

**RSOC 49**  
***Religion, Politics, and Civil Society: Fundamentalism and Democracy***  
Spring 2009  
*Section 47574*  
*11:45am-12:50pm*

Professor Jason Smick

Office: Kenna Hall, Room 311

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00am – 11:00am, and by appointment

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**Course Description and Objectives**

Fundamentalism is now a global phenomenon. Fundamentalist movements have emerged in every major world religion. They are the most visible, and, some would argue, problematic, site of religious reflection and action in the contemporary world. Fundamentalisms seek to effect real and far-reaching changes in modern political and social life. This course is an inquiry into the phenomenon of fundamentalism and the affect it has had over the last 20 years on politics and the creation and/or maintenance of democratic civil societies. The primary objectives of the course are to examine the nature of the changes such groups seek, the extent to which these changes have thus far been realized, and the way fundamentalisms have affected democratic societies. The course will be divided into three sections. The first will be devoted to gaining an understanding of democracies and democratic politics. We will read several texts that locate democratic impulses and/or practices and forms of social organization on varying scales (micro- and macrological) in the Judaic tradition and ancient Greek culture. We will draw on several theses of the philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, and use them to help us understand religious traditions and their fate in modernity and postmodernity. We will also utilize select elements of the theories of religion of Jan Patocka, Sigmund Freud, Emile Durkheim, Bruce Lincoln, and Bronislaw Malinowski. We will use these thinkers to articulate a theory of religion, society, and secularization that clarifies some of the reasons for the emergence of religious fundamentalisms. They will also be used to create a picture of the secular traditions that have contributed to the formation of the modern and postmodern worlds and displaced in certain respects traditional religious cultures. We will then examine and display the structure and activities of religious fundamentalism in Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, and Southeast Asia and discuss how such sub-traditions undermine or inhibit democratic practices and political bodies. Finally, we will look at religious and secular responses to fundamentalism in an effort to identify and assess the possible ways in which democratic forms of life might cope with religious fundamentalism.

**Course Objectives**

- 1) To give students a good understanding of the nature and sources of democratic politics and practice in the U.S., Europe, India, and the Middle East.
- 2) To enable students to identify and understand the sources of fundamentalism in Western and non-Western societies.
- 3) To help students locate and analyze the different forms of religious fundamentalism and their secular analogues.

## Required Texts

Scott Appleby et al., *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World* (book)

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (Questia.com)

Luc Ferry, *Man Made God: The Meaning of Life* (book)

Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion* (Questia.com)

Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science and Religion: And Other Essays* (Questia.com)

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (online text)

Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Madman" from *The Joyful Science* (online text)

Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Questia.com)

Paul Woodruff, *First Democracy: The Challenge of an Ancient Idea* (book)

**\*Note:** See the reading schedule for links to the free online texts. Your reading schedule will be posted to our Angel course page by the end of the first week of classes. By the end of the first week of classes you must sign up for a temporary membership at Questia.com (\*unless you already have the texts available through Questia.com).

## Required Films

*Final Solution* (documentary)

*The Fundamentalists* (online documentary)

## Course Requirements and Grade Weights

Ten in-class quizzes; a Midterm and Final Exam; two short papers (2-3 pages each); active participation in class discussions and in-class assignments.

Course Engagement\*: 10%

Quizzes: 10%

Take-home assignments: 10%

Papers: 20%

Mid-term: 25%

Final Exam: 25%

**\*Note the following:**

- (1) Attendance is mandatory. You will be required to sign a sheet verifying your presence each class period, or, once I know everyone, I will note absences without a sign-in sheet. Unless an unexpected emergency arises, you must let me know beforehand if you will be missing a class. *For each unexcused absence one point will be deducted from your overall final course grade.*
- (2) Your course engagement grade will be based on the degree to which you abide by five rules: (1) you must display the neutral and empathetic manner of approaching religious phenomena discussed in the first week of class; (2) talking in class is not permitted, unless your comments are directed to the whole class (\*the exception is when you are in your discussion group); (3) you will treat the other members of the class – your fellow classmates and your instructor – with the kind of respect and dignity that you expect others to display toward you; (4) you will come prepared for each class, which means that you will have completed that day’s reading assignment, and you will be prepared to answer questions posed by your instructor related to that assignment; and (5) in your discussion group, you will actively engage your fellow group members

**Prerequisites:** one first level course in Religious Studies

### **Office Hours and E-mails**

The hours specified above are my regular office hours. Individually or in groups, I encourage you to visit me to discuss ideas, questions, assignments, etc. If you are unable to visit during my regular office hours, please e-mail me to schedule an appointment. I will do my best to respond to your e-mails within 48 hours; I would ask that you do the same.

### **Angel Course Management System**

You are **required** to use the University’s course management system, Angel, in this course. This means, each of us should enroll in this section on Angel by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> week of classes.

### **Disability Accommodation Policy**

Those of us with a disability or other impairment for which accommodations will be requested should work through Disability Resources, Drahnann Center, in Benson (408-554-4111; TTY 408-554-5445).

### **Academic Integrity and Related Expectations**

Throughout this course we should conduct ourselves in accordance with the academic integrity standards and policies articulated in the University Bulletin (for details, see: [www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity](http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity)).

### **Grading Policies and Regulations:**

For the standard sense of each grade (A, B, etc.), please refer to Santa Clara University Undergraduate Bulletin 2007-2008, p. 335. Specific policies related to individual assignments will be given along with those assignments as is appropriate.

### **Subject to Change**

This syllabus is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements and changes made while you were absent.