GGR358H1S: Geography, political economy, and religion
Department of Geography; University of Toronto
M 11-1; SS2110
SPRING 2012
(NOTE: this is not an official course outline. It is posted here for informational purposes only)

Instructor:

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Office Hours: M 2-4

Course website:

Blackboard Portal (updated often, so please check)

Course description:

Focuses on the interaction between political economy and religion, with a particular focus on how this plays out in cities. In the theoretical realm, most political economists have written extensively on religion at one point or another. It is important to consider what they have said about religion and how it might have affected their ostensibly secular ideas about politics and economy. In the practical realm, religion, as belief system invented by humans, structures a great deal of political and economic activity at a variety of spatial scales. Religion, for example, influences relationships between countries, urban politics, city form, and social class among many other spheres. This course is an introduction to both the theoretical and practical applications of the intersection of political economy and religion.

Required Readings:


Available at:
The Bob Miller Book Room
180 Bloor Street West, Lower Concourse
Toronto, ON M5S 2V6
Telephone: (416) 922-3557
(NOTE: there is not a section for this course...our book is in the “theology section”...ask at the front desk if you are confused)

You are responsible for retrieving the remaining readings:

1. Journal articles are available through the University of Toronto Library system (just search for the journal under “e-journals” on the main library website).

2. All other readings will be posted in weekly folders on Blackboard.
Requirements

Essay assignment—25 percent
You will be required to write a 4-page essay on the topic of secularization. It will be due on February 6. Details will be announced in class and via Blackboard.

Group topic presentation—15 percent
You will be required to complete a presentation on one of the topics listed at the end of this course outline (or a topic of your choosing). You may work by yourself or in a group of up to three students (including yourself). In either case, please be ready to select a time and a topic by the second week of class (I will come to class with a signup sheet). Plan for no more than 10 minutes of presentation time, and prepare a hand-out that you will post on the course blog. A sign-up sheet will be circulated on the first day of class.

Late-term test—25 percent
The test will occur on March 19 in the regular classroom and consist of two essays. Approximately 90 percent of the material will be derived from the readings (i.e. just listening to the lectures will not be sufficient to do well on the test).

Poster presentation—15 percent
You will be required to assemble a poster about your final paper topic and present it to the class during one of the final two weeks of class. More details will be announced in class.

Research paper—20 percent
You will be required to write a 5-page, independently researched term-paper. I will explain the details of this assignment in class. It will be due on the final day of class. There is a preliminary list of ideas at the end of this course outline to give you a sense of the range of topics that you might choose.

Policies:

Email: Generally I prefer that you come to see me during my office hours rather than asking in-depth questions (that require in-depth responses) over email.

Additionally, email cannot be used to submit any assignment for this course. Only hard copies of assignments will be accepted.

Blackboard grades: I will attempt to post grades on blackboard as quickly as possible to inform you of your standing in the class. It should be noted however that the grades you see on Blackboard are not official. If you notice a discrepancy between the grade recorded on Blackboard, and the mark listed on one of your assignments or tests, you should assume that the hard copy is correct (not Blackboard). If you notice discrepancies of this sort, please bring them to my attention as soon as possible.

Hard copies of exams and assignments: It is your responsibility to retain a hard copy of all graded work at least until you have received an official mark for the class.

Digital copies of the assignments: It is your responsibility to maintain a digital copy of term work even after you have submitted a hard copy to the instructor.
Penalties for late term work: Written term work (i.e. the assignment) will incur a penalty of 10 percent per day (with nothing accepted one week after the deadline).

Absences from class or examinations: Attendance for the lecture period during the term will not be recorded. It is your responsibility to obtain and retain the course material, which includes lecture. You are very much encouraged to attend all of the lectures, but it is ultimately up to you to decide how often you will attend.

Examination absences are however a very different matter. The only excusable absences from the midterm exam are documented medical or family emergencies. For medical absences, you will need to generate a doctor’s note that clearly excuses you for work on the day of the exam (i.e. a note saying that you were sick the week before the exam is not sufficient). The note should be written on the official letterhead (or notepad) of your physician, and it should be delivered to the instructor within three days of the missed assignment or examination date. At a minimum, the note should include the name and telephone number of your physician so that the instructor can call to verify. Family emergencies vary more in nature, so please contact the instructor as soon as possible about necessary documentation should you find yourself in this situation.

