
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES
SPRING 2014
TIME AND LOCATION: THURSDAYS, TBA

**LOSING GOD? SECULARIZATION:
THEORY, HISTORY, AND EVIDENCE
BLHV 453-01**

Overview

Are we losing God? This course provides a review of current understandings of the theory, history, and empirical evidence for what is widely known as secularization. This has generally been understood as the process by which organized religion is weakened as a political, social, and cultural force in a society. The degree to which religion loses this role appears to vary by place, time, and faith. Often depicted theoretically as an evolutionary process that develops in a response to the Enlightenment/science, economic development, and/or modernization, the real world development of secularization appears to be much more uneven. There are periodic religious revivals that create reversals and it is rare for the conversion to be anything near complete. Committed atheists (as compared to agnostics or “nones”—those without a religious affiliation) are most often a minority throughout the world—even in places where states have sought to create a completely secular world. Predictions of the demise of religion are common in history. Why have these gone unfulfilled? At the same time clearly religion has often moved from the core of society and the state into the realm of the individual and personal periphery. What can we say about the future of religion today? Is more secularization or religious revival ahead? This course will review the theory, history, and evidence and provide points of view on these questions.

Faculty

Mark M. Gray, Ph.D., Research Associate Professor
Georgetown University and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)
Office Hours: Fridays 1-3 p.m. and by appointment
Telephone: 202-687-0885
Email: mmg34@georgetown.edu

Textbooks (required)

Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory

Steve Bruce (Author)

Hardcover: 224 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press, USA; 1 edition (March 15, 2011)

ISBN-10: 0199584400

Rethinking Secularism

Craig Calhoun (Editor), Mark Juergensmeyer (Editor), Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Editor)

Paperback: 328 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press, USA (August 12, 2011)

ISBN-10: 0199796688

Religion and the State in Russia and China: Suppression, Survival, and Revival

Christopher Marsh (Author)

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: Continuum (January 15, 2011)

ISBN-10: 1441112472

Learning Objectives

1. Describe, compare, and utilize theories of secularization
2. Describe, compare, and utilize theories of the origin and growth of religions
3. Recognize the impact of schisms, liberalizations, and religious switching on religions
4. Explain the role and importance of religious revivals
5. Understand the impact of the Enlightenment and the development of science on religion
6. Understand the process of secularization in the public square
7. Differentiate between the components of personal religious affiliation, belief, and practice
8. Understand the socio-demographic differences between highly religious and highly secularized societies
9. Understand the cultural differences between highly religious and highly secularized societies
10. Evaluate state attempts to impose religion or secularization
11. Using data, provide a general forecast for the U.S. and/or other societies in terms of secularization and religiosity
12. Describe and understand the development of ‘secular religions’

Grading

The grade scale in the course is:

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

Grades for this course will be determined by your performance on course assignments, two exams, and a final paper. The two exams will be given during the semester gauging your grasp of the material. Each is worth 20% of your final grade (collectively **40%** of your grade). Five assignments will each account for 4% of your final grade (collectively **20%** of your grade). In the final paper you will address your point of view of secularization. Engage the literature, research, and readings and select a position regarding what you think has, is, and will occur regarding secularization and religion. Your paper should include evidence to support your claim (i.e., historical examples, trends in public opinion, and trends in religious belief and participation). This paper can focus primarily on a specific region and/or period of your choice as a case study. Or it could be broad and look at more global macro changes. The paper should be approximately 2,700 words. Grades will be based on the quality of research and the arguments put forth (not on the position you advocate—you have the complete academic freedom to express your informed point of view). The paper is worth **40%** of your grade.

Plagiarism & the Georgetown Honor System

The sources for all information and ideas in your papers must be documented using the style followed by the American Psychological Association (APA). In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and documentation of the source of the quotation. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism and will be treated as such. Plagiarized work will be reported to Georgetown’s Honor Council (see below). If the council finds that the work has been plagiarized, the work will receive an F for a first offense; a second plagiarism will earn an F for the course.

