

Northern Arizona University  
College of Arts and Sciences

Department of History  
Fall 2007

*HISTORY 460 Topics in World History: RELIGION, POLITICS AND POWER IN THE MODERN WORLD*

**Instructor: Sanjay Joshi**  
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**Meeting : Tu 2:30-5:00 , LA 203**  
**Office Hours: T-Th. 12:30-1:30,**  
**and by appointment.**  
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**A COPY OF THIS SYLLABUS WILL ALSO BE ON THE COURSE WEB PAGE**

Course URL <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/relpowerpolitics.html>

NAU Policy Statements <http://www2.nau.edu/academicadmin/plcystmt.html>

Classroom Management Statement <http://www4.nau.edu/stulife/handbookmanagement.htm>

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to histories outlining different relations between religion, politics, and power in the modern world. Our major objective is to understand some of the ways in which religion is shaped by, and in turn shapes, how politics and power are configured in the world today. Rather than assuming we already understand what “religion” is, and debating whether it is good or bad, or inherently oppressive or liberatory, in this course we first seek to understand this category we call “religion” as itself a product of history. We then study some of the many ways in which religion is connected with politics and power at different times and in different places in the modern world.

**A LITTLE ABOUT THE FORMAT OF THIS COURSE**

Discussions between students, and between students and myself, will be the main vehicle driving the learning experience in this classroom. As a result **there will NOT be a great deal of lecturing, if any**, in this course. I expect all students to be active participants in creating a viable and vibrant learning experience in the classroom, rather than be passive recipients of information.

*There is quite a large amount of reading required for this course.* You will be, on many occasions, expected not only to read the required essays or chapters, but also draw your own connections between the different readings. The classroom will be a site where we will discuss our different interpretations of the essays/chapters and the connections between them. This too is very much part of the seminar experience, and often the most enriching. I **strongly** urge you to make your own notes on the reading and bring them to class. These will facilitate discussion and make the assignments much easier to complete. Though generally true, I will really emphasize that in this course you will get from the course exactly what you are prepared to put in!!

If you have not taken history seminar classes before, this may be a very new experience for you. One major difference between seminars and lecture courses is that seminars require ALL participants come to every class having done the required readings for the week, AND ready to participate actively in class discussions. **Any student may, with or without previous intimation, be called upon to make brief presentations on the assigned readings during the class.** A point I should emphasize is that while participation is encouraged, and worth points in

this class, seminars are not occasions for presenting uninformed opinions even if they relate to the topic under discussion. You will be expected to, and indeed called upon, to relate your interventions to the readings and/or other credible, preferably scholarly, sources of information.

**READINGS** Two books have been ordered at the NAU Bookstore for this course.

1. Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
2. Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, revised edition, 2006.

In addition, there are a large number of essays which are on electronic reserve via the Vista Shell. I will try to create direct links to the essays from the web page for this course as well. Any electronically distributed assignments and/or guidelines for the course will ONLY be available via the course web page.

**ASSIGNMENTS:** There are three sets of assignments required for this class.

1. **Formal Reports:** on FOUR out of the FIVE sections of the course. These should be between four to six pages of typed prose and closely engage with the readings and class discussions on the subject. The web page for the course will have guidelines to help write each review. Each of these will count for 15% of the total course grade. I encourage you to write all five reviews and I will take the four best into account in calculating the final grade.

2. **Discussion Leadership:** Either individually or as part of a team (to decided upon, depending on class size) students will be responsible for leading the discussion of the reading for at least ONE class period from September 18 through to October 23. This will involve not only doing the readings, but *also meeting with me during office hours the Thursday BEFORE the class you are due to lead discussion*, to discuss the readings, their implications as well as questions and strategies for encouraging discussion in the classroom.

3. **Final Take Home Exam:** will ask you to write a ten to twelve page analytical essay based on questions addressing some of themes we cover in the course.

**EVALUATION:** The final grade for the class will be calculated as follows:

\* Participation 10 points

*Please note:* This includes regular attendance as well as an evaluation of the QUALITY of your participation in class discussions rather than its quantity.

I will take into account the extent to which your participation reveals a close reading and analytical thinking about the readings.

\* Leading Discussion (grade assigned individually or as a team depending on class size) 10 points

\* Four Formal reading reports. (15 points each) 60 points

\* Final take-home essay exam. 20 points

TOTAL 100 points

The grading scale for the course will be as follows:

90-100 = **A**; 80-89= **B**; 70-79= **C**; 60-69= **D**; below 60= **F**.

UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED, ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE IN CLASS

### **OTHER COURSE POLICIES**

**PLEASE NOTE:** I do not give extensions or incompletes except in cases mandated by University policy. I will require documentation, e.g. a doctor's certificate or its equivalent, to allow for an extension.

