

POL 310: Religion and Politics in the U.S.

Lecture 1 - Introduction

Professor Enrique Quezada-Llanes



Plan for Today

1. Introductions
2. Course Overview
3. Syllabus

A Bit About Myself



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Research Interests

Racial and ethnic politics, religion and politics, and political behavior.

Hobbies

Coffee, table tennis, and reading.

Tell Me About Yourself

- ▶ Name
- ▶ Year
- ▶ Major
- ▶ Why are you taking this course?
(be honest, you won't hurt my feelings!)
- ▶ YouTube genre that you're into
(or, something that brings you joy)

In This Course, You Will Learn:

1. Explanations for changes in Americans' religious affiliations
2. How social scientists study religion
3. Why religion is not just about the divine (rather, it is very social)
4. How to communicate political science research to a variety of audiences

The Course is Organized As Follows

1. The Changing Religious Landscape
2. Church and State
3. Contemporary History
4. Religious Influences on Politics
5. Race, Religion, and Politics
6. Political Influences on Religion
7. The Christian Right and the Religious Left



Course Website

For most class-related materials, check the course website:

<https://pol226.fall23.equezaallanes.com/>

Readings and Resources

Readings

All readings are available through the library (look for  on the website) or uploaded to Canvas (.

Resources

You will read many journal articles throughout the semester. For the most part, these follow a specific structure. You will also need to summarize some of these articles.

On the website, you can find guides on how to read political science articles and how to write summaries.

Do you want to go through them in class?

Let's look at the syllabus more closely

<https://pol226.fall23.equezaadallanes.com/>

Tell me what you know

Activity

Poll Everywhere: <https://PollEv.com/enriquequezada937>

What is religion and how do we study it?

According to sociologist Christian Smith,

"Religion is a complex of culturally prescribed practices, based on premises about the existence and nature of superhuman powers, whether personal or impersonal, which seek to help practitioners gain access to and communicate or align themselves with these powers, in hopes of realizing human goods and avoiding things bad."

Religion is about

practices

derived from beliefs

about superhuman powers

So ... how do we study it?

The Three B's approach:

1. Believing (religious beliefs)
 - Beliefs about the Bible
2. Behaving (also religious commitment)
 - Frequency of religious service attendance
 - Importance of religion in one's life
3. Belonging (religious affiliation)
 - Religious tradition

How else might we study religion?

For Next Class

Read

- ▶ Wald, Kenneth and Allison Calhoun-Brown. 2018. "A Secular Society?" In *Religion and Politics in the United States 8th Edition*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield. (Chapter 1: pp. 1-19; skim Chapter 2).

You can summarize this reading.

We're done!

Questions or comments?

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