

## RSOC 134 – Religion & Secularization

MW 4:45-6:30 | Kenna 218

Elizabeth Drescher, PhD



### Course Description

This course explores the relationship between religion and secularism. It begins by exploring the development of religious diversity among (primarily Christian) religious positions in the West in the early modern period (from the Protestant Reformations through the eighteenth-century). It moves to more contemporary themes, including the tension between religious identities and the modern state, the so-called “God debate” by prominent “new atheists,” and other recent global controversies related to religion in a world assumed by many to be largely secular. The course fulfills **RTC3** requirements for the core curriculum for students who have already completed *RTC1* and *RTC2* requirements.

According to many important nineteenth- and twentieth-century social commentators and scholars, modernization of the world meant its secularization: as the world developed, it would also become more secular—less dependent on and less influenced by religious ideas. By the early twenty-first century, we know that this assumption has turned out to be inaccurate. In the United States, while a growing number of people claim no religious affiliation, the majority of the so-called “Nones” nonetheless believe in supernatural beings or powers. Their spiritual and religious practices continue to influence American culture, including politics, education, and institutional religion. Elsewhere in the world, religiously influenced violence, as in the Charlie Hebdo attacks in France, continue to challenge assumed boundaries between religion and “the secular.”

In this course we will consider religion and secularity not as binaries, but as existential, social, and political bedfellows that together shape what it means to be both religious and secular in contemporary culture. We will focus on the development of ideas (e.g., “toleration,” “religious freedom,” “diversity”) and critical concepts (e.g., “religion,” “the secular,” “pluralism”) The readings will include texts from religious studies, anthropology, sociology, history, and other disciplines that enable us to examine theoretical approaches to religion(s) and secularism(s) that unfold in various debates and conflicts at the intersections of religion and politics, religion and science, religion and popular culture, et cetera. Case studies will invite students to explore how historical experience and theoretical concepts enter into the lived reality of religion and secularity.

### Learning Objectives for Religion, Theology, and Culture 3

- 3.1 Identify diverse perspectives and evaluate ethical positions on contemporary questions.
- 3.2 Evaluate and apply insights from the study of religion to open-ended questions facing contemporary society.

### Course Learning Objectives

- 1. Students will gain an awareness of the historical, political, and theoretical roots of secularization in relation to global political, economic, social, and religious change.
- 2. Students will be introduced to the major debates about religion, secularity, and the so-called “post-secular.”
- 3. Students will be able to critically analyze new approaches to religion and secularization in light of relevant sources in religion, anthropology, sociology, history, and other related disciplines.

4. Students will apply insights gained from class readings, discussions, and their own resource to questions of religiosity and secularity in American life as they experience and observe it.

### Required Texts

Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). (Noted as “Rethinking” in course schedule.)

### Course Requirements

Class Participation	20% of final grade
Case Study Presentation	25% of final grade
Midterm Paper	25% of final grade
Final Exam	30% of final grade

**Class Participation** – This is an upper level course, which requires significant engagement by students to achieve learning outcomes. Students are expected to attend *every class*, to arrive *on time*, and to *have read* all of the assigned materials, noting significant insights, questions, areas of confusion, agreement, or disagreement raised by the materials. Students should likewise consider how the issues raised in readings and other materials relate to real life contexts, either in their own experience or their observation. Throughout the course, we will apply our understandings of the concepts, issues, and questions raised in the readings to case studies of situations in the recent past in which encounters between religion and secularism were central. Working together, students will prepare individual responses to cases assigned by the instructor, researching these cases in common, exploring news reports, commentary, and academic analysis for each week’s Wednesday class.



