Course Description & Aims:
This course outlines the interaction of religion and politics in the contemporary world; the relationship between religion and society, the different types of religious organizations and movements, their social roles, and their impact on society. The impact religious ideas, practices, and organizations have on the social, political, and economic processes. The focus will also be on the role of religion in the formation of individual, communal, and national identity. Using a comparative and transnational approach, the impact of religious traditions on the internal sociopolitical structure of different states and their role in shaping power relations on the international level will be assessed. Finally, it examines the contemporary relationship between religion and the state with the help of case studies from selected countries. Students will be able to examine, analyze and critically discuss the politicization of religion in the contemporary world and its consequences.

Religion and society; types of religious organizations and movements and their social role and impact. Secularization and counter-secularization. Religion, politics, and the state. Students will examine; analyze; evaluate; case studies of the contemporary role of religion in selected societies.

Lecturer: Dr. Ruchi Agarwal
Office number 2118
Office hours. Monday-Wednesday 10-12.00
Contact: ruchi.aga@mahidol.ac.th, ruchi.aga@mahidol.edu

Assessment

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<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activities &amp; assignments</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>Mid-term Exam</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Final Report &amp;Presentation</td>
<td>35%</td>
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Course Learning Outcomes
At the completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. To analyze and examine the interaction of religion and politics in contemporary world
2. To differentiate and analyse political narratives in different religions
3. To point out contemporary conflicts between religion and politics
4. To assess and analyse the major issues and controversies engendered by religion in relations to global, national and local politics.
**Assessment Methods & Criteria**

1. **Class Participation**  
   Students will be assessed on their active participation in class discussions, doing peer reviews, and engaging in different class activities.

2. **Activities & assignments**  
   The class is a seminar based class requiring students to do short assignment with a purpose of keeping one’s self updated with the current events. Students will also be required to prepare one position paper summarizing and commenting the content of the assigned reading for the particular week. The purpose is to present the understanding of the readings and guide further class discussions. Presentations are expected to be either critically analyzing an argument or applying it to a certain case study.

3. **Mid-term Exam**  
   The Midterm exam will be short answer questions based on the knowledge gained during the first half of the trimester.

4. **Final Research Report**  
   The final research report is where the students need to write a report based on a topic chosen earlier during the term. The research topics should be related to the contents discussed in the class. Potential topics will however be suggested by the instructor during the term. A prior approval of the topic for the final research report is required. Students need to research the topic, explore and analyze the different perspectives related to the selected issue. Students can then formulate their own recommended solutions for the issue. The length of the report is expected to be between 12-15 pages with proper referencing. A draft copy of the report (at least 75% complete) has to be submitted by week 10. During week 11 and 12, the reports will be presented by each group in class.
Introduction & The concept of Religion

Topic description: This week students will be introduced to the course outline, course requirements, and their expected input. Basic concepts are defined (the study of religion, diversity, politics, and globalization); central issues such as religion and sociological traditions, secularization, religious marketplace are outlined; and tensions within the study introduced.

Expected learning outcomes: Students will be able to survey the continued role of religion in daily lives of people as well as in global politics.

Readings and activities:

Suggested Readings:


Activities: As part of the first activity students are required to find examples of world’s indigenous cultures that have been destructed for material benefits and present them in the class.

Religious Diversity in Contemporary World

Topic description: This week the concept of religious diversity will be explored. Lectures start with three kinds of religious globalization: Diasporas, transnational religion and the religion of plural societies and explores the variations in different religious traditions and how these have changed over time.

Expected learning outcomes: Students will be able to analyze religious diversity in the modern world and how different religions have responded to the cultural context around them.

Readings and activities:

Suggested Reading:


Activities: As part of this activity an overview of the distribution of religions worldwide will be provided. Students can access the site adherents.com rank which includes pie charts showing the faiths in terms of the number of worldwide adherents for each religion. As part of this activity, students will have to firstly point out the following: How does the global distribution of religions compare to that within the United States? Do the pie charts show what you would have predicted? What was surprising? What was something new that you learned? How does the U.S. differ from the rest of the world? How is it similar?

Second part of the activity requires students to present information on the following religions assigned to each group using internet resources:

• Christianity
• Islam
• Judaism
For each religion, students will have to cover the following:

- Origins of the faith (When was it founded? Was there an identifiable founder?)
- Whether it is monotheistic, polytheistic or nontheistic
- Where in the world most of the faith's adherents are located
- Major beliefs or emphases
- Variations among followers of each religion. (Be careful not to stereotype members of faith groups; religion is a public as well as a private affair)
- Scriptures or holy texts/books
- Key figures or individuals
- Major values or rules for human behavior
- Key holidays/holy days/religious observances
- What is unique about the religion (relative to others in the list of nine)
- What is similar about the religion (relative to others in the list of nine)

**Religious Organizations and their social role**

**Topic description:** This week students will be introduced to the types of religious organizations and examples of each type. A brief sketch will be made of organized religions, their associated organizations, and how these organizations help in the advancement of their goals.

