

GOV 371R
Politics and Religion in the U.S.
Spring, 2024

Instructor

Professor David L. Leal

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Class Information

Class Location: PAR 201

Class Hours: 5 - 6:30 PM

Unique #: 37585

This class uses the [Canvas](#) course management system. The [University Resources for Students](#) Canvas site provides a list of resources for students as they engage with and navigate the course and the university.

Course Description

This course will address key topics in the study of politics and religion in the United States. The class begins with a general overview of religion and politics in America and a preview of the larger questions we will address. This is followed by a political history of religion, beginning with debates about church and state in the founding era and followed by discussion of the Protestant traditions of the 19th century and the changes brought by the growth of American Roman Catholicism. We continue with more contemporary phenomena, including the “religious right,” the “religious left,” and growing secularism; we also ask whether America is experiencing a “culture war.” We continue with an examination of additional religious traditions in America, including the Black Church, the growing Latino religious presence, Judaism, Islam, and Mormons. Lastly, the class examines contemporary political dynamics, particularly the influence of religion on elections, parties, and public opinion.

Required Reading

Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown. 2018. *Religion and Politics in the United States*, 8th Edition. Rowman & Littlefield. ISBN: 978-1-5381-0513-9

Frank Lambert. 2010. *Religion in American Politics*. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 978-0-6911-4613-3

Additional readings available online (see links below) and in a course pack (indicated with *) available for purchase from Jenn's at 2518 Guadalupe or online at:

<https://jennscopiespacket.com/>

This class uses the Longhorn Textbook Access program, and you may choose to participate but are not required to do so:

“The LTA (Longhorn Textbook Access) program is a new initiative that will significantly reduce the cost of course materials for students. In addition to having access to low-cost course materials, students enrolled in LTA courses:

- Will have access to course materials on or before the first day of class
- Will be able to access available course materials through Canvas
- Will pay for course materials online through the “What I Owe” Page
- Will be able to shop quickly, online, from home”

For more information, including “Opt In” and “Opt Out” dates, see:

<https://www.universitycoop.com/longhorn-textbook-access>

However, you are free to buy a paper copy online or in some other way, although the UT Co-op will not sell copies.

Assignments

Student understanding of the readings and topics will be assessed in a variety of ways, as noted below.

Course Grade

Exam #1

100 points; 25% of course grade

May include identification, essay, and multiple choice questions

Covers approximately first half of class

Exam #2

100 points; 25% of course grade

May include identification, essay, and multiple choice questions

Covers approximately second half of class; may include cumulative questions

Book Review

100 points; 25% of course grade

The choice of book is open, but it must involve a political or policy topic. No fiction, autobiographies, poetry, or theology, please. Guidelines on how to write the review will be emailed by the instructor via Canvas and discussed in class. Instructor must approve your choice of book no later than Tuesday, March 26. Reviews are due on Tuesday, April 16.

Reflection Essays

100 points; 25% of course grade

For any ten (10) weekly topics, students will write a two-page essay (doubled spaced) with reflections, observations, comments, and questions about the readings and corresponding class discussion. This could include, for example, what you found to be the most interesting or unexpected. Due dates for each essay will be listed on our Canvas “Assignments” page. The instructor will discuss this assignment further in class. Each reflection essay is worth up to 10 points.

You may not use ChatGPT or any other AI in the writing of your reflection essays.

Class attendance is not used in determining your course grade. Nevertheless, regular class attendance is *highly* recommended.

The class does not have a “final exam” during the final exam period at the end of the semester.

There are no extra credit assignments.

Grading

To determine your final course grade, divide your total number of points by 400 and find the letter grade that corresponds to your percentage.

Percentages are not rounded up or down. For example, 90.0%, 91.7%, and 92.9% are all A- grades.

93-100%	A	73-76%	C
90-92%	A-	70-72%	C-
87-89%	B+	67-69%	D+
83-86%	B	63-66%	D
80-82%	B-	60-62%	D-
77-79%	C+	Below 60%	F

Policies

By taking this class, you agree to all of the following policies:

- * All aspects of this course are subject to change depending on the public health context. Directives from UT or the State of Texas may therefore require changes that are large, small, and anything in-between.
- * Make-up exams and late essays will only be allowed on a case-by-case basis. Please check with the instructor before an exam or the paper due date to discuss your situation and see what is allowable.
- * Grades of “Incomplete” are generally not assigned, but please discuss your situation with the instructor if you believe an Incomplete may be necessary.
- * If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). You may refer to D&A’s website for contact and more information: <http://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>. If you are already registered with D&A, please discuss your Accommodation Letter with me as early as possible in the semester so we can review your approved accommodations.
- * Accommodations for religious holidays. By UT policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.
- * Important announcements will be made in class and via the class Canvas email list. It is the responsibility of students to make sure that the University knows their correct email address.
- * The Canvas class email list can only be used for class purposes. Do not use it for any commercial or business activities, for example.
- * Students who miss class should obtain notes from a classmate.
- * Any complaints about grades must be initiated by your written or emailed explanation of why the decisions behind the assignment of your grade should be revisited. You will have one week after an exam or paper has been graded to submit this written explanation. After that period, all grades will be considered final and any discussion that we might have will be restricted to how you can do better on the next exam or essay.
- * During class discussions, be respectful at all times.
- * Computers and cell phones can only be used in class for academic purposes.
- * Students must be prepared to show their UT identification card during exams.
- * This syllabus is subject to change or adjustment by the instructor at any time.
- * Consistent class attendance is the best way to ensure that no important announcements are missed.

