PSCI 5050.001 Seminar on Religion and Politics  
Department of Political Science, University of North Texas  
WH 130, W 6:30-9:20p, Syllabus spring 2018

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 3:30-6:30p

SEMINAR DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Wald and Wilcox (2006, 523) note that, “Apart from economics and geography, it is hard to find a social science that has given less attention to religion that political science.” As the political salience of religion has endured, however, political scientists have devoted increased attention to this key social phenomenon. As a result, this seminar introduces and applies the major social scientific theories of religion with the goal of understanding the interaction between religion and politics. The authenticity of a particular creed is irrelevant for our purposes. The focus is on the explanatory value of religion in understanding mass political behavior, policymaking, and institutional politics. Students will (1) develop an appreciation of the debates within the subfield, (2) gain deeper insight into the methods and techniques that scholars employ when undertaking research in this area, and (3) advance their own research agendas.

READINGS


Other readings for the course will be drawn from scholarly articles and book chapters. Journal articles and some book chapters can be found online via the UNT Library. I will make the rest available via Blackboard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Seminar grades will be assigned according to the following schedule: A, 90-100%; B, 80-89.9%; C, 70-79.9%; D, 60-69.9%; F, below 60%.

Participation and Attendance, 33%: Students are required to attend each class meeting having completed the reading assignment and ready to participate in a discussion of the material. I suggest you prepare notes on the readings we are discussing as a guide for class discussion. To prepare yourself adequately for seminar, focus on the following questions as you complete the readings.
• What is the principal research question or problem being studied?
• Does this study address some broader theoretical issue, question or theme in the literature on religion and politics?
• What types of evidence are presented in support of the author’s conclusions? What is the source of the evidence or data?
• What method is used to analyze the evidence presented by the author? Is this method appropriate to the research problem?
• How sound are the conclusions drawn by the author? How might the study have been strengthened?
• So what? Does the study make an important contribution to our understanding of religion and politics? Why or why not?

Research Project, 34%: Students will conduct an original research project on religion and politics from beginning to end. The paper must be one in which students empirically test the theoretical argument developed in the paper. Most importantly, the paper must make an original contribution to the field and it must be theoretically rigorous. The projects will be conducted in stages and students will receive extensive feedback from both the instructor and fellow class members throughout the term. We will devote a substantial portion of each class to discuss the progress of the projects in order to brainstorm ideas about how to make the papers better. The goal for these projects is to produce a paper that could be presented at a political science conference and, subsequently, submitted to a journal for review. Students will present these projects during the last class meeting on May 2nd.

Research Project Schedule:
1. January 24 – Discuss research topic ideas in class. Come prepared with your topic.
2. January 31 – Submit your research proposal. This proposal should outline what your topic is, what question(s) you are answering, how you plan to go about answering your question(s), and where your paper fits into the literature. Approximately 2-3 pages.
3. February 21 – Submit your literature review. This literature review should provide an overview of the literature that you are examining in your research project. The literature should discuss not only what the literature says but also its areas of strength and weakness. Of particular importance is a discussion of the gaps within the literature you are focusing upon. Approximately 3-8 pages.
4. March 21 – Submit your theory section. This section spells out in detail the hypothesis being tested in your paper and the theoretical arguments that support these hypotheses. This section represents your ideas about the new knowledge that you seek to create in your paper. It is important that this section of your paper be logically constructed and carefully argued. Approximately 3-5 pages.
5. April 4 – Submit your research design section. This section of your paper will discuss the methodology you will use to test the hypotheses discussed in the theory section of your paper. Essential to this section of your paper is that you describe the research design in sufficient detail that someone reading your research design could replicate the analysis conducted in your paper perfectly.
6. April 25 – Submit results and conclusion sections. This section of your paper will examine the results of your analysis. In this section, you will discuss the ways in which your analysis supports or differs from the hypotheses that you raised in the theoretical section of your
paper. As part of the discussion, you will walk the reader through your findings and interpret what these findings mean. In the conclusion section, you will take a broader view of your findings and place these results within the broader literature. What have you contributed? Why is it important? Are these results surprising? Why?

