

Comparative Secularisms  
REL 4936 (Section 1C97) /EUS 4930 (Sec. 1C98)  
MWF 6 (12:50-1:40) TUR 2333

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## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course addresses “secularism” as a political or ideological position concerned with the relationship between religion, government and the public sphere. Recent events – debates over marriage equality and reproductive rights in the US and the January 2015 shootings at the *Charlie Hebdo* offices in France among them – indicate this relationship to be as tenuous as ever. Readings from philosophy, political theory, history and religion will help ground us theoretically as we then move to explore specific case studies within European, North American, and Latin American contexts.

## **II. OBJECTIVES**

- a.) To familiarize students with major theories of secularism
- b.) To analyze the historical and philosophical underpinnings of classical conceptions of the secular, secularization, and secularism
- c.) To evaluate contemporary theoretical approaches to secularism from sociology, religious studies, history and political science;
- d.) To examine case studies from European, North American and South American contexts

## **III. Readings:**

Required texts:

David Martin. 2005. *On Secularization: Towards a Revised General Theory*

Judith Butler, Jürgen Habermas, Charles Taylor and Cornell West. 2011.

*The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere*

Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Van Antwerpen. 2011.

*Rethinking Secularism.*

Additional articles and book chapters (available via Canvas):

## **III. Requirements:**

**Attendance and Active Participation (20%)** Students will attend and participate actively in each class meeting, having prepared the assigned readings for discussion

and questions. Throughout the term students will also present updates on their research projects.

**Response Papers (30%)** Students will write short papers (4-5 pages) at the end of each unit where they will synthesize key concepts, develop their own ideas and conclusions about the material, and pose questions for future inquiry.

**Research Project (50%)** Students will meet with the instructor in the first month of class to determine jointly the topic for an extended research project on secularism, religion in the public sphere, and other themes related to the course. Students will submit an annotated bibliography **(5%)** and rough draft **(10%)** prior to the end of the semester. In the last weeks of the course students will submit a final version of their papers **(25%)** and deliver a brief presentation to the class summarizing their findings **(10%)**.

#### **IV. Preliminary Course Schedule:**

##### **Part I. Introduction to Secularism: Religion and Public Life**

- Readings:*
- Mendieta and VanAntwerpen, "Introduction: Religion in the Public Sphere" in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (pp.1-13)
  - Jürgen Habermas, "'The Political': The Rational Meaning of a Questionable Inheritance of Political Theology" in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (pp. 34-59).
  - Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (excerpts).
  - Talal Asad, "Freedom of Speech and Religious Limitations" in *Rethinking Secularism* (pp.282-295).
  - Akeel Bilgrami, "What is Enchantment?" in *Varieties of Secularism in 'A Secular Age'* (pp. 144-165)
  - Jonathan Sheehan "When was Disenchantment? History and the Secular Age (217-242

##### **Part II. "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms": Defining Secularism**

- Readings:*
- Charles Taylor, "Western Secularity" in *Rethinking Secularism*, (pp.31-52)
  - José Casanova, "The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms" in *Rethinking Secularism* (pp. 54-74).

##### **Part III. Case Studies: European and North American Studies**

Readings:

(European Secularisms)

- Jean Baubérot, "The Evolution of Secularism in France: Between Two Civil Religions" in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (pp.58-67).
- Yolande Jansen, "Secularism and Security: France, Islam and Europe" in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (pp.69-83).
- Phiz Zuckerman, *Society without God* (excerpts)

(North American Secularisms)

- Tisa Wenger, "The God-in-the-Constitution Controversy: American Secularisms in Historical Perspective" in *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (pp. 87-105).
- Judith Butler, "Is Judaism Zionism?" in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (pp. 69-91)

#### **Part IV. Secularization RIP: Examining Claims of Religious Resurgence**

Readings:

