



STUDY PROGRAMME

European Interdisciplinary Studies, Natolin campus (Advanced Academic Master)

YEAR

2021-2022

COURSE TITLE

Religion and Politics

ACADEMIC ASSISTANT

BRESKAYA Maria

COURSE PROFESSOR(S)

ANDERSON John

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

COURSE TYPE

Optional Contextual Course

MAJOR(S)

Not applicable

ECTS CREDITS

no ECTS

SEMESTER

1

TEACHING HOURS

10

INDIVIDUAL & GROUP STUDY TIME

TUTORIAL(S)

COEFFICIENT

not applicable

LANGUAGE(S)

EN

COURSE OBJECTIVE

This course explores the relationship of religion and politics, drawing on a range of examples. The first session introduces the study of religion, political and international relations, exploring why definitions of religion matter, whether religion can be studied 'scientifically', and looking at the so-called resurgence of political religion in recent decades. We then turn to the role of religion in the public sphere, focusing primarily on Europe broadly conceived and the United States of America, exploring both formal and informal relationships and asking whether a modern democratic state has to be 'secular'. The third session turns to the rise of 'morality politics' informed by religion, focusing in particular on how states and the international community are often divided over questions of reproduction and sexual orientation. We then turn to the notion of 'strong' religion, focusing on discussions around 'political Islam' and the use of the word 'fundamentalism', and the connection between religion and nationalism. The final session addresses the common assumption that religious engagement with politics often leads to conflict, addressed the relationship of religion, violence, and peace-making. In this session there will also be some time for general Q&A around this topic.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Students will acquire a basic understanding of some of the ways in which religion and politics interact in the modern world and an understanding of some of the theoretical perspectives used by social scientists to explain religion's role in the public sphere.
2. Students will be able to reflect critically on simplistic assumptions that are often made about religion and politics, for example that formal models of church-state relations reflect the reality of religion's role in society or politics, or the assumption that religion inevitably causes conflict when it enters the political arena.
3. Students will acquire empirical understanding of how religious political engagement relates to other trends in the modern world, including democratization, globalization and political violence.

RECOMMENDED PREPARATION

Students should look at a selection of the key texts assigned in the course outline.

TEACHING METHOD(S)

Lectures and seminars, mixed sessions.

ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA

The course will be assessed on a 'pass/fail' basis through:

- an online multiple-choice test (80% of the mark) at the end of the final course session - 15 minutes to answer 7 questions, and
- overall attendance (20% of the mark).

The weighted average of both assessment elements needs to be equal or greater than 50% for a student to pass the course.

Each student is entitled to re-taking the test once. The re-take test would account for 80% of the mark whilst overall attendance would account for the remaining 20%.

Since optional contextual courses carry no ECTS credits, the final result will be present on the transcript, but will have no impact on students' final average, nor on overall grade, nor on attaining the diploma.

COURSE CONTENTS

The ten hours will be divided into five sections addressing the following issues:

- Studying religion and politics: how we understand religion and politics; the so-called 'absence of religion' from political studies; the global resurgence of politicized religion.
- Religion in the 'modern' public sphere: religion-state relations (with some focus on France, United Kingdom and USA; democracy as necessarily secular (and what do we mean by secular); and the legitimacy or otherwise of religious engagement in politics).
- Religion and the rise of 'morality politics': domestic political struggles around abortion and homosexuality (with some focus on Poland, Russia and the USA); the globalization of these agendas as evident at the UN and in Africa.
- The notion of 'strong religion', often associated with political Islam, the word 'fundamentalism', or ethno-religious identities.
- Religion and conflict – myths and realities, war and peace in the Christian and Islamic tradition, religion and peacemaking.

COURSE MATERIALS (readings and other learning resources/tools)

See the course outline.