**Discussion Leaders**—To help facilitate robust, engaged learning in a course covering complex historical and ideological territory, two (or three, some weeks) discussion leaders will be named for each class after the first week. Each student will lead two discussions. Discussion leaders do not relieve other students of the responsibility of preparing fully for class. But they do take on the special task of introducing the readings for the day, raising important questions, and identifying key issues introduced by the texts. Leading discussions will contribute to preparation for the midterm paper. (3.1, 3.2)

**Case Study Presentations**—Working in pairs will research a case of religious/secular encounter assigned during the first week of class. Case presentations will begin in week 4. Research will involve reviewing relevant news accounts, commentary, and academic analysis of the case. Each student in the duo will share her or his informed perspective in class during the assigned week. Students will have 20 minutes to present their insight on the case as it speaks to historical and current questions of religion and secularization. Each student will provide a reading related to the case to the class one week before the presentation of the case in class. The case study work will contribute to students’ midterm papers. Guidelines will be provided the first week of class. (3.2)

**Midterm Paper** – Students will submit a 10-12 page paper in which they apply their informed understanding of theoretical concepts of “religion,” “secularism,” “pluralism,” et cetera to a contemporary case of encounter or conflict between religious and secular viewpoints and practices. The paper will draw upon research for a case study that will be shared in class. Paper guidelines will be shared the second week of class. (3.2)

b – The final exam will take the form of an Oxford-style debate in which two teams of students research opposing positions on a proposition presented by the professor two weeks before the last class session. Guidelines on the debate format, research requirements, and grading criteria (which will be developed in consultation with students) will also be provided two weeks before the last class. (3.1, 3.2)

### Couse Policies

## Attendance

Attendance will be taken in each class. Prompt attendance for each class session is required. **More than two excused or unexcused absences will negatively impact a student's final grade.** Arriving late or leaving early more than three times will count as an absence. If students must miss a class, it *is their own responsibility to get notes from a classmate and make up missed work.* The professor *will not* meet with students during office hours to make up material from missed classes.

## Academic Integrity

Students should read and understand the University's policy with regard to academic integrity:  
<http://www.scu.edu/academics/bulletins/undergraduate/Academic-Integrity.cfm>.

Suspected violations of academic integrity (“e.g., plagiarism, falsification of data, misrepresentation of research...and other acts generally understood to be dishonest”) will be investigated immediately, and students shown to have violated the University academic integrity policy will receive a failing grade on the assignment and may also fail the course.

It is worth noting that what constitutes plagiarism is often misunderstood, and students often plagiarize unintentionally. Students are advised to take particular care when quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing another source in writing assignments or oral presentations so that the student does not appear to be representing the words, thoughts, or ideas of the source as her or his own. The University of North Carolina provides a handout on plagiarism that may be helpful for students to review:  
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/plagiarism.html>.

## Disability Accommodation

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, [www.scu.edu/disabilities](http://www.scu.edu/disabilities) as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.

## Electronic Devices

Students may use laptops for note taking and group work in class, including online research. However, cell phones, PDAs, pagers, mp3 players, and other electronic devices are not permitted. Students may not make or respond to phone calls or text messages nor may they send or receive emails or update social networking statuses during class.

Should the use of *any* electronic devices by *any one student* to be disruptive, the privilege of using laptops will be revoked for *all students* and the *offending student(s)* will be marked absent for that class session.

Cell phones or other electronic devices used for personal communications in class (e.g., texting, tweeting, posting) will be removed from the offending student and returned at the end of the quarter.

## Title IX Statement

Santa Clara University upholds a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and

dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to [www.scu.edu/studentlife](http://www.scu.edu/studentlife) and click on the link for the University's [Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie at [408-554-3043](tel:408-554-3043) or by email at [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through [www.scu.edu/osl/report](http://www.scu.edu/osl/report) or anonymously through Ethicspoint: [www.ethicspoint.comhttp://stage-www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethics-point/](http://www.ethicspoint.comhttp://stage-www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethics-point/)

While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with issues you may be struggling with or concerns you may be having, please be aware that there are some reporting requirements that are part of my job at Santa Clara University.

For example, if you inform me of an issue of harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's EEO and Title IX Coordinator. If you inform me that you are struggling with an issue that may be resulting in, or caused by, traumatic or unusual stress, I will likely inform the campus Student Care Team (SCU CARE).