- Saba Mahmood, "Can Secularism be Other-Wise?" in *Varieties of Secularism in 'A Secular Age'* (pp. 282-299).
- Wendy Brown, "The Sacred, the Secular and the Profane: Charles Taylor and Karl Marx," in *Varieties of Secularism in 'A Secular Age'* (pp.81-104).
- Cornel West, "Prophetic Religion and the Future of Capitalist Civilization" in *The Power of Religion in the Public Sphere* (pp. 92-100\_

#### **V. Policies**

**1.Attendance and Active Participation** constitutes 20% of your final score in the class. Given the small size and seminar structure of this course, it is essential that you arrive to class prepared, having worked through the assigned material prior to our meeting. Please make every effort to arrive on time each week. If there are extenuating circumstances that will effect your ability to arrive to class on time, please contact the instructor in advance.

**2. Common Courtesy.** *Cell phones, laptops, tablets, and all other electronic devices must be turned off and stored during class.* Students who receive or make calls, text message, check email, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc. during class will be asked to leave and marked absent. However, students may request permission from the instructor to use electronic devices during class for note-taking purposes, but all requests for such

arrangements must be made in advance of the class meeting. Repeat violations of these rules may result in dismissal from the course. **Only in extenuating circumstances and with advanced permission will a student be allowed to use electronic device during class.** **NOTE: this includes laptop computers and tablets.**

**3. Communication Guidelines.** Students are encouraged to contact the instructor via email for questions, clarifications, requests and assistance, academic or otherwise. Please remember that your correspondences represent you and the way you regard your academic progress and should therefore be written in a respectful, professional manner. Emails to the instructor or fellow classmates are official correspondences and should be approached with a degree of formality, not composed as you might structure text messages or chats. During the week the instructor requests 24 hours in which she will reply to student emails (48 hours on weekends). \*\*\*In emergency situations that require immediate attention, please add 'URGENT' to the subject line of your message.

**4. Make-up assignments** will only be given to students who can present written documentation (in the form of a medical excuse or a funeral notice, for example) to justify their inability to complete and assignment or take an exam during the scheduled time.

**5. Late assignments** will only be accepted in extenuating circumstances, or in situations where the student can present proper, legitimate written documentation to justify the tardiness (i.e. sickness, family emergency, etc.). **Should you require an extension for an assignment, contact me in advance of the assignment deadline to discuss potential arrangements.**

**6. Student Conduct: Plagiarism or cheating:** Students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. On the issue of plagiarism and cheating, I operate under a **zero tolerance policy**. **Students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and will fail the course.** In addition, they will be reported to the appropriate university authorities. Please keep in mind that plagiarism does not consist only in copying verbatim someone else's material and presenting it as if it were yours. It also includes taking ideas (even paraphrased!) from an author without according him/her proper recognition (through a footnote, for instance). Other forms of cheating (particularly downloading material from the Internet and presenting as if it were yours) will also be subject to the same action. See <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honestybrochure.htm> & [www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/academic.htm) for more information on UF policies.

**7. Students with Special Needs.** If a student anticipates barriers related to the format of requirements of a course, s/he should meet with the course instructor to discuss ways to ensure full participation. If you are a student with a disability, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require. Requests for academic accommodations should to be made during the first week of the semester so arrangements can be made to best accommodate you as early in the term as possible. You must be registered with Dean of Students through the UF Disabilities Resource Center (DRC) who can provide you with the appropriate documentation for your accommodations. For additional information please visit: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

**8. Counseling Resources** are available on campus for students at the UF Counseling and Wellness Center. For additional information visit:  
<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

**9. Withdrawal Dates.** The Add/Drop period for this is August 24-28 2015.  
Additional withdrawal deadlines can be found at:  
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/Pages/adfall1516.aspx>

**10. 5. Grading Scale:** A: 100-94; A-: 93-90; B+: 89-87; B: 86-84; B-: 83-80; C+: 79-77; C: 76-74; C-: 73-70; D+: 69-67; D: 66-64; D-: 63-60; F: <60.