

PS 1275: Religion and American Politics

Spring 2021

4:30-5:45 TTh
2400 Sennott Square

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Office Hours: 10:00-12:00 Wednesday, or by appointment

"People act politically, economically, and socially in keeping with their ultimate beliefs. Their values, mores, and actions, whether in the polling booth, on the job, or at home, are an outgrowth of the god or gods they hold at the center of their being."

-Robert Swierenga

"In the American experience, the separation of church and state... does not necessarily mean the separation of religion from public life. Another way of saying this is that America has a strong commitment to secularism, but it is secularism of a particular kind, understood in a particular way."

-Wilfred McClay

Overview and Objectives

Is the United States a Christian Nation or a nation of Christians? What is the difference and how can we know? And what does the answer mean for citizens who are not adherents? To answer these questions, one needs to understand both the role of faith in the development of the United States and the way in which different faiths affect the way citizens act politically.

This course has been divided into 6 units in an effort to interrogate the role of religion in public life in the United States. We will begin the course with a review of the history of religion in the United States before turning to the political institutions that shape the interactions between the two – the constitution, the courts, and political elites. From here we turn to explore various faith traditions present in the United States – from Mainline Protestants to the fast-growing unaffiliated – identifying their structures, dispositions, core beliefs, and behaviors that influence their identities. After this section, units 4 and 5 will dive into political behavior (voting, protesting, civic involvement, to name a few) and policy beliefs (social, economic, and foreign), respectively. These units will begin to paint a picture of how religion motivates the way individuals act politically in society. Finally, the course will conclude with a unit on the way that religious groups act as collective units – both within and across traditions.

This course will focus on both ontological and normative discussions about religion and politics. While the readings will provide the basis for the ontological status of religion and politics – that is, what the relationship IS in practice – our classroom discussion will serve as a forum for their normative status. We will debate why the status quo should exist or what it should be replaced with and why. The research project for this class will focus on preparing you to use the knowledge obtained in the class in a real-world scenario, serving as the Director of Faith-Based Outreach for a political campaign.

In addition to the substantive information learned, this course will help you to develop useful skills such as data analysis, oral presentation techniques, professional writing, and analytical thinking. These skills, as exemplified by the research project, translate directly into professional careers that many of you may pursue in the near future. At the end of the course, you should be able to distinguish between major faith groups in the United States on the basis of beliefs, scriptures, prominent leaders and groups, and geographical strength. Further, you should be able to use these distinctions to explain, analyze, and rationalize the actions of believers in American politics.

Books

Required:

Hertzke, Olson, den Dulk, and Fowler. *Religion and Politics in America: Faith, Culture, and Strategic Choices*, 6th Edition. Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-0813350578

Available at: Hillman (Hard copy), Amazon (Rent-\$23.30), Chegg (Rent-\$28.49)

Corbett, Corbett-Hemeyer, and Wilson. *Politics and Religion in the United States*, 2nd Edition. Routledge. ISBN-13: 978-0415644631

Available at: Hillman (Hard Copy and Digital), Chegg (Rent-\$11.99)

Smidt, Kellstedt, and Guth. *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics*. Oxford University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0190657871

Available at: Hillman (Hard copy and Digital), Chegg (Rent-\$36.99)

Recommended:

Wald and Calhoun-Brown. *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 8th Edition. Rowman and Littlefield.

Available at: Hillman (Digital), Amazon (Rent-\$19.46), Chegg (Rent-\$48.49)

Course Requirements

Although there is no prerequisite for this class, I expect that all members of the class will have some background in American politics. Further, I assume that all members of the class have an inherent interest in politics or can at least fake such an interest for a few months. I expect all students to read a national news source (paper or online version) every day, as a source for political, electoral, and cultural information.

All of the readings listed in the syllabus are required and should be completed before the class for which they are assigned. If you suspect you will not be attending class every day having done the readings and being ready to participate, you should drop the course now.

