

Religion 2: Religion in the Modern World

12-hour: Summer Term 2014 (12:30-1:35 MWF; x-hour–Tues 1:00-1:50)

Instructor: A. Kevin Reinhart

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Office Hours: Monday and Tuesday 1:45-3pm, and much later as desired; also when I'm in my office (except 1 hour before my 10 and 12 hour classes—I do prepare!—and by appointment.

Email: (I read email at least twice daily except on weekends)

Course description: As late as the 1970s academics were convinced that religion was dying, and that it was less and less relevant to the contemporary world. Then came the Iranian Revolution, the Rise of the Religious Conservatives in the US, the settler movement in Israel, the appearance of militant Buddhists in Sri Lanka, and of course 9/11. Ecological concerns, gender, economics, warfare, and biogenetics are among the many important issues in the modern world where policy and practice are, despite the 'demise of religion,' still decisively shaped by religion. In this course we will *first* try to understand what we mean by the term "modernity" and what features are characteristic of it. *Then* we will consider and discuss a series of topics related to modernity and religion. Readings are designed to include both topical cases and classic works in the study of religion and modernity.

Course Goals:

(1) To provide students with the background to think intelligently about, and discuss, both the nature of modernity (as well as the discourse about it) and some manifestations of religion in the contemporary world. (2) To expose students to some particularly interesting instances of the interaction between religion and modernity. (3) To expose to students to classic works on modernity, and religion and modernity. This is not a survey of contemporary religions—Islam today, Buddhism today etc..

Assignments:

In most classes, attendance is a matter of indifference or not assessed. Consequently, work, participation etc. add up to 100%. In this class, 40% of your grade is showing up. You start with 40% and go down.

To assess the value of your work as it would be valued in another class, double its value.

- General class citizenship, attitude, contribution: starts at 0 points; can go up to 10%.
- Outlines of the essays (due the morning of class) by Weber (7 July), Hume (11 July),

Alfred North Whitehead (14 July), 5% total

- One take-home essay—a chance to sum up the first part of the course. 6-7 pages (Due Aug. 1) (Topics passed out 21 July)(20%).
- One collaborative “case study” (15-20 pages; c. 4500-600 words exclusive of citations and bibliography) (August 23) 25%

Etiquette: To be discussed in class

The usual accommodations for physical, learning or other challenges are available, provided you do not spring them on the instructor at the last moment. The first week's office hours are a good time to meet to discuss these matters.

Dartmouth recognizes that religious events, and family events connected with them, may have claims on students' time and attention. Reasonable accommodation will be made, but if you miss class, you are missing class, and you are still responsible for any material covered. This is true *a fortiori* for athletic, theatrical, and other obligations. If these regularly interfere with class time (for example, requiring you to miss most Friday classes) you might want either to reconsider the *extra-curricular* commitment, or to take classes that meet Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Illness policy. After lengthy discussions with Dr. J Turco, my policy is this: Since Dick's house won't/can't certify illness unless you are actually admitted, I have no way of assessing your illness—I *am* a doctor, but in Islamic Studies and the Study of Religion. My basic stance is that everyone gets ill at some point, faculty included, and we soldier on. If you feel unable to come to class, ask a colleague to share his/her notes, and then discuss those notes. You won't be at your best every day, but unless you are prostrated by a serious illness, I am inclined to urge you to attend class, do your work on time etc.. If you think your case exempts you from this expectation, by all means, let's talk.

Recording: Please do not record lectures and discussions without the permission of *all* parties involved. It is probably illegal, but it is certainly unethical. I am sure all concerned are willing to make exceptions for good reasons, but we must be asked, and give our consent. Thank you.

Texts:

- Ian Buruma, *Taming the Gods*
- Lincoln: *Holy Terrors*
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* (tr Kalberg)
- T.M. Luhmann, *When God Talks Back*
- Extensive readings from *Canvas* (must be printed out for reading; **DO NOT** bring your laptop from which to discuss the readings. Annotated iPad readings may be acceptable

with the instructor's consent.)