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## *Expectations*

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This is an introductory course. I don't expect you to know anything about religious studies. But if you're unfamiliar with reading and analyzing scholarly articles or writing in standard humanities styles, you might find some assignments challenging. Read directions closely and seek additional assistance well in advance of deadlines.

Treat every student and every concept you encounter with respect. Challenge your assumptions and position(s) of privilege. Speak from your own experiences and understandings of the issues, and assume that each class member operates from best intentions. Don't evaluate the truth or validity of any tradition; use the evidence we have to position that tradition's beliefs, practices, teachings, and products in the context of religion(s) and U.S. culture.

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## *Class Format*

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Each class will center in sources; some will combine lecture and presentation elements as well. None of these work unless you attend regularly and read the assignments.

Come to class ready to analyze and respond to the primary documents and secondary sources assigned. (The Reading Notes exercise is designed to help you do just that.) Participating in the discussions will be easier if you bring your readings and notes to class with you, so be sure to print them ahead of time.

Your active engagement in discussions and class activities is essential to your success in this class. Remember that "engagement" includes active listening as well as speaking.

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## *Course Description*

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### *Election!*

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America is a nation that prides itself on religious diversity but has been deeply shaped by Christianity. In light of the 2016 presidential election, understanding these tensions is crucial. This course examines religious and political issues that will shape the 2016 election while grounding contemporary debates in their historical context, paying particular attention to the religio-political valence of race. Students analyze speeches, debates, court cases, and visual and popular culture sources as well as scholarly articles to explore how religion and politics shape and are shaped by each other.

After completing this course, successful students will have:

- developed a working knowledge of American religious history and the role religions have played in American politics since the formation of the state
- become critical readers of primary and secondary sources
- acquired first-hand knowledge of the lived political process on the local, state, and federal levels.

## TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Unless you have learning accommodations that require their use, laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices are only permissible in the classroom for specific class activities. You are also required to use certain technologies to

complete your assignments. Most importantly, you need to know how to create PDF documents and submit them via Blackboard in a timely manner. You are responsible for learning how to negotiate these technologies.

Submit all assignments via Blackboard. Any submission that is not in PDF format, submitted as \*.doc or \*.docx files, or assignments submitted via email will not earn full credit. Please follow directions!



I AM COMMITTED TO MAKING OUR CAMPUS AND OUR CLASSROOM AN INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR PEOPLE OF ALL SEXUAL ORIENTATIONS, GENDER IDENTITIES, AND GENDER EXPRESSIONS.

# ARE YOU PARTICIPATING?

## *how to succeed in class by really really trying*

Attendance isn't enough. To succeed in this class, you must fully engage in activities and discussions.

These criteria determine your participation grade. Here's the short version: **speak up!**

### EXCELLENT

You're present, prepared, and engaged. You consistently refer to the readings, lectures, and class discussions from other weeks. You encourage others' comments and questions in a productive and respectful manner.

### GOOD

You're present and prepared, and you offer thoughtful questions and comments that demonstrate your preparation for discussion and attention to readings and lectures.

### ADEQUATE

You're present and prepared, but limit your contributions to several surface-level observations or clarifying questions about lectures or readings.

### MINIMAL

You usually make a single comment during discussions in response to another student's observations or insights.

("I agree with them.")



SEX AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT ARE CIVIL RIGHTS OFFENSES, SUBJECT TO THE SAME KINDS OF PENALTIES APPLIED TO OFFENSES AGAINST OTHER PROTECTED CATEGORIES (SUCH AS RACE, NATIONAL ORIGIN, ETC.). SURVIVORS ARE ENTITLED TO CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT. IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS BEEN HARASSED OR ASSAULTED, SYRACUSE WANTS TO HELP. **HERE** ARE OUR RESOURCES.

## ATTENDANCE -AND- PARTICIPATION

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There is no attendance grade for this class – **you must participate in the conversation to receive credit for attending.** Unless granted an exception due to hospitalization, family emergency, or another extenuating circumstance, students who miss three or more classes will lose two points per missed class from their final grades.

**Students must meet with me once before the midterm.** Contact me before **1 October** to schedule this meeting.

Please don't arrive late for class: it distracts me and your classmates, and it's very rude. Also, please turn off your cell phones before arriving for class. Anyone using their phones, laptops, tablets, etc., for reasons unrelated to class will be asked to leave the discussion and may not make up any missed work.

