Course Description

Our thinking about religions and secularisms has long focused on the conflicts between them. This course will begin by looking at the idea of religious-secular divides and how it emerged in modern times. But it will also ask: should we, and can we, move beyond the view that conflict is the only possible interfacing between the religious and the secular? Can we think of the religious-secular encounters in terms of collaborations? And, if so, what are the sources, religious and secular, that enable us to envision the world where believers and non-believers can affirm their differences and work toward the flourishing of all?

Course Objectives

- Hone the ability to interpret fundamental concepts in the debates about the religious and the secular through critical engagement with classical and contemporary texts,
- Learn to analyze key texts in the social sciences, theology, and the humanities to articulate their ideas through the practice of reasoned discussions, and
- Write academic papers (3 total) demonstrating an understanding of all the components of the writing process (see below).

\[1\] In consultation with the author, this syllabus has been edited for length, removing details particular to the author’s context such as office hours and location, absence policies, honor codes, and other instructor-specific (or institution-specific) details.
Required Texts
All required texts will be posted on Blackboard (the course website), and are listed below in the course schedule.

Course Assessments
This course is writing intensive. Students are assessed based on several criteria, including thesis development, evidence of research, and effective prose.

- **Presentations**: All students are required to present their final essay projects in class. Presentations take place in the final week of term, and count towards participation. More information on presentation requirements will be shared throughout the semester.
- **Essays**: Students complete 3 essays over the course of the semester.
  - Essays 1 & 2 consist of 4-5 pages each, and each count for 20% of total grade. Essays 1 & 2 will be guided by a selected prompt from the professors.
  - The Final Essay consists in 12-15 pages and counts for 30% of total grade. This essay advances an argument based on independent research, and converses with texts, themes, and topics discussed in class. Students must plan to consult with the professor(s) to validate the direction of their Final Essay.

COURSE SCHEDULE
Course schedule and assignments are subject to change. All changes will be announced ahead of time, then posted on Blackboard (BB). Students should consult BB often to receive up-to-date information about classes and assignments.

UNIT 1: Identifying (and Challenging) the Conflict

**WEEK 1**

- **Tuesday**: Introduction to the course
- **Thursday**: The case against religion
  - Excerpt from C Hitchens, *God is Not Great* (BB)
  - Religion Debate: C Hitchens vs. T Blair

**WEEK 2**

- **Tuesday**: The case against anti-religion
  - DB Hart, “Believe it or Not” (BB)
  - Debate: DB Hart vs. T Sanderson (BB)
- **Thursday**: Dawn of the Modern Age of Unbelief
  - Excerpt from C Taylor, A Secular Age (BB)
  - Christopher Nichols, “Who Has ‘Religion’”?
UNIT 2: Historical Roots of the Conflict

WEEK 3

Tuesday: The *Saeculum* in Theological View: Augustine
- Excerpt from Augustine, *City of God* 19 (BB)
- Excerpt from RA Markus, *Saeculum* (BB)
- Excerpt from O O’Donovan, “The Political Thought of *City of God* 19” (BB)

Thursday: The Reformation as Turning Point: Erasmus vs. Luther
- Excerpt from Erasmus, *On the Freedom of the Will* (BB)
- Excerpt from Luther, *On the Bondage of the Will* (BB)
- Excerpt from M Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (BB)

WEEK 4

Tuesday: The Legacy of Protestantism?
- E Durkheim, “Individualism and the Intellectuals” (BB)

Thursday: Creation of Public and Private Realms
- Excerpt from H Arendt, *The Human Condition* (BB)
- Excerpt from C Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (BB)

WEEK 5

Tuesday: Property and Possessive Individualism
- Excerpt from J Locke, *Second Treatise* (BB)
- Article on Locke tbd (BB)

Thursday: Religion, Tolerance, and Violence
- J Locke, “A Letter Concerning Toleration” (BB)
- Excerpt from T Hobbes, *Leviathan* (BB)
- Article on Hobbes and Locke tbd (BB)

WEEK 6

Tuesday: Wars of Religion
- W Cavanaugh, “Sins of Omission” (BB)
- Debate: W Cavanaugh vs. R Blackford

Thursday: Disenchantment and Death of God
- Excerpt from F Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*
- DB Hart, “Christ and Nothing” (BB)

WEEK 7

Tuesday: Disenchantment and Death of God
- Excerpt from B Gregory, The Unintended Reformation (BB)
- B Moore, “Beyond the Catholic-Protestant Divide”
UNIT 3: Negotiating the Present Conflict

Thursday: The Secularization Thesis
- Excerpt from H Cox, *The Secular City* (BB)
- Excerpt from P Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (BB)
- S Jakelić, “The Sixties” (BB)

WEEK 8

Tuesday: The Return of Religion
- Excerpt from J Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (BB)
- Excerpt from C Smith, *The Sacred Project of American Sociology*

Thursday: Out-Narrating the Secular Order
- Excerpt from J Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (BB)
- Excerpt from S Shakespeare, *Radical Orthodoxy* (BB)

WEEK 9

Spring Recess – No Class

WEEK 10

Tuesday: Configuring the Religious-Secular Divide
- Excerpt from T Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (BB)
- Excerpt from E S Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (BB)

Thursday: Configuring the Religious-Secular Divide Part II
- J Z Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious” (BB)
- A Omer “Can a Critic be a Caretaker Too?”
- N Danforth, “Islam will Not Have Its Own ‘Reformation’”

WEEK 11

Tuesday: Religious-Secular Distinctions and Human Rights
- A Sachedina, “The Clash of Universalisms: Religious and Secular in Human Rights” (BB)
- Article on Religious Freedom and Human Rights (BBC, “Christians take ‘beliefs’ fight to European Court of Human Rights”)

Thursday: Project Conferences – Schedule meeting with Professors

WEEK 12

Tuesday: Christianity in the Age of Liberalism
- Excerpt from S Hauerwas, *Approaching the End* (BB)
- Excerpt from J Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (BB)

Thursday: Islam, Secularism, and Modernity
- Excerpt from N Göle, “Snapshots of Islamic Modernities”
- Excerpt from S Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety* (BB)
WEEK 13

Tuesday: Islam and the “Secular” Media
▶ Watch segment from Real Time with Bill Maher and read responses (BB)
▶ Yassir Morsi, The Walking Dead
▶ Randa Abdel-Fattah, Hate Islam, Love Muslims?

Thursday: Rethinking Secularism and the Secular
▶ Excerpt from W Connolly, Why I am Not A Secularist (BB)
▶ Excerpt from T Todorov, Imperfect Garden (BB)
▶ A de Botton, Atheism 2.0

WEEK 14

Tuesday: Rethinking the Religious-Secular Encounters
▶ R Bhargava, “States, Religious, Diversity, and the Crisis of Secularism” (BB)
▶ S Jakelić, “Secular-Religious Encounters as Peacebuilding” (BB)

Thursday: Awe, Wonder, Gratitude, and Prayer
▶ R Williams, After God in New Statesman
▶ C Hitchens, Unspoken Truths
▶ Excerpt from DB Hart, The Experience of God (BB)
▶ Excerpt from S Weil, Gravity and Grace (BB)

WEEK 15

Tuesday: Abolishing the Religious-Secular Distinctions?
▶ Excerpt from J R Jakobsen & A Pellegrini, Secularisms (BB)
▶ ES Hurd, “A Suspension of (Dis)Belief” (BB)
▶ M Dressler, Beyond Religio-Secularism: Toward a Political Critique

Thursday: Student Presentations

WEEK 15

Tuesday: Student Presentations

Thursday: Student Presentations