

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

JPR 364F - Religion and Politics in the Nation-State
Syllabus September 2025

LOCATION: Mon. 3-5, CHECK ACORN FOR ROOM NUMBER

INSTRUCTOR: Joseph Dattilo
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-2:30 PM (Drop In) SS3058
Thursdays 2-4:00 PM (By Appointment) SS3058

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THEMES:

This course will engage with contemporary debates on religion and politics twenty-five years on from 9/11. The emphasis will be on understanding the evolving relationship between religion and politics and examining challenges facing democratic politics from the religious sphere, both in the West, where secular liberalism is the dominant framework for discussing these questions, and in the Global South, where this is not always the case. While in our globalized world it is often difficult to draw clear distinctions between national and global trends, this course will focus on the modern nation-state form and its evolving relationship with religious faith, institutions and practices. (This course has a second or companion half, which studies religion and politics in a global context – JPR365) Over the past decade, radical forms of religiosity have come to threaten established democracies in the West, and fuel conflicts around the world. We will critically examine the central concepts and contemporary theoretical debates around secularism, religious pluralism and tolerance, rights and freedoms, religion's relation to law, race, the formation of identity and political community, gender, and sexuality. The emphasis will be on evangelical Christianity and radical reformist Islam in particular, as the two most successful and politically significant forms of religiosity on the planet today. Some of the readings will speak to such themes in theoretical terms; others will have a more empirical focus. Readings will be complemented by student-led research into current stories and issues found in the media and online, from both primary and secondary sources – investigative articles, blogs, videos, podcasts, public speeches, films, radio shows etc. that exemplify, dramatize or illustrate the themes and issues.

JPR 364Y is jointly offered by the departments of Political Science and Religion, and will draw students from both areas, in addition to some who are enrolled primarily in other programs. All are welcome, though students registered in the class should be prepared for a multidisciplinary approach.

LEARNING: As this is a 3rd year course, students should be ready to take active responsibility for their own learning. The instructors' 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. The instructional team is happy to meet you 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 and Delivery: This course is scheduled as an in-person course with the Faculty of Arts & Science. Students are expected to attend in-person

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

3. Participation: 10%

You will be expected to raise questions, share your knowledge and views with other class members and actively participate in class discussion as well as posting on the Discussion Forum. 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. **If you regularly attend and speak up in class**, you need only participate in the Discussion Forum 4 times to earn an A range grade. If you don't or can't attend or speak up, you'll be expected to respond to at least 9 out of 12 weeks to receive an A. You should post before class, but the Discussion Board will be open all semester, you can still post on the most recent week's discussion as well.

4. Response Papers – 2 per term – 500-750 words/2-3 pages double-spaced. 40% total. Due October 20 and December 1.

Each of you is 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. The first paper should select readings/themes from the first 6 weeks of class, the second from the second 6 weeks. You may submit them at any time up during each period. 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. Material in excess of the 750th word will not be graded

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

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 with the instructional team. Material in excess of the 500th word will not be graded.

6. Final Research Essay: 3,000-3,500 words, or 12-15 pp. 40% - Due December 1

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. Material in excess of this limit will not be graded.

LATE WORK: This course has no penalties for late work. Deadlines are negotiable, as you are all grownups who best know how to manage your time. If you cannot make the deadline, you must let me know and propose your own deadline (note that the deadline you propose must fall within sessional dates and cannot be guaranteed). See Quercus for instructions on how to do this. Out of consideration for the graduate student TAs own time management, and since they will be doing most of the grading, **assignments handed in over a week past the deadline without any prior communication won't be graded.** We understand how difficult many of your lives are, and we are all willing to accommodate students who are struggling. Work handed in late may also see significantly diminished feedback. Please note however that this policy cannot supersede the registrar's deadlines.

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.

USE OF GENERATIVE AI; The use of Large Language Models such as ChatGPT is strictly forbidden for any of the writing in this class. It constitutes academic dishonesty and will incur serious consequences. **YOU MUST READ** the AI Policy posted on Quercus that explains why I am so vehement about the use of LLMs in my courses.

SUBMITTING THE FINAL ESSAY: TURNITIN.COM

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com 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 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.

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.

SUBMITTING TERM WORK:

You should ensure that you have a hard copy and an electronic copy of all work submitted, and you are strongly advised to retain the rough work, notes, and draft material that went into the essay or assignment. Again, students have the right to refuse to use Turnitin.com. In this case, students will be expected to submit a copy of their work accompanied by their notes and rough drafts.

Evaluation:

Participation		10%
Reflection Papers (2 papers per term)	Due Oct. 20 and Dec.1	40%
Final Essay Outline	Due Nov. 10	10%
Final Essay	Due Dec. 1	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.

MEDIA RESOURCES:

Given the contemporary and pressing nature of the issues covered in this course, you will find frequent references to, discussion and illustrations of them in a variety of media – academic and quasi-academic blogs, mainstream investigative journalism and news media, as well as media produced by religious organizations, lobbyists, partisan political groups, talk radio hosts, think tanks, activists and advocates of all stripes.

An excellent academic resource is the extremely exhaustive and topical blog on religion and politics by American Social Science Research Council - [The Immanent Frame](http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/).

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You should consult national dailies, global news outlets services such as the BBC World Service, Al Jazeera, CNN, MSNBC, FOX for news reports. There are many good investigative articles in publications such as The Economist, The New Republic, Harpers, The Atlantic, The New Yorker, The New Statesman, The Wall Street Journal. Liberal or left liberal political commentary: Politico.com, Salon.com, Democracy Now, Alternet. The Intercept, Talk2Action etc. Right or far right: Fox News, World Net Daily, Breitbart. Media, Gateway Pundit; far-right watchdogs – Right Wing Watch, Media Matters for America, Southern Poverty Law Centre. More sources, including faith-based media outlets will be posted on Quercus.

REQUIRED READING LIST:

All reading listed under each week posted in the Quercus Modules are required reading. In addition to the items optional readings will also be posted on Quercus should you want to do a deeper dive. Content is subject to modification.