Honor Code

“The core values of the University of Texas at Austin are learning, discovery, freedom, leadership, individual opportunity, and responsibility. Each member of the University is expected to uphold these values through integrity, honesty, trust, fairness, and respect toward peers and community.”

Scholastic Dishonesty

*“‘Scholastic dishonesty’ includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, misrepresenting facts, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student (such as, but not limited to, submission of essentially the same written assignment for two courses without the prior permission of the instructor), or the attempt to commit such an act.” Section 11-802 (b), *Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities*. If you have any questions about what constitutes scholastic dishonesty, you should consult with me and the following website:

<http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/conduct/>

* Policy on Scholastic Dishonesty: “Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.”

Emergency Evacuation Policy

* Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

* Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

* Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

* In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.

* Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

* Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: <http://emergency.utexas.edu/>

* Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050,
<http://operations.utexas.edu/units/csas/bcal.php>

Class Recordings

* Some class lectures may be recorded and posted to the class Canvas site.

“Class recordings are reserved only for students in this class for educational purposes and are protected under FERPA. The recordings should not be shared outside the class in any form. Violation of this restriction by a student could lead to Student Misconduct proceedings.”

Sharing of Course Materials is Prohibited

“No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University’s

Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.”

Senate Bill 212 and Title IX Reporting Requirements

“Under Senate Bill 212 (SB 212), the professor and TAs for this course are required to report for further investigation any information concerning incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking committed by or against a UT student or employee. Federal law and university policy also requires reporting incidents of sex- and gender-based discrimination and sexual misconduct (collectively known as Title IX incidents). This means we cannot keep confidential information about any such incidents that you share with us. If you need to talk with someone who can maintain confidentiality, please contact University Health Services (512-471-4955 or 512-475-6877) or the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center (512-471-3515 or 512-471-2255). We strongly urge you make use of these services for any needed support and that you report any Title IX incidents to the [Title IX Office](#).”

WEEKLY READINGS AND TOPICS

Week 1	Demographic Introduction: Religion in Transition
Tuesday, January 16 Thursday, January 18	

Pew Research Center, “[In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace](#); An Update on America’s Changing Religious Landscape.”

Pew Research Center, “[About Three-in-Ten](#) U.S. Adults Are Now Religiously Unaffiliated.”

Robert P. Jones and Daniel Cox, “[America’s Changing Religious Identity](#).”

PRRI, “[The 2020 PRRI Census of American Religion](#).”

Congress: Pew Research Center, “[Faith on the Hill](#): The Religious Composition of the 118th Congress.”

Comparative Perspectives: BBC News, “[Is the UK Still a Christian Country?](#)”

Week 2	Overview and Themes: Religion in America
Tuesday, January 23 Thursday, January 25	

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapters 1 and 2

Lambert, Introduction

* Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth. “The Role of Religion in American Politics: Explanatory Theories and Associated Analytical and Measurement Issues.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and American Politics*.

* Comparative Perspectives: Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, “The Puzzle of Secularization in the United States and Western Europe.” Chapter 4 in *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd edition.

Week 3	Church, State, and the Founding of the USA
Tuesday, January 30 Thursday, February 1	

Lambert, Chapter 1

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 3

* David L. Holmes, “A Layperson’s Guide to Distinguishing a Deist from an Orthodox Christian.” Chapter 12 in *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers*.

Week 4	Church and State in the 19th and 20th Centuries
Tuesday, February 6 Thursday, February 8	

Lambert, Chapters 2-3

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 4

Week 5 (Part I)	Roman Catholics and Politics
Tuesday, February 13	

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 9 (first five sections)

* Ted G. Jelen, “Catholic Politics in the United States: Challenges in the Past, Present, and Future.” *Forum*.

* Mark Rozell, “The ‘Catholic Vote’ in the USA.” Introductory chapter in *Catholics and US Politics after the 2016 Elections: Understanding the ‘Swing Vote.’*

Week 5 (Part II)	Mainline Protestantism
Thursday, February 15	

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 9 (sixth and seventh sections)

Lambert, Chapter 5

* Corwin Smidt, “Evangelical and Mainline Protestants at the Turn of the Millennium: Taking Stock and Looking Forward.” Chapter 2 in *From Pews to Polling Places*.