**Expected learning outcomes:** Students will be able to analyze the role played by religious organizations, the relations shared between political agents and the religious organizations within different political systems.

**Readings and activities:**

**Suggested Readings:**


**Activity:** In a group of 3-4, students search for a religious organization and define what type of organization is it and which religion does it belong to. Each group discusses the achievements and failures of their chosen organization.

**Religion and the Individual & Religion and Society**

**Topic description:** This week assess how religions shape individual identities and behaviors as well as the society we live in. The relationship between religion and health: social and psychological support, egalitarian vs. authoritarianism trends within religious traditions will also be assessed. The focus will be on the intersection between religion and selected
contemporary issues such as ethical, social, political, economic, and cultural issues. The impact religious faith and religious organizations have on social life as well as the impact of social processes like modernization and secularization on religious institutions and individuals will be covered.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to analyze selected religious texts, beliefs, rituals, practices. Students will be able demonstrate the various ways in which religious communities are organized and how these affect religious life.

**Readings and activities:**

**Suggested Readings:**


**Religion, Gender and Reproductive Rights**

**Topic description:** This week students will be introduced to the understanding of gender and sexuality in the context of different religious traditions as practiced by individuals, partner’s families, and communities. The focus will be on contemporary issues related to gender and sexuality as expressed within religions. Topics covered may include: women, gender roles and religious roles, sexualities and religion, gender, sexuality and religion in popular culture, masculinity and religion, HIV/AIDS and religion.

**Expected learning outcomes:** Students will be able to reflect on how the overlapping conceptions and activities of religion, gender and sexuality operate in lives of people individually and as well as members of communities, and families.

**Readings and activities:**

**Suggested Readings:**

Religion and Politics

**Topic description:** Politics and religion are intertwined. The topic evaluates recent research on the role of religious actors, institutions, and ideologies in policymaking, state-building, political change, conflict and war. A number of case studies will be used to assess the intertwined relationship between politics and religion.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to explain the influence religion has on politics in different parts of the world. To assess the relations between religion, political mobilization, race and ethnicity, foreign policy, and political processes.

**Readings and activities**

**Suggested Readings:**


**Review and Mid-term Examination**

**Topic description:** The first class this week will be review session followed by the midterm examination.

Local Religious Conflicts

**Topic description:** This session examines the various ways in which local religious conflicts cross borders and become international issues. The phenomenon has been evident since the end of the Cold War when many of the domestic conflicts became internationalized. As part of this session, the factors contributing to the internationalization of domestic conflicts will be assessed, including domestic conflicts inspiring similar groups to rebel, presence of international media publicizing the conflicts, and use of international forums among other factors.

**Expected learning outcomes:** Students will be able to examine the internationalization of domestic conflicts. The role played by media and international bodies in this process of internationalization of domestic conflicts.

**Readings and activities:**

**Suggested Readings:**

- Activity: In a group of 3-4, students search for a case where local conflicts became international, define what the conflict was, and how the conflict became an international issue. Each group discusses manifestation of the domestic conflict into the need for international intervention.

Transnational Religious Phenomena

**Topic description:** This topic will examine the phenomena and issues with religions becoming global crossing over the state borders. Rise of religious missionary movements, human rights, and fundamentalism occur on a larger sphere with greater impact than ever. It
will discuss the tension between religion and the state from both historical and contemporary perspective.

**Expected learning outcomes:** Students will be able to compare the historical and current issues surrounding religious fundamentalism, human rights, and terrorism.

**Readings and activities:**

**Suggested Readings:**


**Religion and Economy**

**Topic description:** This topic will explore the relationship between religion and economic life and development. The sub themes will include the support and shaping of economic life by religious traditions, the religious dimension of economic activities, and the economic interpretation of religious phenomena.

**Expected learning outcomes:** For students to survey the multifaceted and changing relationship between religion and economic life.

**Readings and activities:**

**Suggested Readings:**


**Religion and Economy II**

**Topic description:** The religious dimension of consumer culture, consumer capitalism, and the sacredness of consumption will be assessed further.

**Expected learning outcomes:** Students will be able to explain the dynamics of capitalism and its relations with the economy of religion.

**Readings and activities:**


**Final Research Report Presentation**

**Topic description:** This week students will present their final research report based on a topic chosen earlier during the term. The research topics should be related to the contents discussed in the class or based on potential topics suggested by the instructor during the term.

**Expected learning outcomes:** Students will be able to conduct research on their own, to explore and analyze the different perspectives related to the selected topic/issue. Students can then formulate their own recommended solutions for the issue.