

RSOC 148R
RELIGION AND THE PRESIDENCY

T, TH 9:55-11:40 a.m. Kenna Hall 212

Course Description

This course explores a central irony in the United States: the central role of religion despite a secular constitution that prohibits religious tests for office. As we seek to unravel that irony, we will explore the links between religion and the Presidency, from Constitutional conceptions of the role of religion and of the powers of the Presidency right up to the role of religion in the current Presidential campaign. The course strives for a balance between the historical contexts and trajectories of the complex interaction of religion and politics with attention to the particular manifestations of those intersections in the 2008 presidential election. Among the topics covered are the intent(s) of the founding fathers and first presidents, the debate over a "Christian Nation," and themes such as race, gender, and religious diversity. Finally, the course will examine the changing place of religion in the elections and policies of presidents over the last half century, from John F. Kennedy to George W. Bush. Regardless of the outcome of the Nov. 4 election, students will be able to contextualize the victor and his election within the long history of religion and politics in the United States.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- identify, understand and analyze the major ways the religion intersects with presidential politics
- describe the ways that historic debates about the role of religion relate to contemporary debates about the role of religion
- interpret contemporary uses and misuses of religious rhetoric in the current presidential campaign, by partisans and the media alike
- analyze the ways that gender, race, and religious diversity impact the relationship between religion and politics in the United States
- construct both brief and sustained written arguments using contemporary and historical sources to explicate the themes noted above

Texts

The following texts are required and are available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

Randall Balmer, *God in the White House*

Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith*

Additional Required Readings: Additional course materials, resources and updates will be posted on the course website in the ANGEL course management system. Students must sign-up for this course on ANGEL in order to access the material. ANGEL is accessible from the SCU main web page via the "SCU Login" link in the upper right corner. If you do not have an ANGEL account you will need to create one. Once into your ANGEL account, on "My Page," click on "find a course" under the "Courses" banner. Search for this course. Once you have located the course, click on it to enroll. You will need the password "vote" in order to enroll. Once enrolled,

you will be able to access additional readings and resources, as well as course announcements, schedule changes, and grades. The readings will appear in the “lessons” folder. Supplemental readings may be announced or distributed during the quarter.

Course Requirements

Intellectual Engagement. Your presence and participation is essential to your success in this course, and to the success of the course as a whole. Discussion of assigned texts forms a core aspect of this seminar. As a result, the intellectual engagement grade extends beyond mere attendance to emphasize engagement with course materials. Attendance is only a necessary pre-condition for this engagement, not a measure of it. Intellectual engagement will be measured by the extent to which you come to class prepared and are willing and able to discuss the assigned readings. For each class meeting, you should be prepared with questions, comments and observations about the assigned readings and discussion topics.

Portfolio: During the quarter students will write short (750-1000 word) response papers that require a sharp, concise argument about or reflection upon course readings or themes. Together, these papers will form a portfolio of your reflections upon the issues raised by the course and the current political campaign. Response topics will be posted on Angel, and students must complete six response papers over the course of the quarter.

Book Review alternative: in lieu of 2 response papers you may read a book on one of the course topics and submit a review (four pages) of the book. You must obtain approval in advance to exercise this option and the review will be due on the date that topic is discussed.

Group Presentation. For the sixth week of classes, students will be making group presentations on religion and the current presidential election. Group assignments and topics will be distributed during the second week of class.

Final Research Project (12-15 pages): Students will complete individual research projects exploring in-depth and through original research one dimension of the relationship between religion and the Presidency. Papers may focus on any dimension of these intersection, such as religious groups, media coverage, policy decisions, particular presidents or presidential candidates, and during or across any time period. Students must submit a topic proposal for approval no later than Oct. 23.

Grading

Intellectual Engagement	20%
Portfolio	25%
Group Project	20%
Final Project	35%

The Santa Clara University *Undergraduate Bulletin, 2008-2009* (p. 345), identifies the standards for grades as follows: A (excellent), B (good), C (adequate), D (barely passing), F (not passing).

Third Level Religious Studies Course

As the third course in the Religious Studies sequence, the underlying emphasis of this course is an engagement with and opened-ended discussion of critical issues in religion. Focusing on new religions in the U.S. will provide an avenue to engage such issues. Consequently, the emphasis

will be on questions more than answers. Students will be expected to bring together the intellectual tools they have developed in both their core and disciplinary studies in order to make critical, well-reasoned, insightful and nuanced assessments that reflect a variety of perspectives and thereby enhance our understanding of the society and nation in which we live. In order to receive credit for this course as a 3rd level religious studies course, students must have completed their first and second religions courses and have completed at least 88 units.