All students are expected to follow Georgetown’s honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at www.georgetown.edu/honor, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, “What is Plagiarism?”, “Sanctioning Guidelines”, and “Expedited Sanctioning Process.” Papers in this course will be electronically checked for plagiarism. Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or arc@georgetown.edu.

Attendance, snow, and other emergencies

During inclement weather or other emergencies, check <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu> or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open.

We have only 14 meetings together. Attendance is very important. If you are going to be missing a class please let the instructor know ahead of time. You are responsible for obtaining course material missed during any absence. Consistent with the policies of the Liberal Studies program, having two or more absences may result in failure of the course.

Topic, Focus, Lecture	Readings, Data sets, Quizzes
Jan. 9: Introduction; Theories on the origins of religious belief and institutional religion; introducing the theory of secularization	Bruce Chs. 1 & 2 In-class examination and discussion of cross-cultural creation and origin stories [these readings provided by the instructor].
Jan. 16: The Un-secular: cycles of religious revival and change; Catholicism, Schism, and Reformation	Calhoun Introduction, Ch. 1 “The Pervasive World-View: Religion in Pre-Modern Britain” by Steve Bruce in <i>The British Journal of Sociology</i> , Vol. 48, No. 4 (Dec., 1997), pp. 667-680 [JSTOR]
Jan. 23: God and disaster: Making sense of bad things; “The Flood,” In the Wake of the Plague; Disaster, religious belief, and affiliation in the modern world	Calhoun Introduction, Chs. 2-3; Bruce Ch. 4
Jan. 30: The Enlightenment I	Bruce Chs. 5-7
Feb. 6: The Enlightenment II	Bruce Chs. 8-10
Feb. 13: The religious call and coming to America; the religious beliefs and affiliation of America’s founders; division of Church and state	Exam 1 Calhoun Chs. 6 & 13
Feb. 20: Religious politics in Europe; Popes and absolute monarchs, Rise of Christian Democracy; Conflict with Communism	Marsh Chs. 1-4; Calhoun Ch. 11
Feb. 27: Imposing Atheism: Case studies of Russia, China, North Korea, and Cuba	Marsh Chs. 5-7, Conclusion; Calhoun Ch. 12
Mar. 6: The North and South Divide: Religion and Economic Development; The effects of “modernization”	World Values Study assignment [SDA Archive] Calhoun Chs. 4-5
Mar 15: <i>Distance Learning (2.5 hours):</i> Dueling Documentaries and Online Diary Reflection Assignment	Atheism: A Rough History of Disbelief (2004) <i>Or</i> Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed (2008)

Mar. 20: Catholicism and Science; Friends and Foe alike	“Obscurantism to the Rescue” by Richard Dawkins in <i>The Quarterly Review of Biology</i> , Vol. 72, No. 4 (Dec., 1997), pp. 397-399 [JSTOR]
Mar. 27: Secularization at Home: Religious changes in views on marriage, sex, and family; America’s Changing Sundays	GSS/NES assignment [SDA Archive] Lecture and discussion of findings from Pew’s <i>Religious Landscape Study</i> and Robert Putnam and David Campbell’s <i>American Grace</i> and other recent “None” studies
Apr. 3: The End of history or Clash of Civilizations? Religion and secularization post-9/11	Calhoun Chs. 7-9 “Why Secularism Fails? Secular Nationalism and Religious Revivalism in Israel” by Uri Ram <i>International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society</i> , Vol. 21, No. 1/4, <i>Secular Imaginaries</i> (Dec., 2008), pp. 57-73 [JSTOR]
Apr. 10: Postmodern challenges; The Rise of secular religions; St. Steve Jobs?; Climate change beyond the science; Religious aspects of Atheism	Calhoun Ch. 10 Data and Discussion: Comparing religious and secular at the micro and macro levels. What happens when religion loses influence?
Apr. 24: Discussion of final papers, concluding thoughts	Papers due May 10 (electronic submission suggested)
TBA: Final Exam meeting	Exam 2 during scheduled time of finals week