If you would like to reach out directly to the Student Care Team for assistance, you can contact them at [www.scu.edu/osl/report](http://www.scu.edu/osl/report). If you would like to talk to the Office of EEO and Title IX directly, they can be reached at 408-554-3043 or by email at [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through [www.scu.edu/osl/report](http://www.scu.edu/osl/report) or anonymously through Ethicspoint: [www.ethicspoint.com](http://www.ethicspoint.com). Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Life (OSL), Campus Safety Services, and local law enforcement. For confidential support, contact the Counseling and Psychological Services office (CAPS), the YWCA, or a member of the clergy (for example, a priest or minister).

Finally, please be aware that if, for some reason, our interaction involves a disruptive behavior, a concern about your safety or the safety of others, or potential violation of University policy, I will inform the Office of Student Life. The purpose of this is to keep OSL apprised of incidents of concern, and to ensure that students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student wellness services they need.

## Course Outline

### **Week 1: Introduction**

#### Part I. Setting the Stage (Monday, September 21)

- ❖ Introduction of the theme and course overview.
- ❖ What is religion? What is secularism: The Case of Kim Suozzi (Handout/Email)

#### Part II. Historical Background (Wednesday, September 23)



1. José Casanova, “Secularization, Enlightenment, and Modern Religion,” chapter 1 of *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 11-39. (Canvas)

### **Week 2: The Secular, Secularization & Secularism: Definitions and Debates**

#### Part I. Terminologies (Monday, September 28)

1. Charles Taylor, “Western Secularity” (Rethinking)
2. José Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms” (Rethinking)

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2)

Part II. The Contemporary Debate (Wednesday, September 30)

1. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford UP. 2003. (chapter 6: Secularism, Nation-State, Religion, pp. 181-205). (Canvas)
2. Jose Casanova, 'Secularization Revisited: A Reply to Talal Asad', in *Powers of the Secular Modern: Talal Asad and his Interlocutors*, ed. by David Scott and Charles Hirschkind, Stanford 2006, pp. 12-30. (Canvas)

Wednesday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (4)

**Week 3: Historical Contexts and Conflicts**

Part I. Theoretical and Historical Perspectives (Monday, October 5)

1. Jean Bauberot's 'The Two Thresholds of Laicization', in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics*, pp. 94-136.
2. Daniele Hervieu-Léger, 'Individualism, the Validation of Faith and the Social Nature of Religion in Modernity', in *The Blackwell Companion to the Sociology of Religion*, Oxford 2001, pp.161-64.
3. Talal Asad, 'Muslims as a "Religious Minority" in Europe', in T. Asad, *Formations of the Secular in Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford 2003, pp. 159-180.

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (6)

\_\_\_\_\_ (7)

Part II. Modernization, Democracy & Religion in Secularization (Wednesday, October 7)

1. Alfred Stepan , "The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes" (Rethinking)
2. Peter J. Katzenstein, "Civizational States, Secularisms, and Religions" (Rethinking)

Wednesday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (8) \_\_\_\_\_ (9)

**Week 4: Science and Religion**

Part I. Intellectual Legacies (Monday, October 12)

1. Stanley Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1990), pp. 1-15. (Camino)
2. Jay Laycock, "Vampirism and Religion, a Dialogue," chapter 6 of *Vampires Today: The Truth About Modern Vampirism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2009), 120-137. (Camino)

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (10) \_\_\_\_\_ (11)

Part II. Case Study. The quest for transcendence: on vampires, magic and modern witches (Wednesday, October 14)

Case Study Presenters:

\_\_\_\_\_ (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2)

## **Week 5: Global Religions & Secularisms: Eastern Europe**

### Part I. Theoretical and Historical Perspectives: Europe & Eastern Europe (Monday, October 19)

1. Elizabeth Shakman Hurn "A Suspension of (Dis)Belief: The Secular-Religious Binary and the Study of International Relations" (Rethinking)
2. Cecelia Lynch, "Religious Humanitarianism and the Global Politics of Secularism" (Rethinking)

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (12) \_\_\_\_\_ (13)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (14)