For assignments, you need to demonstrate more than why you were feeling ill on the day it was due. Assignments are circulated and posted on Blackboard during the first few weeks of class, so generating documentation that you were sick on the day it was due or in the days leading up to it will not be sufficient for the instructor to grant an extension. In short, assignment extensions are almost never granted. Please plan ahead and do not wait until the last minute to begin them so that you do not find yourself in this situation.

Without proper documentation for missing an assignment, or being absent from an exam, you will receive a grade of zero for the piece of work in question.

Academic integrity: I expect that most of you are well-acquainted with the university’s policies regarding plagiarism and academic misconduct. Briefly, the quotation or paraphrasing of an author without proper citation is strictly prohibited, as is the submission of an assignment that you did not complete (i.e. buying a term paper, re-using old term papers). For more information about this matter, please visit: www.artsci.utoronto.ca/osai/students. If you are unclear on how to properly cite an author, please visit your college’s writing centre.

Turnitin.com: Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

Disability services: If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or www.accessibility.utoronto.ca.

Course schedule and reading list:
Codes:
BB = Reading has been posted on Blackboard
UT = Reading is available for download through the main library website (note, this will require some time to download and print them all)

Week 1 (9 January): Introduction to the course

Chapter 1 from Garrod and Jones, 2009

Week 2 (16 January): Political economy and religion

Chapters 2 and 3 from Garrod and Jones, 2009

Week 3 (23 January): Geography and religion


Week 4 (30 January): Secularization

Chapter 6 from Garrod and Jones, 2009

Week 5 (6 February): Geography, religion and the city

Essay assignment due today


Week 6 (13 February): Max Weber


20 February: Reading Week, No Classes

Week 7 (27 February): Religion and the welfare state

**Week 8 (5 March):** Religion and politics


**Week 9 (12 March):** Religion, social capital, and the city


**Week 10 (19 March):** Late-term test

**Week 11 (26 March):** Poster Presentations

**Week 12 (2 April):** Poster Presentations AND Research Papers Due
Potential presentation topic ideas:

The following list provides some suggestions for what you might present to the course. It is by no means exhaustive. There are many other topics that could be chosen, and I’d be happy to help you develop an off-topic list if you would like.

*Religion in the ideas of:*
Lord Acton
Daniel Bell
Tommy Douglas
Émile Durkheim
Jurgen Habermas
John Locke
Karl Marx
John Stuart Mill
Thomas Malthus
Reinhold Niebuhr
Thomas Paine
Charles Taylor
Max Weber
Many other possibilities

*Political economy in the ideas of any well-known religious figure (e.g. the Pope, Martin Luther)*

*Political economy ideas in:*
The Bible
The Torah
The Quran

*Political economy in religious social movements:*
The Religious Right
Pentecostalism
Prosperity Theology
Dominionism/ Reconstructionism
The social gospel
Liberation theology

*Some interesting scholars of religion:*
Talal Asad
Steve Bruce
Jose Casanova
Mark Chaves
Clyde Wilcox
Charles Taylor
Robert Wuthnow
Many other possibilities
Potential Paper Topics

The following is a list of ideas that you might consider for your final paper. It is not meant to be exhaustive but rather suggestive of directions that you might take. I very much encourage you to come see me to develop your paper topic, and strategies for researching it.

Faith-based organizations in <fill in the country of your choice>  
- or do a comparison of two or more countries

Comparisons between different types of faith-based organizations in the same country  
- e.g. compare religious education and religious housing providers in Canada  
- e.g. compare Catholic and Evangelical providers  
- e.g. compare FBOs in the Northeast versus the Southeast of the US

Religious justifications or critiques of taxes, financial interest, or trade policy  
- e.g. the aversion to financial interest in the Islamic world (Riba)  
- e.g. Christian arguments for free trade  
- e.g. tithing

A critical summary of <fill in your favourite political economist> writings on religion  
- some interesting examples: Marx, Locke, Weber

An examination of the relationship between recession and church attendance

An examination of the relationship between prosperity and church attendance

Anything on liberation theology

An examination of the social welfare activities of religiously-defined groups

Geopolitics and religion

An examination of the growth of a religion amongst a certain class or group of people (e.g. the current rise of Pentecostalism)

Secularization (or evidence or arguments challenging secularization) in: different countries; different groups within the same country; new immigrants; different religious traditions