

## **Religion in American Political Life**

Theology 099-10

Summer School 5-Week Course

Dr. Lauve H. Steenhuisen  
steenhul@georgetown.edu  
Office: New North 140

Tu/Th: 10:45-12:45 p.m.  
Room: Reiss 283  
June 4-July 8, 2016

Religion and politics have fueled debates in American political life since the inception of the nation. James Madison believed that government was not to be cognizant of religion and that religious diversity would protect religious liberty. George Washington believed that government should promote religion because non-sectarian religious language, symbolism, and celebrations would serve as vehicles for moralizing and uniting the nation. Diverse opinions on the role of religion in politics have stemmed from these two postures ever since.

### **Goals of course:**

1. Each student will experience, perhaps for the first time, discussions of politics and religion in a civil, educated, and animated environment.
2. Each student will formulate and express their opinions and express them as a contribution to discourse and the learning of others.
3. Each student will develop clarity of opinion on the values of low-wall or high-wall separation issues.
4. Each student will gain applicable knowledge about A. religious advocacy groups, B. issue politics that they can share in conversations with others.

### **Course Materials Purchase:**

God on Trial: Dispatches from American's Religious Battlefields, Peter Irons, ISBN-13: 978-0143113751; \$16  
Additionally, several articles on BlackBoard

### **Expectations of Students:**

~This course is an active participation environment for the examination of hot-button issues. We will step out into passionate debates and clarify issues through active engagement.

~Each student will be asked to sign a 'Class Member Covenant' of civility and engagement.

~ In accordance with Georgetown's Academic Regulations, students are expected to attend all classes, turn in all assignments by assigned due dates, and actively participate in class discussions.

~Arrive awake, with two thoughts to contribute to class that day

~Grades will be reduced for late assignments, tardiness, missing more than 2 classes, and/or lack of class participation. Students risk failure of the course if they miss more than three classes.

~There will be no computers or phones used in the classroom. All electronic devices must be turned off when class begins. If someone must take notes on the computer for medical reasons, please let the instructor know ahead of time.

**Course Requirements=2 papers, 1 graded discussion, 1 presentation**

**1: Papers-**

Paper #1: 3-page “Presidential candidate and religion” paper

Paper # 2: 5-page “Are you a ‘high-wall’ or ‘low-wall’ American?” cumulative final paper

**2: Graded Discussion on ‘Hobby Lobby’ Supreme Court decision**

**3: Presentation-**

Each student will present in class on a topic. They will choose 1 of these 2 options:

1- “*Issue Politics Debate*” group member (group will choose it’s topic):

Topic Option #1- Kim Davis, County Clerk & Legal Same-Sex marriage licenses

Topic Option #2- Oregon coach Joe Kennedy prays at 50-yard line after games

Topic Option #3-Florist refuses to provide flowers for gay wedding

OR

2-“God on Trial” chapter dual presentation and discussion-leading.

**These tasks will count toward the final grade in these percentages:**

Presidential candidate and religion paper.....	20%
Hobby Lobby Graded Discussion.....	20%
In-Class Debate/Presentation.....	20%
Final Course Cumulative Paper.....	20%
Course Discussions/Participation.....	20%
Course Grade Weight Total.....	100%

**Grading Policy:** Doing a good job earns the grade of B. Doing the minimum requirements earns the grade of C. A’s are reserved for outstanding work that goes well beyond the requirements and is particularly distinctive in its quality.

Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense. Students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. Please see <http://bulletin.georgetown.edu/regulations6.html> for a description of the Georgetown Honor System.