Disability Accommodation Policy

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disabilities Resources located on the second floor of Benson. Phone numbers are (408) 554-4111; TTY (408)554-5445. Students must register and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations

Academic Integrity

Students are encouraged to collaborate, share ideas, and ask questions of one another. However, all submitted and graded work must be your own and clearly distinguishable from the work of others. Plagiarism is presenting others' work as your own, or failing to cite the contributions of others to your own work. It matters not whether the work is from a fellow student, the world-wide web, or a traditional printed source. If you have any questions as to what constitutes plagiarism, do not hesitate to ask the instructor. The Religious Studies department and Santa Clara University take seriously the commitment to academic integrity. Any violations, including plagiarism or cheating, will result in an "F" and referral to the Office of Student Leadership for further action, as described in the *Community Handbook*. Additional information and resources are available at www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity/.

Course Schedule (Tentative: Schedule and readings subject to change):

PRELIMINARIES

Sept. 23 *Introduction: Religion and Presidential Politics in Historical Perspective*
Identifying issues and interests, perspectives and problems, questions and quandaries

**** Enroll for RSOC 148R on Angel Course Management System**

Sept. 25 *Gaining Perspective: Who are we talking about and how did we get here?*
Declaration of Independence; U. S. Constitution; Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (pewforum.org); Coe and Domke, "Think Religion Plays a Bigger Role in Politics Today?"; Waldman, *Founding Faiths*, Introduction, chp 1

Sept. 26 **1st Presidential Debate, 6pm**

THE FIRST PRESIDENTS AND THEIR INTENT

Sept. 30 *The Founding Fathers*
Waldman, *Founding Faith*, chp 2-11

- Oct. 2 Creating the Nation
Waldman, *Founding Faith*, chp 12-14; Patrick Henry, "Bill Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion," James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance Against Religious Assessments," Thomas Jefferson, "Act for Establishing Religious Freedom"

Vice-Presidential Debate, 6pm

- Oct. 7 Legacies and ongoing Debates
Waldman, *Founding Faith*, chp 15-17

2nd Presidential Debate, 6pm

THEMES IN PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS: RACE, GENDER, & RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

- Oct. 9 Religion and Race
James Bennett, "Obama's Words Ring Uncomfortably True," Michael Eric Dyson, selections; Malcolm X, selections; MLK, Jr., selections

**** Michael Eric Dyson "The Collision of Politics, Religion, and Race," Mayer Theater, 7:30 p.m.**

- Oct. 14 Religion and Race, continued

Oct. 15 3rd Presidential Debate, 6pm

- Oct. 16 Religion and Gender
Hillary Clinton at Faith Forum
Willard, *Woman in the Pulpit*
Edward Blum, "Paul Has Been Forgotten": Women, Gender and Revivalism During the Gilded Age

- Oct. 21 Religious Diversity: the Candidates
Balmer, *God in the White House*, Preface, chp 1, appendix 1
Mitt Romney, "Faith in America"

- Oct. 23 Religious Diversity: the Electorate
Pew forum
John McGreevy, "Catholics, Democrats, and the GOP in Contemporary America"

**** Final Research Project Proposals due**

RELIGION IN THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

- Oct. 28 Presidential Ticket Group Presentation #1
Barack Obama, "Call to Renewal"; John McCain, Beliefnet Interview

Oct. 30 Presidential Ticket Group Presentation #2

INTERLUDE

Nov. 4 *The Religion of Abraham Lincoln*
Abraham Lincoln, "Second Inaugural"
Ronald White, *Lincoln's Greatest Speech*, excerpts
Mark Noll, "The Puzzling Faith of Abraham Lincoln"

ELECTION DAY!

Nov. 6 *Eisenhower and American Civil Religion*
Robert Bellah, "Civil Religion"
Jack Holl, "Dwight D. Eisenhower: Civil Religion and the Cold War"
Gary Scott Smith, "Dwight David Eisenhower, Dynamic Conservatism, and the Religious Revival of the 1950s"

RELIGION IN THE MODERN PRESIDENCY

Nov. 11 *Religious Presidents?*
Balmer, *God in the White House*, chp 2

Nov. 13 *Final Project Consultations*

Nov. 18 *The Rise of the Religious Right*
Balmer, chp 3-4
Jerry Falwell, "Listen America!"

Nov. 20 *Is there a Religious Left?*
Daniel Howe, "Forum: Religion and Politics on the American Scene"
Jim Wallis, *God's Politics*, selections

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Dec. 2 *Bush: the end of an era?*
Balmer, chp 5, conclusion
Kevin Phillips, "Forum: Religion and Politics on the American Scene"

Dec. 4 *The New Religious Pluralism and its Challenges*
Bellah, "Is There a Common American Culture?"

FINAL PROJECT PRESENTATION/ DUE DATE: Tuesday, December 9, 1:30-4:30 p.m.