# Accessibility @ Syracuse

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If you need in-class or testing accommodations because of accessibility issues, if you have emergency medical information, or if you require specific arrangements in the event of a building evacuation, please inform me as soon as possible.

Students who require testing accommodations must pre-register

with **Syracuse's Office of Disability Services** and inform me of these accommodations during the first week of class. Please note that you are responsible for making timely arrangements with the Office of Disability Services and me regarding your testing accommodations.



## WRITE BETTER!

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There are a number of helpful handouts and guidelines for writing on our Lyceum site, including a handout on writing for religious studies. For further assistance, please come to office hours, make an appointment with Syracuse's **Writing Center** or visit their **website**.



## Plagiarism and Cheating

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Presenting someone else's thoughts, words, or ideas as your own is plagiarism. Please don't cheat or plagiarize; you will fail the course. Complete this **plagiarism tutorial**

and submit a passing certificate before **6 September** if you intend to remain in the course. If you're still unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, please consult

the "What is Plagiarism?" handout available on Blackboard or **Syracuse's Academic Integrity Policy**. "I didn't know" is not a valid excuse. Go know.



# Grading

In this course, you will be graded on **how** you think, not **what** you think. In other words, **you will not be graded on your beliefs, opinions, or the positions you advance.** You will be graded on how well you

articulate your thoughts and positions, how closely you read the assigned texts, and how much your ability to think **critically and synthetically** about course themes develops throughout the semester.

## PERCENTAGES

- 10% Participation
- 10% Meme Reflection
- 15% Political Literacy
- 15% Reading Notes
- 15% Midterm Exam
- 15% Harkness Discussions
- 20% Final Exam

## RUBRIC

- A = 94 – 100
- A- = 90 – 93
- B+ = 87 – 89
- B = 83 – 86
- B- = 80 – 82
- C+ = 77 – 79
- C = 73 – 76
- D+ = 70 – 72
- F = 69 and below

# - ASSIGNMENTS -

Here's what we'll be working on this semester. Please consult assignment sheets for more information.

## HARKNESS DISCUSSIONS

This is a method designed to spark rigorous, student-led classroom discussions. Four times in the semester, students will use the class period to respond to a prompt I provide. I will record the conversation but participate only as needed. All participants will earn a single grade.

You must be in class to earn grades for these discussions. If you arrive unprepared, you will be asked to leave the discussion and earn a zero for the assignment.

## READING NOTES

Learning to read, understand, and think critically about challenging material is a key skill for liberal arts scholarship. This assignment will help you become a more careful reader of these texts and jumpstart your preparation for your Harkness discussions.

You are responsible for providing reading notes for one source assigned on the days marked RN on the following schedule. Reading notes are due on Lyceum by midnight before class.

## POLITICAL LITERACY

Groups will follow the public media presence of one national candidate. Each week, student groups will report on news of national political import, as well as significant events in the group's candidate's campaign. Each student will also live-tweet the presidential debates, and collaboratively fact-check (via Genius) 10 statements made by their group's candidate in each debate. If you're eligible to vote, a voting selfie is also required for full credit!

## MEME REFLECTION

This course centers on several key concepts: election and exceptionalism, dis/enfranchisement, religious freedom, religious in/tolerance, and race. Choose one of these concepts and explain how our conversations and readings this semester have helped you understand the term's relevance to the study of religion and politics. Use memes, tweets, and other social media conventions to do this via BuzzFeed. (See assignment sheet for further instructions.)

# Schedule of Classes

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>FOUNDATIONS</b>		
T 30 August	Introductions	
R 1 September	What's religion?	Albanese, "Elephant in the Dark" PRC, "Faith and the 2016 Campaign" Ingraham, "The Non-Religious" Blumberg, "American Religion"
T 6 September	What's politics?	Bivins, "Embattled Majority" Wasserman, "The Political Process Isn't Rigged" PRC, "Politics from the Pulpit" PRC, "A Deep Dive into Party Affiliation" Lind, "Future of American Politics"
R 8 September <b>RN</b>	Political religions	PRC Election 2016 report (skim) Valeri, "Trump and the Evangelical Political Schism" Du Mez, "Fractured Nation" Michaelson, "Tim Kaine...Defies the Religious Stereotype" Mahler and Johnson, "Mike Pence's Journey"
T 13 September <b>RN</b>	Election and Exceptionalism	Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity" Kennedy, "City Upon a Hill" Reagan, "Reagan's Farewell Speech" Baldwin, "The American Dream and the American Negro" Schwartz, "Rebuilding Babel" Colbert, "American Exceptionalism"