## Course Schedule

Week	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Tasks
1	<b>6/6:</b> Course Introduction & Inaugural Prayers	Wall of Separation PowerPoint on 'Establishment'; "Civil Religion" article discussion	Civil Religion Ballots	Discussion: "Pro-Con: Are we a Christian nation?"	No Class	Read 'Civil Religion' article on BB
2	<b>6/13:</b> <b>Paper #1 Due:</b> "Use of Religion in a Presidential Campaign"	Religious Freedom: 1. PwrPt 2. Cases 3. Discussion	Religious freedom Ballots	<b>Debate Team:</b> "County Clerk Kim Davis refuses to issue legal same-sex marriage licenses."*Or:	No Class	
3	<b>6/20:</b> <b>Discussion:</b> "When can religious freedom be dangerous? ~When do we need to protect it?"	Tax Code 501c3	"8: The Mormon Proposition" Video	Video Discussion & discussion of: "Should the IRS reform the 501c3 exemption/How?"	No Class	
4	<b>6/27:</b> "Judgment Day: Creationism On Trial" Video	Video discussion	<b>Graded Discussion:</b> "Hobby Lobby Decision"	<u>God on Trial:</u> "Football Game Prayer Case" Team Presentation Chap. 5	No Class	Read "Hobby Lobby Decision" article on BB
5	<b>7/4: No Class</b>	<u>God on Trial:</u> "Ten Commandments Cases" Team Presentation Chap. 6	<u>God on Trial:</u> "No 'Under God' in Pledge" Team Presentation Chap. 7	Final Class <b>Paper #2 Due:</b> "Are you a high-wall or low-wall American?"	No Class	

Debate Option #1: County Clerk Kim Davis refuses to issue legal same-sex marriage licenses.

Debate Option #2: Oregon High School Coach Joe Kennedy placed on leave for praying at 50 yard line.

Debate Option #3: Florist Baronelle Stutzman refuses to provide flowers for gay wedding.

**Guidelines for “Presidential Candidate and Religion” Paper  
Religion in American Political Life**

**~Length:** 3 pages, double-spaced

**~Purpose:** Condensed, focused analysis of how issue of a presidential candidate’s religion used for or against him in their campaign.

**~Format:**

- 1. Research**
- 2. Analysis**
- 3. Conclusion.**

**~Questions for examination:**

1. What was their (publically affiliated) religion?
2. What was the time period and historical/political context of their campaign?
3. How was religion framed in the campaign/career?

~Historical presidency’s allowed, but be sure there is enough information available for research substance.

**Guideline Sheet for Final Paper:**  
**“Are you a ‘high-wall’ or  
‘low-wall’ American?”**

**Point of paper:** A cumulative review of what you’ve learned in the “Religion in American Political Life” course placed in the context of your argumentation for your wall’s height status with regard to the separation of church and state in America.

**Graded on:**

1. Wealth of course content represented
2. Strength of argumentation

**Format:** 5 pages, double-spaced, well-cited

## **Religion in American Political Life Formats for Debate Teams**

For each debate day, we will follow a schedule to best get the teams' ideas and arguments before the viewing audience. Here is the format for the debate:

- 1:-'Pro' side 10- minute presentation
- 2:-'Con' side 10-minute presentation
- 3:-15-20 minute open debate for each side to pose questions, challenge responses, etc.
- 4:-30 minute general class discussion on issues and---
- 5: class vote on who presented the most convincing arguments

Presentations should be informative and entertaining, colorful and clear. Make it fun! Be passionate.

**Religion in American Political Life**  
**Format/Rubric Sheet for Presentations on**  
**God On Trial “Supreme Court Case” Chapters**

**Goal of presentations:**

To present clear, objective, and thorough information about this Supreme Court case’s history, stakeholders, outcome, and consequences, if any. You will use the chapter to explore the case, thus, information from outside the chapter has to be researched.

**Format:** PowerPoint (or Prezi, etc.)

**Content:**

1~History of case: geographic locale, timeline of case, important persons. Most important of this section: Please provide images, if at all possible, of the persons involved on both sides of issue—plaintiffs, attorneys, etc. This will give a human face to the case issues, which is the main goal of the presentation. Include edgy quotes from them or about them.

2~Case issues specifically

3~Outcome of case, the ruling’s argumentation

4~Controversies?

5~Lastly and importantly, please provide 2-3 discussion questions for the group to enter the material, keep them short (not too involved or verbose), help us engage your case issues through a few targeted questions. Then, you’ll lead the discussion.

**Length:**

25-30 minutes or so for presentation

15 or so minutes to lead discussion