***California State University Northridge***

***RS 255OL: American Political Institutions and Religion***

***Spring 2016***

***Instructor:*** Mary Jane O'Donnell, Ph.D.

***Ticket Number:*** 14377

***Course Day/Time:*** Completely Online

***Office Hours:*** M-W: 11:00 a.m. to 12 noon

***Online Office Hours:*** T/8 to 9 a.m.

***Office:*** Santa Susana Hall 418

***Telephone:*** 818-677-6875 (Office hours only)

## *Email:* mjod@csun.edu

***Course Description:*** This course will examine the development of the political ideals, institutions, and processes of the United States and California. It will focus on the religious elements within political ideals, religious freedom, the relation between religion and state, and the role of religion in the public forum, including both politics and public education.

*This course satisfies the Title V United States Constitution requirement and the California State and Local Government requirement. Students will understand and reflect upon United States history, institutions, and ideals; the Constitution of the United States; and the principles of state and local government as established in California.*

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| ***Student Learning Objectives*** |
| ***Title V*** | ***Religious Studies 255*** |
| Describe and analyze the histories of the United States and California over significant time periods;  | Understand the development of United States and California political ideals, institutions, and processes.   |
| Explain the principles and major provisions of the Constitutions of the United States and California;  | Understand citizens’ rights and obligations established by the United States and California constitutions.  |
| Compare United States and California political institutions and practices | Understand the structures and processes of federal, California, and local governments. |
| Describe and examine the histories and thedevelopment of political institutions as related to diverse peoples in the United States and California.  | Understand federal and state constitutional guarantees of religious freedom and the history of legislative and judicial efforts to apply the principle of religious freedom.   |
|  | Understand the role of religion in public life in the United States, California, and local municipalities, including its role in both political debate and public and private education.   |

***Required Texts:***

* Michael Corbett, Julia Corbett-Hemeyer and J. Matthew Wilson, *Politics and Religion in the United States*, 2nd ed (New York: Routledge, 2014).
* Selected readings online.

***Instructor’s Office Hours:*** My office hours and my office address are posted above. I look forward to working with each of you in class and on an individual basis. I will also be available by phone on Tuesdays from 8 to 9 am via phone. You will be given a number on the Moodle site to call. Therefore, I urge you to take advantage of my office hours. I am happy to discuss any aspect of this course with you, and help you with the assignments. I especially urge you to contact me if you are confused about the course or an assignment. Really successful students ask questions!

***Course Assignments:***

* Students will carefully read the designated selection of the texts for each class. The reading selections are listed in the Course Schedule;
* Students will write one five-page essay about an aspect of the intersection between religion and politics in American history that interests you. This will comprise 40% of your grade for the course. More information about the essay may be found on Moodle.
* Students MUST participate in weekly discussions regarding the readings assigned for the week. You must make three (3) substantive essay-like contributions each week. You will comment in detail and with serious thought to concepts presented in the course material and comments made by classmates on the discussion site. You must cite specific ideas, issues, or events in the texts that you think need to be discussed in order to fully understand the week’s topic. Students may raise questions as well, which should be answered by others. The more engaged and thorough you are in the discussions, the better your grade will be. Each posting should be thoughtful and well written. Do not use generalities. You should refer to specific points made by the authors. This will comprise 40% of your grade for the course.
* You will have one final exam, which will comprise 20% of your grade.

***Course Requirements:***

* All reading assignments must be read as early as possible in the week they are assigned in order to allow for more sophisticated in-depth discussions;
* You must fully participate in the discussions by asking/answering questions and making studied and insightful comments. As you can see from the scoring chart below, your participation in the weekly discussion pages will be 40% of your grade. You must post at least three (3) substantive posts per week. More detailed instructions for the discussions are on the RS 255OL Moodle site;
* All papers must be written according to basic scholarly standards appropriate for university level work. Not only does this include proper citation as well as grammar, punctuation, and syntax, but also serious reflection on your topic. There are many sources to help you with your writing assignments. The most important is the Writing Program at CSUN’s Learning Resource Center, which is on the 3rd floor/East Wing of the Oviatt Library. For more information, go to: <http://www.csun.edu/undergraduate-studies/learning-resource-center/writing-center-and-freshman-writing-lab>
* All assignments must be turned in on the date listed. Unless students present a written and documented reason why a paper is late or will be late, which is accepted by the instructor, the grade will be deducted one letter grade per day.
* Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade, certainly for the item plagiarized, but also *quite* *likely* for the course. Moreover, you many not turn in a paper, whether whole or in part, that you previously wrote and submitted to another class, whether at CSUN or elsewhere. If you wish to build upon previous work you have done, please contact me prior to incorporating it into your assignment.