7. May 2 – Submit full paper with an introduction. The introduction of your paper should set the stage for your reader, describing to them why your topic is important and why they should bother reading the remainder of the paper. You can also signal to readers in your paper what your findings are. Once you finish the introduction, you can now put all of the sections you have written into one complete paper, taking into account the suggestions for revision that have been made throughout. Be careful to make sure that the paper reads like one, well-flowing paper and not a serious of separate sections put together. Make certain that your paper is of conference presentation quality: properly cited and free of grammatical errors. You will present it to the group as if you were at a conference.

**Final Exam, 33%:** There will be one exam in the course. This exam will be a take-home exam in which students will have a choice of exam questions to answer. Questions will resemble the types of questions you would find on a comprehensive exam. Upon opening the exam, students will have four hours to complete it. The exam will be distributed on May 3rd and will be due no later than May 10, 11:59p. All exams will be submitted through the link on the course Blackboard page.

**Schedule**

January 17
What is religion, and why do we care?


**Recommended**

January 24

Conceptual and theoretical approaches


Recommended


January 31

Measurement

6. Measurement discussion on ReligioninPublic.blog:
   Djupe, Paul A., Ryan P. Burge, and Andrew R. Lewis, “Do we have any idea who evangelicals are?”,
   Djupe, Paul A., “American Religion is Not a Matryoshka Doll”;
   Grant, Tobin, “Why we really use religious tradition”

Recommended

February 7
Secularization...or not

1. Norris and Inglehart, Sacred and Secular, all

Recommended
February 14
Political behavior in the United States


Recommendations


February 21

Political preferences and public opinion in the United States


Recommended


February 28
Political behavior and public opinion around the world


**Recommended**


March 7
Political parties and religious interests in the United States


**Recommended**


March 14
Spring break

March 21
Political parties and religious interests around the world

Recommended


March 28
PSA meeting, no class

April 4
American Political Institutions


Recommended


April 11

Religion and the state


Recommended
New York, NY: Oxford University Press.


April 18
Ethno-national intersections


Recommended


April 25

Religion and democracy


Recommended


May 2
Presentations

**ADDITIONAL TOPICS**

We will not have time during the semester to cover the following topics, but they are important. The readings lists are a good place to start if you would like to explore them on your own.

**The American Context**

4. de Tocqueville, Alexis. 1835. *Democracy in America*.

**State and Local Policymaking**


Clergy


Religion and Tolerance


Conflict and Global Politics


ADDITIONAL POLICIES

For course drop information, see schedule at: essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html.

Dr. Oldmixon reserves the right to amend this syllabus at her discretion.

Late assignments: Late assignments are unacceptable and will be penalized a half a letter grade for the first day they are late, and a full letter grade every day thereafter. Extensions are given only after consultation with the instructor – prior to the due date.
Americans with Disabilities Act Statement: The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information see the Office of Disability Accommodation website at: http://www.unt.edu/oda. You may also contact them by phone at 940.565.4323.

Academic Misconduct: Academic Integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic Dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of “F” in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. You will find the policy and procedures at: http://facultysuccess.unt.edu/academic-integrity.

Acceptable Student Behavior: Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The university's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at: https://deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Sexual Discrimination, Harassment & Assault: UNT is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these acts of aggression, please know that you are not alone. The federal Title IX law makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses. UNT has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

UNT’s Dean of Students’ website offers a range of on-campus and off-campus resources to help support survivors, depending on their needs: http://deanofstudents.unt.edu/resources_0. Renee McNamara is UNT’s Student Advocate and she can be reached through e-mail at SurvivorAdvocate@unt.edu or by calling the Dean of Students’ office at 940-565-2648. You are not alone. We are here to help.
Emergency Notification & Procedures: UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify you with critical information in an event of emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). The system sends voice messages (and text messages upon permission) to the phones of all active faculty staff, and students. Please make certain to update your phone numbers at www.my.unt.edu. Some helpful emergency preparedness actions include: 1) ensuring you know the evacuation routes and severe weather shelter areas, determining how you will contact family and friends if phones are temporarily unavailable, and identifying where you will go if you need to evacuate the Denton area suddenly. In the event of a university closure, your instructor will communicate with you through Blackboard regarding assignments, exams, field trips, and other items that may be impacted by the closure.