Grading and Assignments

Grade Distribution

A+	≥ 97%	B+	≥ 87%	C+	≥ 77%	D	≥ 60%
A	≥ 93%	B	≥ 83%	C	≥ 73%	F	≤ 60%
A-	≥ 90%	B-	≥ 80%	C-	≥ 70%		

Grade Composition

Participation	20%
Assignments	20%
Quizzes	30%
Research Project	30%

Attendance and Participation – 20%

Classes

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, classes for this course will be conducted on Zoom during our scheduled class time (Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:30 - 5:45 pm Eastern time) until it is possible for us to convene in person. I will notify students before I begin any in-person teaching. Recordings of the classes will be made available on Canvas for those who are unable to join the Zoom sessions; nevertheless, I strongly encourage everyone to attend the classes at the scheduled time. There are several reasons for this. First, participation is a critical part of learning and the class sessions will be discussion based. Second, students who decide to watch recorded lectures will be in danger of falling behind on the course material (unless they are extraordinarily disciplined). Third, watching recorded lectures and classroom discussions will be less engaging and thus less effective in pedagogical terms. The recordings should be used sparingly – if you expect to have to regularly rely on the recordings to watch class, you will not get the same amount out of this class and I would encourage you to reconsider your plans.

I also encourage students to treat this course like they would if we were in-person. You should find somewhere quiet where you can focus on the Zoom free of distractions and with nothing else scheduled during class time. You should have your camera on during class sessions once you join – if you need to have your camera off during class time for any reason, you should let me know by email prior to the class starting.

Class sessions have been designed to be interactive in nature and therefore rely on student engagement to make them productive. You should arrive to class with the reading completed and ready to be discussed. You should have your camera on and be focused on the class discussion – if your camera is off, and you have not discussed the reason with me before class, I will assume that you are not paying attention. General attention and engagement with the class proceedings will account for 10% of your grade. You will start with the full amount and I will deduct points from the total for each class in which I determine that you are not engaged. If you are not (virtually) in class, it will be very difficult to demonstrate your engagement.

Discussion Board Posts

In order to help prepare you for class discussions, you will be required to post to a discussion board prior to the class. To fulfill this requirement, you must first post a question inspired by the reading to the discussion board by 9 AM on the day of class and then respond to another student's question by 4:30 PM when class starts.

Your question should not be factual with a simple and clear answer (e.g., What year was the first Catholic elected president?), but more abstract so that it requires thinking about the question in the context of the reading (e.g., How might Catholic partisanship have changed differently if John Kennedy had not been elected president?). The goal of the question is to make your classmates think – and to also provide us with topics for our class discussion.

Responses to the questions should only be a few sentences (2-4), but should draw on the reading to work through how you might answer the question. I care more about your response demonstrating substance and original thought than I do about length. Feel free to speculate or project, but make sure that these are inspired by what you have read and not just taken from your gut. Your goal here is not to “get it right,” but rather to get your mind thinking about issues the readings raise and how you might try to work through them. Using the example question from above, a sample response might read:

Catholic partisanship favored Democrats prior to Kennedy's election, but briefly exploded upwards after his election. Since then, Catholic partisanship has shifted to a more balanced division between the two parties. Without Kennedy, this trend would likely have happened sooner, though it is unclear if the additional time would have shifted partisanship to be less balanced and more Republican-aligned than it currently is.

By completing these posts prior to class, you will arrive having read the assigned material, having already reflected on it, and ready to discuss. This should not only help you learn

better, but should also make the class discussions more productive. These posts will count for 10% of your course grade. There are 22 class sessions where you will be able to submit posts (all except classes 1, 9, 18, 26, and 27). You are expected to do this 17 times, meaning that you can skip posting 5 times for any 5 classes you choose. However, you may complete additional posts beyond the required 17 for extra credit. You cannot post multiple times for a single class and have it count as extra.