While I will excuse one documented absence from the class, missing more than one class out of the eleven teaching classes during the semester will impact your performance, and will certainly result in grade penalties. ***Missing more than three classes for reasons other than University business or medical emergencies will result in failing the course, regardless of other performance.***

Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in failing the course. Please consult the *NAU Student Handbook's* sections on academic dishonesty if you are not certain of the meaning of this term. **IT IS THE STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITY TO FAMILIARIZE HERSELF/HIMSELF WITH THESE MATTERS AS DEFINED BY THE UNIVERSITY.**

### **PROVISIONAL COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to modification)**

**August 28**                                      **Course Introduction**

**September 4**                                      **SECTION I: What is religion?**

#### **Required Readings**

1. "Introduction" from <http://www.as.ua.edu/rel/studyingreligion.html> (I also encourage you to read the next two sections of this website, "Essentials of Religion" and "Functions of Religion" though these are not mandatory).
2. Peter van der Veer, "Secularity and Religion" from his, *Imperial Encounters*, pp.14-29.
3. Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category" from his *Genealogies of Religion*, pp. 27-54. <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/asadfirstchapter.pdf>

**September 11-25**                                      **SECTION II: Religion and Politics in our Times**

#### **Required Reading**

Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*.

#### **Schedule:**

September 11: *Holy Terrors*, Chapters One and Two.

September 18: *Holy Terrors*, Chapters Three and Four,  
**Assignment: Report of Section I due.**

September 25 *Holy Terrors*, Chapters Five and Six.

**October 2-9**

**SECTION III: Historicizing Religion: Religion and Modernity**

Required Reading

Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*.

Schedule:

October 2: *Imperial Encounters* Chapters Two, Three and Four.

October 9: *Imperial Encounters* Chapters Five and Six.

**Assignment: Report of Section II due.**

**October 16-30**

**SECTION IV: Gender and Religion**

Schedule:

October 16:

1. Randall Balmer, "American Fundamentalism: The Ideal of Femininity," in *Fundamentalism and Gender* pp. 47-62.

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/balmergenderusfundamentalism.pdf>

2. Sikata Banerjee, "Gender and Nationalism: the Masculinization Of Hinduism and Female Political Participation in India." *Womens Studies International Forum*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2003. pp. 167 – 179. **Electronic Reserve**

3. Simona Sharoni, "The Myth of Gender Equality and the Limits of Women's Political Dissent in Israel" and Lisa Hajjar "Between a Rock and a Hard Place" from *Middle East Report* (MERIP) Vol. 207, Summer 1998, pp. 24-28.

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/sharonigenderzionism.pdf>

October 23:

1. Lila Abu-Lughod, "The Muslim Woman: The Power of Images and the Danger of Pity" *Eurozine* 2006-09-01. <http://eurozine.com/pdf/2006-09-01-abulughod-en.pdf>

2. Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood, "Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency", *Anthropological Quarterly*, 75.2 (2002), 339-354.

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/HirschkindMahmoodTaliban.pdf>

**Assignment: Report of Section III due.**

October 30

Film Screening *Under One Sky* and Discussion

November 6-13

SECTION V: Thinking about Religion and Secularism

Schedule

November 6

1. Juan Cole, "The Modernity of Theocracy" in his *Sacred Space and Holy War*, pp. 189-211. <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/colemodernitytheocracy.pdf>
2. Mahmood Mamdani, "Good Muslim Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective on Culture and Terrorism." *American Anthropologist* 104 (3) 2002, pp. 766-775. [http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/mamdani\\_goodmuslimbadmuslim.pdf](http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/mamdani_goodmuslimbadmuslim.pdf)

**Assignment: Review of Section IV Due.**

November 13

1. Peter Winn, "Power and the Glory" chapter X of his *Americas: The Changing Face of Latin America and the Caribbean*, pp. 348 [text 353]-393. **Electronic Reserve**
2. Enrique Dussel, "World Religions and Secularization from a Postcolonial and Anti-Eurocentric Perspective" in *The Invention of Religion*, pp. 179-189. <http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~sj6/dusselworldreligion.pdf>
3. Talal Asad "Comments on Conversion" in Peter van der Veer, ed. *Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity* New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 263-274. **Electronic Reserve**

November 20-December 4

**Concluding the Course**

November 20<sup>th</sup>                      Review of Foregoing Material  
Reading

I especially urge you to re-read Talal Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category" from his *Genealogies of Religion*, pp. 27-54.

**Assignment: Review of Section V Due.**

TAKE HOME FINAL ASSIGNED

November 27<sup>th</sup> NO CLASS: Work on FINAL

December 4<sup>th</sup> : END OF TERM REVIEW: Take Home FINAL DUE

Happy holidays... religious, secular or perhaps just profane!