



Jindal School of International Affairs
India's First Global Policy School

RELIGION AND POLITICS: DANGEROUS LIAISONS FALL 2026

Course Information

Course code: M.A. (DLB) 0641

Credits: 4 Credits

Course Level: B.A & M.A

Course type: cross elective

Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Christine Moliner

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Office Hours: to be arranged by prior appointment

1. Course Description

Contrary to scholarly consensus predicting the decline of religion in the contemporary world because of modernisation, religion remains a potent factor in social and political life.

Adopting a socio-anthropological lens, this course will firstly introduce the students to the major theoretical approaches of religion in the social sciences to understand the interaction between religion, politics and conflict. We will address a wide range of issues, exploring the relationship between modernity, religion and secularism, between religion and violence, as well as the role of religion in supporting or opposing social change and emancipation.

After discussing those issues in Western contexts (North America, Europe), we will focus, in the last section of the course, on the dangerous liaisons between religion and politics in South Asia, and we will particularly explore how they affect minorities.

A multiplicity of sources - documentary films, academic articles, news coverage, etc.- will be used. We will try to schedule a field visit.

2. Assignments

- Internal break up : 70%
- Class participation (10%)
3 in-class short assignments (30%)
Mid-term exam (30%)
- External break up : 30%
- Final exam

(Detailed guidelines for each assignment will be provided in due course)

3. Academic integrity

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words OR ideas without proper acknowledgement. Any idea, sentence or paragraph you take from a web source or from printed material must be credited with the original source. If you paraphrase or directly quote in the exam or essays, the source must be explicitly mentioned. You should not plagiarize content, be it from scholarly sources (i.e. books and journal articles) or from the Internet.

4. Dos and don'ts

- Be regular in your attendance: it is crucial for your academic performance in this class. As per JSIA attendance policy, an attendance of less than 75% will result in a F-grade for the course.
- Equally important is to study the compulsory readings, which are few in number. This is an essential aspect of this course. If you are not prepared to do the readings, this course might not be the right one for you.
- Refrain from sending emails to the professor during weekends. Allow 24 hours to get a response (from Monday to Friday).
- Do take as much notes as possible from the lectures, compulsory readings, student presentations, in-class discussions, guest-lectures and film screenings.
- Deadlines for all assignments are non-negotiable. If you are absent at the session when your presentation/commentary is scheduled, no rescheduling will be possible.
- This class has a **strict NO MOBILE PHONE policy**: you will have to leave your mobile on the professor's desk when entering the class.

5. Grade Definition

<i>COURSE LETTER GRADES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION</i>			
Letter Grade	Percent age of Marks	Grade Points	
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.
P1	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter.
P2	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

6. Sessions Plan

Information about guest-lectures, film screenings and date of examinations to be shared later. Readings will be made available on UMS. Coming prepared to class means having studied the readings and being able to discuss them.

The readings list might be amended in the course of the semester

SESSION 1	Introduction to the course	Presentation of the thematic of the course followed by an overview of the course structure and assignments. How to define religion? Why study religion? What is the scientific approach of religion?
SESSIONS 2-3	The secularization theory	Sociological approaches of religion The founding fathers of sociology and their understanding of religion & modernity: Marx, Durkheim & Weber Secularization theory: its past dominance & current reappraisal <i>Readings:</i> -Abstracts from K. Marx and M. Weber 1- P. Norris & R. Inglehart, 'The secularisation debate', in <i>Sacred and secular. Religion and politics worldwide</i> , Cambridge University Press, 2021, p. 3-32.
SESSION 4-5	State-Church relations, a transatlantic comparison	Relations between established religions and the State in Europe and the US; historical traditions and current evolution; secularism(s), French <i>laïcité</i> <i>Reading:</i> 2-Joan Scott, 'Introduction', in <i>The Politics of the Veil</i> , Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 1-20.
SESSIONS 6	The feminist approaches of religion	Are all world religions sexist? How do women shape religious traditions? Feminist critique of religion, at the intersection of religion, gender & class
SESSION 7	Religious fundamentalisms and current conflicts	How has modernity shaped religions? Violence, conflict & religion <i>Readings:</i> -Jonathan Fox, 'Fundamentalisms', in <i>Introduction to religion and politics. Theory and practice</i> , p. 98-109. -Mark Juergensmeyer, 'Terror in the Name of God', <i>Current History</i> , Nov. 2001, p. 357-361

<p><u>SESSIONS 8-14</u></p> <p>S 8 Mid-term</p> <p>Detailed session plan to be provided later</p>	<p>Religion, politics and minorities in South Asia</p>	<p>Main religions and faith traditions of South Asia; partition and its legacy; secularism and its discontent; fundamentalisms; atheism & free thinking; religious minorities in South Asia; the politics of religious offence</p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- V. Fazila-Yacoobali Zamindar, <i>The Long partition and the making of modern South Asia</i> (introduction)- Ali Riaz (ed.), <i>Religion and politics in South Asia</i>, Routledge- Bhagat Singh, <i>Why I am an atheist</i>, 1931- Paul Rollier et al. (eds.), <i>Outrage. The rise of religious offence in contemporary South Asia</i>, UCL Press, 2019 (introduction)
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