Assignments – 20%

SCOTUS Case Analysis

You will be required to write a 3–5-page (double-spaced, 12-point font) paper on a Supreme Court case that deals with religion. I will provide a list of cases for you to choose from closer to the assignment. While we will briefly discuss many important cases in class, the goal of this assignment is for you to dive into a case and explore the nuance, complexity, and implications of these decisions. This assignment will be due to Canvas by the start of class on Tuesday, February 16th.

Your paper should use section headers to distinguish between components and should include the following information:

- Case Background, to include:
 - Who are the litigants
 - The events that resulted in the lawsuit
 - A brief summary of the lower court decisions in the lawsuit
- The main question(s) of the law the case involves at the Supreme Court
- The arguments used by both sides as to answer above question(s)
- Identify the major legal precedent(s) of the case
- Explain the ruling
 - Which side won
 - What was the balance of judges and who was on which side
 - A summary of all opinions along with their authors and who joined them
- Implications of the case – how did the relationship between religion and politics in the United States, did the court adopt a new test, did the court signal a new interpretation of law or a new direction, how do you see the decision affecting American life

Survey Assignment

In the latter half of the course, we will spend time exploring the Pew Research Center's data, including the Religious Landscape Study surveys, to look at quantitative data on the relationship between religion and politics in the United States. You will be required to analyze 5 relationships using survey questions/pieces of data/statistics. For each one you should hypothesize a relationship, rationalize that relationship, define how you will measure the relationship, identify data to analyze the relationship, and discuss the results. We will discuss the expectations for this assignment more extensively during our survey interlude. This assignment will be due to Canvas by the start of class on April 8th.

Quizzes – 30%

After we finish each unit of the course, students will be required to take a quiz covering only that unit. The quiz will be made available online through Canvas and will be available for multiple days. However, you will only have a limited amount of time to complete it once you begin. The quiz will be short (approximately 10 questions) and is designed to serve as a quick indicator of how well you have learned the material. The quiz is meant to be done individually, closed-book, and closed resource – you are to use your mind alone and that is it. You will not have sufficient time to consult outside resources. While there is nothing I can do to stop you from utilizing resources to complete the quiz, the goal is for them to let both you and me know how well the material was learned. If I become suspicious of any cheating, I will not hesitate to fail you.

Research Project – 30%

For the final project of this course, you will be required to prepare a strategy memo and presentation acting as the Associate Directors of Faith-Based Outreach for a political campaign. Students will work in groups of 5 to devise a strategy for your candidate to win the support of religious citizens. Group assignment, candidate information, and geographic responsibilities will be assigned at the end of Unit III. The strategy memo will account for 20% of your grade and the presentation will account for 10% of your grade.

Strategy Memo

As a group, you should collectively address strategy around 5 different faith traditions. These will likely include, but should not be limited to Catholics, Mainline Protestants, Black Protestants, Evangelicals, Jews, and Muslims. The relevant faith groups will depend upon your candidate and the demographics of your geographic constituency.

Within your group, each student is responsible for writing a strategy memo with regards to a different faith tradition. That is, as a group you should identify the 5 most relevant faiths to your constituency and divide those up within the group. You should not have more than one student within your group writing a memo on the same faith. Each student will be graded on their own individual memo. The memos should be written individually, not collectively.

The memo is designed to inform the campaign leadership about effective strategies they may wish to employ. Your memo should be approximately 5-7 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font) and should be written as a memo – meaning it should have a memo format and use more direct and professional writing. The memo should include the following:

- Executive summary of what is in the memo (2 paragraphs or ~ ½ page)
- Faith tradition's prominence in the constituency
- Explanation of the candidate's relationship to the faith group (partisan leanings) as well as connections to the candidate's biography (race, gender, faith, background, career, etc.)
- Key issues, values, and stances of the religious group in question

- Issues on which the candidate aligns with the faith tradition, why, and how it can be employed
- Issues on which candidate does not align with the faith tradition, why, and how it can be addressed
- Public opinion data to support the arguments in the preceding two sections
- Prominent faith leaders or organizations within the constituency