# Schedule of Classes

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>FOUNDATIONS</b>		
R 15 September <b>RN</b>	Affect	Berlant, "Trump, or Political Emotions" Schaeffer, "In the Gut, Not the Theology" PRC, "Evangelicals Say It's Increasingly Becoming Harder" HuffPo, "Jewish Reporter Covering Trump" Smith, "Churchgoing Republicans"
T 20 September <b>RN</b>	Disestablishment & Free Exercise	US Constitution, Article VI, paragraph 3 Bill of Rights, Amendment 1 Washington, Letter to the Jews of New York Gordon, "Faith & the Contested Constitution" Haselby, "American secular"
<b>DIS/ENFRANCHISEMENT</b>		
R 22 September <b>RN</b>	Abolition	Noll, "The Bible and Slavery" Beecher, "Essay on Slavery and Abolition" Grimke, "Appeal to the Christian Women of the South" Truth, "Ain't I A Woman?"
M 26 September	Debate	
T 27 September <b>RN</b>	Suffrage, Immigration, and Enfranchisement	13th and 19th amendments Ortberg, "Suffragettes Who Sucked" Zeit, "The Republican Party[s] Race Problem" Voting timelines X, "The Ballot or the Bullet" Jenkins, "Core Support for Trump's Immigration Policies"
R 29 September <b>RN</b>	VRA and Its Legacy	Voting Rights Act (1965) Liptak, "Supreme Court Invalidates Key Part" Ginsburg, VRA dissent (2013) Haberman, "Rigged Election and the Politics of Race" Newkirk, "Voter-Fraud Laws Are All About Race"
T 4 October	Harkness discussion	
R 6 October	Midterm exam	
N 9 October	Debate	

# Schedule of Classes

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>RELIGIOUS FREEDOM</b>		
T 11 October	Defining Religious Freedom	Hurd, "Believing in Religious Freedom" Brown, "Religious Freedom's Oxymoronic Edge" Sullivan, "The Impossibility of Religious Freedom"
R 13 October <b>RN</b>	American Indian Movement	Wenger, "We Are Guaranteed Freedom" Employment Division v. Smith Sullivan, "The World that Smith Made"
T 18 October <b>RN</b>	RFRA(s)	RFRA (1993) Burwell v. Hobby Lobby (2014)
W 19 October	Debate	
R 20 October <b>RN</b>	After Burwell	Imhoff, "The Supreme Court's Faith in Belief" ToS, "Satanists Leverage Hobby Lobby Ruling" Posner, "Discrimination on the Taxpayers' Dime" TIME, RFRA map and timeline Miller, "Did SCOTUS Just Restore Sanity?" ACLU, "Federal 'Religious Freedom' Law" Epps, "Zubik v. Burwell Gets Sent Back Down"
T 25 October	Harkness	
<b>RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE</b>		
R 27 October	Defining intolerance	Corrigan and Neal, from <i>Religious Intolerance in America</i> Pellegrini and Jakobsen, from <i>Love the Sin</i> Killerman, "30+ Examples of Christian Privilege"
T 1 November <b>RN</b>	White Supremacy	Smith, "My Name is Legion" Baker, from <i>Gospel According to the Klan</i> Jones, "The Decline of White Christian America" Pasquier, "White Catholics" Sommers and Norton, "Racism Against White People" Moss, "Christianity Owes Very Little to White People"
R 3 November <b>RN</b>	LGBT Rights	NPR on Kim Davis Cajka, "The Lived Theology of Conscience" Massie, "America's Faith-Based Homophobia Problem" Brintnall, "HB2 and LGBT rights"

