POLI 3390
RELIGION AND POLITICS

Bulletin Description: An overview of the interaction of governmental institutions and religion.
Prerequisites: None

Course Objectives:
This course is designed to do three things: Acquaint you with the role of religion in American politics historically; provide you with a brief overview of the interaction of governmental institutions and religion; and offer a framework for analyzing what (if any) influence religion should have in public policymaking today. Naturally, because we will be discussing religion and politics (both generally viewed as taboo in polite conversation), we are sure to have some lively discussion in class. While I welcome such participation, please remember that there are good people with strong views on both sides of the argument.

Course Credit:
This class is worth three (3) semester hours and meets three times each week for 50 minutes, for 15 weeks.

REQUIREMENTS
All students are required to:

(1) attend each class prepared to discuss the assigned readings listed below (10 percent of your final grade). More than three unexcused absences will result in the complete loss of these points which constitutes a full letter grade drop.

(2) write a 3-5 page paper on James Hutson’s book which includes a) 10 quotes from the book, b) your reasons for selecting those quotes and your reaction to them, and c) your brief overall reaction to the book. This paper counts for 10 percent of your total grade.

(3) deliver a well researched and rehearsed (10-12 minutes MAX) presentation that offers your findings regarding the intersection of religion and American politics 1) locally, 2) on the Internet, 3) in one of the federal branches of government, and 4) in one policy area of your choice. More details will be given in class. You will also provide a 2-3 page outline of your findings to each member of the class. Together, the presentation and outline constitute 25 percent of your grade.

(4) take a midterm (25 percent) and a non-cumulative final examination (30 percent) which will test your understanding of the readings as well as material presented in class. Together, the exams count for 55 percent of your final grade.

Grading Scale: A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = 0-59%.

Students needing accommodations should arrange a meeting with me during the first week of class. Be sure to bring the Accommodation Memo and Instructor Verification Form to the meeting. If you do not have an Accommodation Memo but need special accommodations, make an appointment with The Program for Students with Disabilities, 1244 Haley Center, 844-2096 (V/TT) or email: scw0005@auburn.edu

Academic Honesty: Students are expected to behave with integrity. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in the manner specified in the Tiger Cub.
Students may withdraw (although with a W on their transcript) until midsemester.

Make-ups for all missed and late work are allowed with proper University approved excuses within one week of the original due date.

The AU Classroom behavior policy is strictly followed in the course; please refer to the Tiger Cub for the details of this policy.

Student names and email addresses may be shared with the students in this class for the purpose of roll taking and/or class projects.

Student emails will be answered within 48 hours of receipt.

The final exam will be given at the University set time and date.

Class attendance is required.

All readings are to be completed before coming to class.

There are no unannounced quizzes.

Participation grades are based on the quality and frequency of the student’s participation in class including demonstrating proper preparation for class through familiarity with readings and other assigned material, answering questions with correct answers based on the coursework, contributing substantively to class discussions with remarks grounded in the coursework and assignments.

REQUIRED TEXTS
As well as other sundry readings that I will assign you throughout the course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. Introduction and Basic Concepts

Weeks 1-2
Introduction to the Course and Why Religion?
READ: Wald Chapter 1
Questions: Why are Religion and Politics so controversial? Why does religion keep its political vitality even as its spiritual vitality seems to be lessening? To what does the term “culture wars” refer?

Weeks 2-4
Types of Interactions Between Religion and Politics
READ: Wald Chapter 2
Questions: Review the typology of church-state relations in the United States. What are Wald’s three points of contact between religion and politics?

Weeks 5-6
Civil Religion
READ: Wald 59-70
Questions: Define “civil religion.” List and describe at least five manifestations of civil religion.

II. Religion, the Founding, and US History

Week 7
Religion and Politics in America
READ: Wald Chapter 3
Questions: Was there a religious founding? What is covenant theology and how is it linked to social and political change? Why is there such a different religious dimension to the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution? What type of role in society did the founders believe religion could play? What is “hegemonic Protestantism”?

III. Religion and the Courts

Weeks 8-9
The Wall, Free Speech, and Free Exercise
READ: Wald Chapter 4
Questions: What are the two primary philosophical divisions pertaining to the Establishment Clause? Describe the Lemon Test. How are religion and the Free Speech Clause intertwined? What is the Sherbert Test? What standard currently controls Free Exercise claims?

(Class also presentations begin this week)

IV. Religion and Public Policy

Week 10
Interest Groups and Institutions
READ: Wald Chapter 5
Questions: What is religion’s role in formulating public policy? What strategies are utilized to exert influence on public policymaking?

Week 11
Denominational Influences on Political Behavior
READ: Wald Chapters 6-7
Questions: What type of influence has religion played on executive, legislative, and judicial decisionmaking? How does religion factor into U.S. foreign policy? How does religion affect political participation?

Week 12
Denominational Influences on Political Behavior (cont.)
READ: Wald Chapters 6-7
V. Effect of Religious Influences on Politics

**Weeks 13-14**
Denominational Influences on Political Behavior (cont.)
READ: Wald Chapter 8
Questions: *How does religion affect political participation? Are efforts to get the “religious vote” a form of political pandering or a real attempt to bring a religious voice to the political table?*

VI. Religion and Politics: Good, Bad, or Ugly

**Week 15**
Assessing Religion’s Role in Politics
READ: Wald 9
Questions: *What positive and negative effects result from religion’s interaction with politics? What viable arguments can be made for and against ridding the public square of religion? Explain why you agree or disagree with Tocqueville’s assessment regarding religion’s value to the state.*