Presentation

The last two class sessions of the semester will be dedicated to group presentations. As a group, you will prepare a presentation that summarizes the strategy memos you have written individually into a comprehensive strategy. You will have 15 minutes total to present your strategy to the candidate. You should include all the topics covered in your memo. You may be asking yourself how you are going to combine five 5-page papers into a 15-minute presentation? The answer is that the presentation is a summary of each of the papers. You are handing your boss the memos so they can read those more thoroughly, so you don't need to tell them everything in it, just the most important parts. Some of the information from the memos will overlap, while much of it will be excessive. It is your job as a group to figure out what parts of the memos are most important for the candidate and campaign manager to hear and present those. If they feel anything is missing, they will ask for it and you should be prepared to answer based on your memo.

You will only have 15 minutes so you will need to practice your presentation to make sure that you can accomplish everything in time. It will be very clear to me if you have practiced or not. I will warn you at 15 minutes and stop you at 16 minutes, regardless of if you have finished, so make sure you have practiced. Every group member should be involved in the presentation

Course policies

COVID-19 Statement:

In the midst of this pandemic, it is extremely important that you abide by public health regulations and University of Pittsburgh health standards and guidelines. While in class, at a minimum, this means you must wear a face covering and comply with physical distancing requirements; other requirements may be added by the University during the semester. These rules have been developed to protect the health and safety of all community members. Failure to comply with these requirements will result in you not being permitted to attend class in person and could result in a Student Conduct violation. For the most up-to-date information and guidance, please visit coronavirus.pitt.edu and check your Pitt email for updates before each class.

Students with disabilities:

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me and Disability Resources and Services, 216 William Pitt Union, (412)648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412)383-7355 (TTY). Please do this as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course. It is your responsibility to discuss with me any accommodations you wish to use in the course. If DRS determines you are eligible for accommodations, but you do not discuss it with me, I will proceed as normal.

Attendance:

Students are responsible for attending class every day and understanding the material for that day. Yes, it *will* be on the quiz. Please do not attend class if you are not willing to pay attention, or at least to pretend to pay attention (I can, in fact, see you scrolling through TikTok). If you prefer not to engage the material, please feel free to skip the class as much as you like. Doing so will make your work very poor, and therefore much easier for me to assess.

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted below, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. (For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html.)

If you have **ANY** questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, **ASK**. **Ignorance is no excuse**. You can also consult the Arts and Sciences website for more information: <http://www.as.pitt.edu/faculty/policy/integrity.html>

Late work:

I do not accept late work. I try to strike a balance between being flexible and maintaining certain expectations of you. I have provided in this syllabus a complete schedule of all of the requirements necessary to succeed in this class. It is your responsibility to manage your time and resources in a way that enables you to meet those requirements.

That said, I do recognize the need for flexibility. You should review the schedule of assignments at the beginning of the semester and request extensions as early as possible. Extensions will be granted based on what I feel is reasonable, given both the reasoning for the request and the timing – if you ask for an extension a week before a due date you will have a much greater chance of it being granted than if you ask a day before.

Incompletes:

It is my policy not to give incompletes. I do so only in rare circumstances, such as a documented illness. (Note: Getting tired of school at the end of the term is not rare, and therefore is not a valid excuse for an incomplete.) Asking for an incomplete except in the direst of circumstances beyond your control only eats away at the precious moments we both have on earth.

Communication:

I hold high expectations of my students and will push you to perform your best. If there are any issues, academic or personal, that may affect your ability to succeed in my class, I strongly encourage you to schedule a time to discuss them with me. I will work with you to address whatever issues I can, and, at the very least, will be able to be mindful of them throughout the course. Any conversations will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

Course Schedule

1. Tuesday, January 19th – Introductions and Course Schedule
 - Required Reading:
 - i. Syllabus

UNIT I – Religion and Politics in American History

2. Thursday, January 21st – Theories and Conceptions of Religion and Politics
 - Required Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 1 (20 pages)
 - ii. Skim Hertzke Ch. 2 (20 pages)
 - Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 1
3. Tuesday, January 26th – Religion in the Colonies and the New Nation
 - Required Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 2 (40 pages)
 - Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 2
 - ii. Wald Ch. 4
4. Thursday, January 28th – Religion since the Founding
 - Required Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 3 (26 pages)
5. Tuesday, February 2nd – Religion Since the 60's
 - Required Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 4 (29 Pages)