### Part II. Case Study: Pussy Riot: Russian Orthodoxy and Human Rights (Wednesday, October 21)

Case Study Presenters:

\_\_\_\_\_ (3) \_\_\_\_\_ (4)

## **Week 6: Global Religions & Secularisms: Islam in Europe**

### Part I. Religion, Religious Pluralism, and Secularism in Europe

1. Courtney Bender, "Pluralism and Secularism," in *Religion on the Edge: De-Centering and Re-Centering the Sociology of Religion*, ed. by Courtney Bender and Wendy Cage (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 137-158. (Camino)
2. R. Scott Appleby, "Rethinking Fundamentalism in a Secular Age" (Rethinking)

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (15) \_\_\_\_\_ (16)

### Part II. Case Study: Charlie Hebdo: Islam in Europe (Wednesday, October 28)

Case Study Presenters:

\_\_\_\_\_ (5) \_\_\_\_\_ (6)

## **Week 7: Religion, the state and the secular: Asia, Turkey and Middle East**

### Part I. Secularism in Muslim Societies (Monday, November 2)

1. Aziz Al-Azmeh, 'The Religious and the Secular in Contemporary Arab Life', in *Islams and Modernities*, 2nd edition, ed. Aziz Al-Azmeh, Verso Books, 1996, pp. 41-58. (Camino)
2. M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009, pp. 14-43. (Camino)
3. Richard Madson, "Secularism, Religious Change, and Social Conflict in Asia" (Rethinking)

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (17) \_\_\_\_\_ (18)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (19)

**\*\*MIDTERM PAPERS DUE IN CLASS\*\***

Part II. Case Study: The Arab Spring (Wednesday, November 4)

Case Study Presenters:

\_\_\_\_\_ (7) \_\_\_\_\_ (8)

**Week 8: Colonial legacy: religion and modernity**

Part I. Theoretical Approaches: The Indian case (Monday, November 9)

1. Peter van der Veer, “Smash Temples, Burn Books: Comparing Secularist Projects in India” (Rethinking)
2. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313. (Canvas)

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (20) \_\_\_\_\_ (21)

\_\_\_\_\_ (22)

Part II. Case Study. The Secularism Debate in India: Secularism & Pluralism (Wednesday, November 11)

Case Study Presenters:

\_\_\_\_\_ (9) \_\_\_\_\_ (10)

**Week 9: Religion & Secularism in the Public Sphere**

Part I. Freedom Of/From Religion (Monday, November 16)

1. Talal Asad, “Freedom of Speech and Religious Limitations” (Rethinking)
2. Marci A. Hamilton, “The Case for Evidence-Based Free Exercise Accommodation: Why the Religious Freedom Restoration Act Is Bad Public Policy” (Canvas)

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (23) \_\_\_\_\_ (24)

\_\_\_\_\_ (25)

Part II. Student Case Studies: The RFRA Debate (Wednesday, November 18)

Case Study Presenters:

\_\_\_\_\_ (11) \_\_\_\_\_ (12)

**\*\*THANKSGIVING WEEK, NOVEMBER 23-27: NO CLASS\*\***

**Week 10. Final Discussion**

Part I. Speaking Religiously, Speaking Secularly (Monday, November 30)

1. Wendy Cage, "Introduction" to *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech*, Talal Asad, Judith Butler, Saba Mahmood, Wendy Brown eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 7-19. (Camino)
2. Wendy Doniger, "From Kama to Karma: The Resurgence of Puritanism in Contemporary India" (Camino)
3. Wendy Doniger, "God's Body, or, The *Ungarn* Made Flesh: Conflicts over the Representation of the Sexual Body of the Hindu God Shiva" (Canvas)

Monday Discussion Leaders:

\_\_\_\_\_ (26) \_\_\_\_\_ (27)

\_\_\_\_\_ (28)

Part II. Student Case Studies: Wendy Doniger and Blasphemy (Wednesday, December 2)

Case Study Presenters:

\_\_\_\_\_ (13) \_\_\_\_\_ (14)

Part II: Final Exam (TBD week of December 7)

In class.