born in the early modern European engagement with religious difference and consolidated in the 19th and 20th centuries. We will explore the ways that secularism arises from *within* Christianity, and cannot simply be thought according to a subtractive logic of the absence of religion. Why does secularism appear as a necessary condition for a modern democratic nation-state, its rights and freedoms? What are the implications of the dominant liberal terms in which secularism is to solve the problem of difference in modernity? How can liberalism adjudicate the difference between the religious and non-religious? If the Western definition of secularism is neither culturally nor religiously neutral, how has the universalization of the Western political model been effected through imperial or violent relations with non-Western others? Are there other models of 'secularism' or non-secular models of toleration and freedom or democratic politics? What might be the future of secularism at a global level?

We will explore these questions through interdisciplinary readings in social, political and cultural theory and the examination of historical and contemporary case studies from North America, Europe, and North Africa.

This course is jointly offered by the Departments of Political Science and Study of Religion, and seeks to create an innovative space for critical interdisciplinary reflection and debate.

REQUIREMENTS:

Reading all of the week's assigned readings, attendance and active participation in every class are required.

1. 2 response papers to readings, maximum 1500 words. Weight: 20%

Students will write two critical reflections based the week's readings. Reflections should focus on a single reading from each of the selected weeks. The object of these reflection papers is to: 1. demonstrate your grasp of the central issues in the week's readings; 2. bring the readings into critical conversation with one another and/or with the central themes of the course; 3. develop a critical evaluation of the reading's central arguments. Response papers must be posted on Blackboard no later than noon on the day before class and are to be read by all class members before presentation and critical discussion. One of your response papers will be submitted in the week you are making your in-class presentation, and will serve as the basis for your presentation. The other can be submitted in the week of your choice.

2. In-class presentation: Weight: 15%

Beginning in Week 2, students will make a 15-minute in-class presentation based on their critical reflection paper on one of the week's readings. Students are encouraged to use their response paper as the basis for their presentation, but should not simply read their paper. (Bear in mind that speaking for 15 minutes is roughly equivalent 7 double-spaced pages of text) Students must be prepared to field questions about their presentations from the instructor and their peers. There will be 2 student presentations in each class beginning in week 2 until week 11. You **may not change weeks** once you have signed up for a specific day. Weeks will be assigned in Week 1.

3 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 Research Paper, 20 pp. Due: 11:59 pm December 4 Weight: 50%

A one page paper proposal is due on **November 25** including a thesis statement or organizing question, a short outline, and a brief annotated bibliography (a few sentences each) of at least 5 primary and/or secondary academic sources. You are free to choose any topic that relates to the broad course themes and issues.

LATE POLICY: Late papers will NOT be accepted. If you require an extension for health or similar emergency reasons, you may arrange it in good time with the instructor. Please

talk to me as soon as you know there may be a problem—it is easier for me to help you if you come to me a week before a deadline than a week after.

WEB SITE & EMAIL:

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

SUBMITTING THE FINAL ESSAY: TURNITIN.COM

Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments and essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their work to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site. See also <http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/academicintegrity/turnitin/guide-students.htm>.
Reminder: Final Essay is due on Turnitin.com by 11:59 p.m. on December 16.

Students have the right to refuse to use Turnitin.com. In this case, students will be expected to submit an electronic copy of their essay to the professor by email, accompanied by their outline, thesis statement and annotated bibliography, as well all their notes and rough drafts

READING LIST: (SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION)

All listed readings are required. Those not posted on Blackboard or on the course Tumblr are available online through the library.

An excellent supplementary resource is the Social Science Research Council's blog on religion in the public sphere, *The Immanent Frame*. www.blogs.ssrc.org/tif. It publishes essays and exchanges, critical commentary on academic questions and current events, as well as substantial discussions of central publications in the field.

Much of the material is challenging, and you must be prepared to read and re-read attentively. 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:

September 9 - Introduction to Course Themes

September 16 - A Secular or Post-Secular Age?

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.

Wendy Brown "The Sacred, the Secular and the Profane: Charles Taylor and Karl Marx" *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. (Harvard University Press, 2010). p. 83-104.

Saba Mahmood "Can Secularism be Other-wise?" in *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age*. (Harvard University Press, 2010). 282-300.

September 23 - Toleration and its limits in Early Modern Europe I

Bernard Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). Introduction, Chapters 9, 11.

Perez Zagorin. *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West*, (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 2003). Chapters 1, 3, 6.

September 30 - Toleration and its limits in Early Modern Europe II

Teresa Bejan, *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U. Press, 2017). Introduction, Chapters 2, 4.

John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*

October 7 - "Enthusiasts and Fanatics": Enlightenment and the Limits of Reason

Jean-Jacques Rousseau *The Social Contract*. Book IV, Chapter VIII - "Civil Religion"

Voltaire. *Traité sur la tolérance à l'occasion de la mort de Jean Calas*. [Treatise on Tolerance on the Occasion of the Death of Jean Calas from the Judgment Rendered in Toulouse.](#)

G. A. Pocock, '[Enthusiasm: The Antiself of Enlightenment](#)',  *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 1/2

October 14 – Thanksgiving Holiday (No Class)

October 21 – On the Jewish Question

Karl Marx “On the Jewish Question” in *The Marx- Engels Reader* and online:
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/>

Wendy Brown “Rights and Identity in Late Modernity: Revisiting the “Jewish Question” in *Identity, Politics and Rights* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994). pp. 85-130.

October 28 – The Catastrophic Century

Hannah Arendt – *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Part I - Selections, Part III - Selections

Judith Butler “Is Judaism Zionism?” in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) pp. 70-91.

Recommended: Richard Bernstein *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*. (London: Polity Press, 1996). Intro, Chapters 1, 2.

November 4 – Fall Reading Week (No Class)

November 11 Democracy, Laïcité and the Theologico-Political

Joan Wallach Scott, “Secularism” In Scott, *The Politics of the Veil*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) 90-123.

Talal Asad, “Trying to Understand French Secularism,” in Hent de Vries and Lawrence E. Sullivan, eds., *Political Theologies: Public Religions in a Post-Secular World* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), pp. 494-526

Recommended: Claude Lefort “The Permanence of the Theologico-Political?” In Lefort, *Democracy and Political Theory*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989) 148-187.

November 18 – The Christian Question

Daniel Colucciello Barber, “Christianity, Religion, and the Secular” in *On Diaspora: Christianity, Religion and Secularity*. (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011) 88-114.

Gil Anidjar, “Secularism,” *Critical Inquiry* 33.1 (Autumn 2006) 52-77.

November 25 - Islam: The Impossible State? **Proposal for Final Research Paper Due**

Wael Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics and Modernity’s Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013). Selections

Souad T. Ali. *A Religion, not a State: Ali 'Abd al-Raziq's Islamic Justification of Political Secularism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2009) Selections

December 2 – Questioning Secularism in Egypt

Hussein Ali Agrama. *Questioning Secularism: Islam, Sovereignty, and the Rule of Law in Modern Egypt* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012). Selections

December 5 - Is Critique Secular?

Talal Asad, Judith Butler, Wendy Brown, Saba Mahmood. *Is Critique Secular?: Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (University of California Press, 2010). Selections

December 4 – Final Research Paper Due