# Schedule of Classes

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENT
<b>IN/TOLERANCE</b>		
T 8 November <b>RN</b>	Islamophobia	McCammon, "Whether 'Religious Freedom' Includes Muslims" BRIDGE, "When Islamophobia Turns Violent" Williams, "Anti-Islam Speech Online" Cottee, "Religion and ISIS" Obama, Muslim ban speech Rifai, "Islamophobia Industry"
<b>ALSO on 8 November...</b>	<b>ELECTION DAY!</b> Remember: a <b>voting selfie</b> is part of your political literacy requirement!	
R 10 November	Harkness	
<b>RACE AND AMERICAN RELIGION</b>		
T 15 November	Defining Race	Parker, Stanford study Kurzman, "The Growing Right-wing Terror Threat" Coates, "Letter to My Son" Biss, "White Debt"
R 17 November	No class	
T 22 November	No class	
R 24 November	No class	
T 29 November <b>RN</b>	20th Century Innovation	X, "God's Judgment of White America" Lorde, "Open Letter to Mary Daly" deLoria, "God is Red" Smith, "For All Those Who Were Indian in a Former Life"
R 1 December <b>RN</b>	20th Century Christianity	Cone, "God is Black" and "The White Church and Black Power" Chavez, "Mexican American and the Church" King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"
T 6 December <b>RN</b>	21st Century Civil Rights	Bree Newsome v. the Confederate flag President Obama's Eulogy for Rev. Pinckney Coates, "What This Cruel War Was Over" Gay, "Why I Can't Forgive Dylann Roof" Cressler, "Why White Terrorists Attack Black Churches" Tribute to Mother Emanuel
R 8 December	Harkness	
T 13 December 12:45-2pm	Exam	

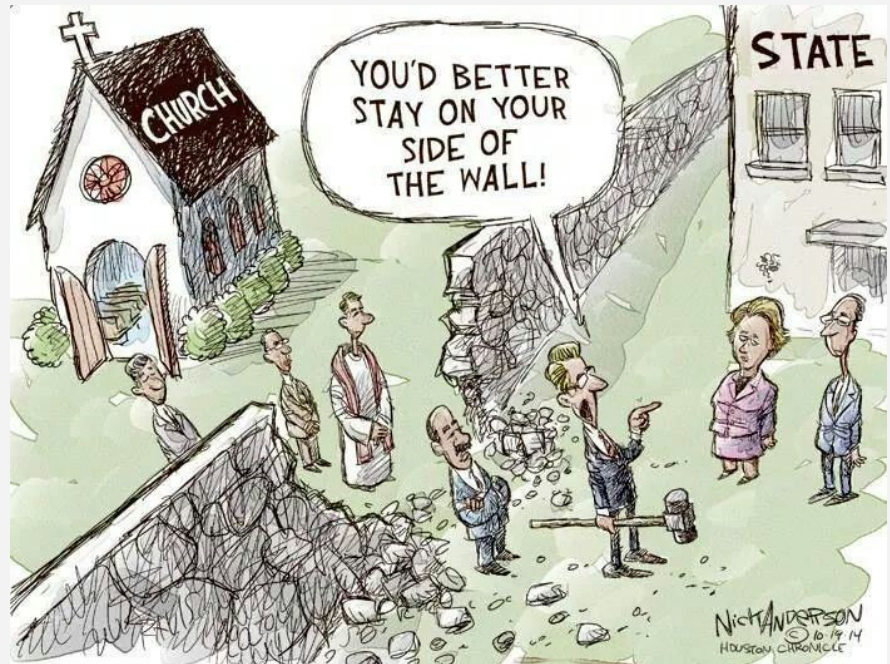


This syllabus is a blueprint, not a contract. As we progress through the semester, I may shift assignments and requirements. But I will not add more readings or assignments than are currently listed here.

## POLITICAL RELIGIONS ONLINE

Much of the public conversation about religion and American politics happens online. Here are a few sources you should keep an eye on:

- [Religion Dispatches](#)
- [Religion and Politics](#)
- [The Immanent Frame](#)
- [Religion in American History](#)
- [Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life](#)
- [Aljazeera: US Election](#)



## EXTRA CREDIT

For up to three points on your final grade, you may write a 750-1000 word analysis of a pop culture portrayal of the relationship between religion and American politics.

(*Purge: Election Year* and *Birth of a Nation* might be of interest.) Summarize the plot and discuss the ways in which the source portrays this relationship. How does it compare to

our class discussions and assigned sources? This is the only opportunity for extra credit; you may only submit an analysis if you complete all other class assignments.



## CLASS INFORMATION

Instructor: Prof. Megan Goodwin  
 Office: Hall of Languages 513  
 Office Hours: TR 12:30 - 2pm  
 Email: [mpgoodwi@syr.edu](mailto:mpgoodwi@syr.edu)  
 Twitter: [#SyrRelPol](#)