

Death of God (REL 370C)

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Office hours: TR 9:00-10:00, 1:00-2:00; or by appointment

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TR 2:20-3:50
EM 211

Description

This course is a study of the history, theory and practice of secularism. It is divided roughly into two sections: the first half of the semester focuses on the history of secularization in the West and its impact on politics, religion and broader culture; the second half of the semester examines political, religious and cultural responses to secularization in non-Western societies, looking specifically at cases in India, the Middle East and Turkey. The aims of the course are: 1.) to help students gain an appreciation of the role of secularization (the ideas and practices related to it) in shaping and defining modernity in the West; 2.) to examine the way secularization has been used to challenge and undermine alternative paths to modernization in non-Western countries; and 3.) to provide a critical basis for evaluating the future of secularization in a more globalized world.

The title of the course, Death of God, is a metaphoric phrase intended to capture the supposed end-point of the secularization process. According to some advocates of secularization, God/religion would ultimately fade away—certainly in public life but ideally also in private life—as societies became more enlightened and modern. Such predictions, of course, have not materialized. Indeed, religion now seems to be as strong as ever, in the West and elsewhere. Still, secularization has come to define a certain separation or balance of authority between religion and politics, one that is associated with Western democracy and two of its supposed fruits: pluralism and tolerance. Our task is to tease out the legacy of secularization and assess its continued usefulness as an idea and practice for understanding it means to be modern.

Conflict Studies and Ethics

The Death of God is a new course for me. It has been designed to address the intersecting thematic concerns of Religious Studies, Conflict Studies and the Janet Prindle Ethics Institute. Secularization has long been a sign of modernity/modernization, and as such, it has been viewed in ethical terms. The simple equation goes as follows: modernity is a positive, progressive value—something for societies to work toward; and since modernity and secularization are twinned notions, secularization also possesses positive social and political value. Conflict over the value of secularization has been around since the idea emerged in Europe, as we shall see this semester. Europeans debated the necessary link between modernity and the secular, and this debate continues in the West, in the academy and beyond. That the West was at the center of the modern world, however, was never in much dispute. The West gave birth to the scientific and political revolutions that would change the way people live around the world. And the idea of the secular became part and parcel of the thinking associated with these revolutions. It also, like modernity itself, became an instrument for measuring and critiquing social and civilizational progress. This semester we will explore both the intellectual disputes about secularization and the domestic and international political conflicts in which secularization has played an important role.

Class Expectations

As a 300-level S-seminar, this course will approach its subject material primarily through discussion. This means that each student is responsible for the upkeep and the success of the class. **For each class meeting, students must read the assigned materials, reflect upon them, and identify a minimum of three ideas/quotes/questions that they believe we should discuss.** Everyone in the class is a discussant, including myself. If it seems that students are falling into patterns of silence, I will call on individuals to reinvigorate the discussion. And given the expectation cited above, individuals will always have something to say!! What we are aiming for is informed discussion (that is, discussion based on the readings and reflection), not talking for the sake of talking. I will distinguish between quality and quantity when I calculate the participation grade. **Note: A significant portion of your grade depends on participation. Failure to participate will result in a lowered final grade.** If you have questions about your participation grade, don't hesitate to contact me. Finally, because your participation is so essential for the seminar style of learning, any unexcused absences, especially on the debate days, will negatively impact your grade. I can overlook two "cuts," but after that each absence will potentially deduct two percentage points from your final grade.

Grading

Two essay papers	40% (2 x 20%)
Research project	30%
Book review	10%
Participation	20%

S-Certification

Since this is an S-course, you will receive not only a regular grade but also a separate evaluation of your competence in oral communication. To earn S-certification, you must demonstrate a consistent ability to communicate your ideas and those of others in a clear, concise manner. 30% of your grade is based on assignments—daily discussion and debate—that require some form of oral communication. Some of these assignments are ongoing and repetitive; others are one-time opportunities. All require preparation, but the latter demand it. I will be glad to meet with you individually or as a group to help you think through these assignments. You should also take advantage of the tutorial assistance available at the S-Center (1st floor Asbury Hall). I will alert you as early as possible if I believe that you are in danger of not earning your S-certification.