***Grading: Plus-Minus System will be used***

* Weekly commentaries: 40%
* One 5-page essay: 40%
* Final Exam: 20%

***Technological Information:***

* This course will employ Moodle. You are responsible for learning how to use this format. Instructions may be found at: <http://www.csun.edu/it/student-moodle-help/>

***Letter Grades:***

* 94-100 A
* 90-94 A-
* 87-89 B+
* 83-86 B
* 80-82 B-
* 77-79 C+
* 73-76 C
* 70-72 C-
* 60-69 D

***Course Schedule:***

## *Week 1: January 25-31*

* ***Topic:*** Introduction
* ***Read:*** “What are the Limits of Religious Liberty?” by Emily Bazelon (on Moodle)
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

## *Week 2: February 1-7*

## *Topics:* Politics and Religion, an Overview.

## *Read:* Corbett, et al: 1-20

* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 3: February 8-14***

***Topics:*** Religion and Politics in the Colonial Era

***Read:*** Corbett, et al: 23-39

* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 4: February 15-21***

* ***Topics*:** Religion and the Revolution
* ***Read:*** Corbett, et al:39-58
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 5: February 22-28***

* ***Topics:*** Religion andthe Constitution and Bill of Rights
* ***Read:*** Corbett, et al: 58-63
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 6: February 29-March 6***

* ***Topic:*** Religion and the American Civil War
* ***Read:*** Lambert, 67-73;“Religion in the Civil War: The Northern Perspective by James Howell Moorhead and “Religion in the Civil War: The Southern Perspective” by Harry S. Stout (Online);
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 7: March 7-13***

* ***Topic:*** Religion’s role in the Civil Rights Movement.
* ***Read:*** Lambert, Civil Rights as a Religious Movement: Politics in the Street, 160-183;
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 8: March 14-20***

* *Paper Due on Sunday, March 20 by 11 p.m.*

***Week 9: March 21-27***

* ***Spring Break: No Class***

***Week 10: March 28-April 3***

* ***Topic:*** Modernism versus Fundamentalism: Political and Legal Implications
* ***Read:*** Lambert, Faith and Science: The Modernist-Fundamentalist Controversy, 104-129;
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 11: April 4-10***

* ***Topics:*** The Emergence of the Religious Right: Envisioning the United States as a “Christian Nation”;
* ***Read:*** Lambert, The Rise of the Religious Right, 184-217;
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 12: April 11-17***

## *Topics:* The Establishment Clause

* ***Read:*** Corbett, et al: 123-147
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 13: April 18-24***

* ***Topics:*** The Free Exercise Clause
* ***Read:*** Corbett, et al: 148-177
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 14: April 25-May 1***

* ***Topics:*** The California Constitution
* ***Read:*** Selected readings, which may be downloaded from the Moodle site
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 15: May 2-8***

* ***Topics:*** Religion and Public Life
* ***Read:*** Corbett, et al: 304-336
* ***Post:*** Three Substantive Commentaries of at least 250 words each on Moodle.

***Week 16: May 9-13***

* ***Final Exam (TBA)***

***Important to note:*** This syllabus is subject to change. I will make every effort to notify you in advance about any changes.

***DRES:*** If you have a disability and need accommodations, please register with the Disability Resources and Educational Services (DRES) office or the National Center on Deafness (NCOD). The DRES office is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110 and can be reached at 818-677-2684. NCOD is located on Bertrand Street in Jeanne Chisholm Hall and can be reached at 818-677-2611. If you would like to discuss your need for accommodations with me, please contact me to set up an appointment.