UNIT II – Religion and American Institutions

6. Thursday, February 4th – Religion and Legal Perspectives; The Establishment Clause and Case Law
 - Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 11 (16 pages)
 - ii. Corbett Ch. 5 (25 pages)
 - Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 12
 - ii. Smidt Ch. 19
 - Assignments Due:
 - i. Unit I Quiz

Friday, February 5th
-Add/Drop Deadline

7. Tuesday, February 9th – The Free Exercise Clause and Case Law

- Required Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 6 (30 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 12
 - ii. Smidt Ch. 19

8. Thursday, February 11th – Religion and Elites

- Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 9 (28 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 16, 17, 18

9. Tuesday, February 16th – Religion and Political Culture

- Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 10 (15 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 4, 5
 - ii. Wald Ch. 3
- Assignment Due:
 - i. SCOTUS Case Analysis

UNIT III – Faith Groups

10. Thursday, February 18th – Christian Faith Groups

- Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 3 (24 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 8

Tuesday, February 23rd

- *Student Self Care Day – No Class*
- Assignments Due:
 - i. Unit II Quiz

11. Thursday, February 25th – Jews, Muslims, Unaffiliated, and Other Faith Groups

- Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 4 (20 pages)
- Assignments Due:
 - i. Unit II Quiz Correction

12. Tuesday, March 2nd – Race and Faith

- Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 5 (21 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 9

13. Thursday, March 4th – Gender and Sexuality

- Required Reading
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 6 (25 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Wald Ch. 11

UNIT IV – Religion and Mass Behavior

14. Tuesday, March 9th – Religion and Socialization

- Required Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 6 (19 pages)

15. Thursday, March 11th – Religion and Voting Behavior

- Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 7 (33 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 3, 12, 15
- Assignments Due:
 - i. Unit III Quiz

16. Tuesday, March 16th – Religion and Political Participation

- Required Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 14 (23 pages)
- Assignments Due:
 - i. Unit III Quiz Corrections

17. Thursday, March 18th – Religion and Politics in Surveys

- Required Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 1 (35 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 7

18. Tuesday, March 23rd – Clergy Roundtable

- Required Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 13 (17 pages)

UNIT V – Religion and Policy

19. Thursday, March 25th – Faith and Economic Issues

- Required Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 7 (19 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Wald Ch. 7
 - ii. Smidt Ch. 20

20. Tuesday, March 30th – Faith and Social Issues

- Required Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 8 (18 pages)

- Assignments Due:
 - i. Unit IV Quiz

21. Thursday, April 1st – Guest Speaker

22. Tuesday, April 6th – Faith and Foreign Policy

- Required Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 9 (18 pages)

UNIT VI – Religion and Group Activity

23. Thursday, April 8th – Religion and Social Movements

- Required Reading:
 - i. Smidt Ch. 10 (22 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Wald Ch. 5
- Assignments Due:
 - i. Survey Assignment

24. Tuesday, April 13th – Religion and Interest Groups

- Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 8 (36 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Wald Ch. 6, 8, 9, 10
 - ii. Corbett Ch. 10
 - iii. Smidt Ch. 11
- Assignments Due:
 - i. Unit V Quiz

25. Thursday, April 15th – Concluding Thoughts

- Required Reading:
 - i. Hertzke Ch. 13 (11 pages)
- Supplemental Reading:
 - i. Corbett Ch. 11
 - ii. Wald Ch. 12
- Assignments Due:
 - i. Research Project Strategy Memo

26. Tuesday, April 20th – Present Final Projects

- Final Presentations
- Assignments Due:
 - i. Unit VI Quiz

27. Thursday, April 22nd – Present Final Projects

- Final Presentations