Academic Integrity Policy

I will observe DePauw's policy on academic integrity (i.e., cheating and plagiarism), as outlined in the *Student Handbook*. We will review this issue, along with examples, at the beginning of the semester, but I encourage you to read the policy for yourself.

Required Reading

Cinar, Alev. *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey* (Minnesota 2005)
Freud, Sigmund. *The Future of an Illusion* (Norton 1961)
Juergensmeyer, Mark. *The New Cold War* (California 1994)
Lilla, Mark. *The Stillborn God* (Knopf 2007)
Porter, Roy. *The Enlightenment*, 2nd ed. (Palgrave 2001)
Scott, Joan Wallach. *The Politics of the Veil* (Princeton 2007)

Zuckerman, Phil. *Society without God* (NYU 2008)

Moodle list

Schedule of Classes and Daily Assignments

1/27 Introduction

1/29 A classical statement on secularization
Berger, chapters 5,6,7 (from *The Sacred Canopy*) Moodle

Current Secular Realities in the West

2/3 Where secularization has flourished: case studies of Denmark and Sweden
Zuckerman, 1-94

2/5 Where secularization has flourished: case studies of Denmark and Sweden
Zuckerman, 95-187

2/10 Secular discontent: the case of France
Scott, 1-89

2/12 Secular discontent: the case of France
Scott, 90-183

The Historical Path of Western Secularization

2/17 The Enlightenment: Science and Politics
Roy, 1-28
Kant, What is Enlightenment? Moodle
Condorcet, "The Utility of Science" Moodle
Priestley, "The Organization of Scientific Research" Moodle
Locke, "Two Treatises of Government" Moodle
Rousseau, "The Social Contract" Moodle
Paine, "Common Sense" Moodle

2/19 The Enlightenment: Religion and Morality
Roy, 29-37
Toland, "Christianity not Mysterious" Moodle
Hume, "An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding" Moodle
Rousseau, "The Profession of Faith..." Moodle
Bentham, "The Principles of Morals and Legislation" Moodle
de Sade, "Philosophy in the Boudoir" Moodle

2/24 The Enlightenment: Its meaning and legacy
Roy, 38-69

Vico, "The New Science" Moodle
Turgot, "On Progress" Moodle
Rousseau, "A Critique of Progress" Moodle
Voltaire, "In Defense of Modernity" Moodle

- 2/26 Video
- 3/3 The Religious-Political Divide in the West
Lilla, 3-103
- 3/5 The Religious-Political Divide in the West
Lilla, 107-213
- 3/10 The Religious-Political Divide in the West
Lilla, 217-309
- 3/12 Research Project Meetings
- 3/17 Psychology of Religion
Freud, all
- 3/19 Debate
- 3/24, Spring Recess
26

Signs of Discontent: Religious, Political and Cultural Opposition to the Secular

- 3/31 Religious Nationalisms
Juergensmeyer, 1-77
- 4/2 Religious Nationalisms
Juergensmeyer, 78-150
- 4/7 Religious Nationalisms
Juergensmeyer, 153-202
- 4/9 Secularism in India
Smith, "India as a Secular State" Moodle
- 4/14 Critiques of Indian Secularism
Madan, "Secularism in Its Place" Moodle
Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance" Moodle
- 4/16 A Defense of Secularism in India
Bhargava, "What is Secularism For?" Moodle

- 4/21 Secularism in the Middle East
Taimimi, "The Origins of Arab Secularism" Moodle
Al-Ghannouchi, "Secularism in the Arab Maghreb" Moodle
Ezzat, "Secularism, the State and the Social Bond" Moodle
- 4/23 Video
- 4/28 A Case Study of Turkey in the 1990s
Çinar, 1-98
- 4/30 A Case Study of Turkey in the 1990s
Çinar, 99-178
- 5/5 Study Day
- 5/7 Debate
- 5/11 Final Exam 1:00-4:00