Ryan P. Burge, “[The Death of the Episcopal Church is Near](#).”

Week 6	The “Religious Right”
Tuesday, February 20 Thursday, February 22	

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 8

Lambert, Chapter 7

* Mark Souder, “A Conservative Christian’s View on Public Life.” From *One Electorate Under God?*

* Andrew Whitehead and Samul Perry, *Taking American Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*, Preface and Introduction.

Ryan P. Burge, “[Are Millennial Evangelicals](#) Going to Change the Narrative?”

Week 7 (Part I)	Culture Wars
Tuesday, February 27	

* Geoffrey Layman, *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*, Preface and Introduction.

Jeremiah Castle and Kyla Stepp, “[Religion and the Culture Wars: A Re-Examination](#).”

General Perspective: Morris Fiorina, “[Has the American Public Polarized?](#)”

Week 7 (Part II)	Exam #1
Thursday, February 29	

Week 8	The “Religious Left”
Tuesday, March 5 Thursday, March 7	

Lambert, Chapter 8

* Brad Fulton and Richard Wood, “Achieving and Leveraging Diversity through Faith-Based Organization. In *Religion and Progressive Activism: New Stories about Faith and Politics*.

* Laura R. Olson, “Collective Identity and Movement Solidarity among Religious Left Activists in the U.S.” In *Religion and Progressive Activism: New Stories about Faith and Politics*.

* Mario Cuomo, “In the American Catholic Tradition of Realism.” From *One Electorate Under God?*

**** Week 9, March 11-15, Spring Break ****

Week 10	Secularism and the “Nones”
Tuesday, March 19 Thursday, March 21	

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 10 (sixth section)

Lambert, Chapter 4

Richard Flory, “[The Changing Nature of America’s Irreligious Explained.](#)” *Religious News Service*.

* Louis Bolce and Gerald De Maio, “Secularists, Antifundamentalists, and the New Religious Divide in the American Electorate.” Chapter 10 in *From Pews to Polling Places*.

* Ryan Burge, “Myth 10: People Return to Religion Late in Life.”

* Ryan Burge, “Myth 15: The Growth of the Nones is Largely from People Leaving Church.”

Week 11	Latinos, Religion, and Politics
Tuesday, March 26 Thursday, March 28	Thursday: Deadline for choosing book to review

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 10 (second section)

Pew Research Center, “[Among U.S. Latinos, Catholicism Continues to Decline but Is Still the Largest Faith.](#)”

* David Leal, “Religion and the Political and Civic Lives of Latinos.” Chapter 10 in *Religion and Democracy in the United States: Danger or Opportunity?*

* Olivier Richomme, “A Catholic Latino Vote?” Chapter 8 in *Catholics and US Politics after the 2016 Elections: Understanding the ‘Swing Vote.’*

Week 12	African Americans, the Black Church, and the Civil Rights Movement
Tuesday, April 2 Thursday, April 4	

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 10 (first section)

Lambert, Chapter 6

* Eric McDaniel and Christopher Ellison, “God's Party? Race, Religion, and Partisanship over Time.” *Political Research Quarterly*, v61(2): 180-191.

* Frederick Harris, “Entering the Promised Land? The Rise of Prosperity Gospel and Post-Civil Rights Black Politics.” Chapter 8 in *Religion and Democracy in the United States: Danger or Opportunity?*

Week 13 (Part I)	Mormons and Politics
Tuesday, April 9	

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 8 (section on Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints)

* David Campbell, John Green, and J. Quin Monson, “Mormon Political Views: Cohesive, Republican, and Conservative.” Chapter 4 in *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics*.

Week 13 (Part II)	Judaism and Islam in American Politics
Thursday, April 11	

Judaism

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 10 (fourth section)

Pew Research Center:

[“Jewish Americans in 2020”](#)

[“U.S. Jews’ Political Views”](#)

Islam

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 10 (third section)

Pew Research Center:

“U.S. Muslims Concerned about the Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream.”

[“4. Political and Social Views”](#)

[“7. How the U.S. General Public Views Muslims and Islam”](#)

Week 14	Elections: Campaigns, Elections, and Participation
Tuesday, April 16 Thursday, April 18	Tuesday: Book Review Due

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapters 5 and 6

Ryan P. Burge, [“The 2020 Vote for President by Religious Groups – Christians.”](#)

Pew Research Center, [“Behind Biden’s 2020 Victory: An Examination of the 2020 Electorate, Based on Validated Voters.”](#)

* Michael Jones-Correa and David Leal, “Political Participation: Does Religion Matter?” *Political Research Quarterly*, v54: 751-770.

Week 15 (Part I)	Elections: Public Opinion, and Partisanship
Tuesday, April 23	

Wald and Calhoun-Brown, Chapter 7

“[How Partisanship and the Political Environment Shape Religious Identity](#): An Interview with Author Michele Margolis.”

Week 15 (Part II)	Exam #2
Thursday, April 25	