Angelo State University
Department of Political Science and Philosophy

Fall 2021
POL 3350: Religion and Politics

Section 010
Location: RAS 112
Time: MWF, 11:00-11:50am

Dr. Bruce A. Hunt, Jr., bhunt2@angelo.edu
Office Hours: MWF 8:30-9:30am, 2-3pm; T 8:30-11:30am
Office Phone: 325-486-6112
Location: RAS 221

Course Synopsis

There are two things wisdom has it that are not to be discussed at the dinner table: religion and politics. This rule acknowledges that both subjects tend to create unpleasant discussion, and the dinner table is about enjoying each other’s company. This class will not follow this wisdom to the letter, but we will keep its spirit in mind. We will be discussing religion and politics, but rather than debating our own personal views, we will be examining and analyzing serious texts on the topic.

The first half of the course examines two major moments in western political philosophy as it relates to religion and politics: Plato’s presentation of the trial and death of Socrates, and John Locke’s argument for religious toleration. Each of these is key to understanding where we are today, and each has another side of the story to it. We will take time to consider the other side of the story, which is often neglected as the weaker point of view. We will therefore consider whether Socrates deserved to die, and whether religious toleration really is in principle the wise idea that we typically take it to be. We will also explore two plays from two major poets that are greatly relevant to these two philosophers and that present influential depictions of the relationship between religion and politics: Aristophanes and Shakespeare. We will discuss and write about how philosophy and poetry make powerful claims regarding politics and religion.

Midway through the course, we look at how compatible religion and tolerant, liberal citizenship seems to be today. Each of the major Abrahamic religions are examined in this light, and we focus in particular on John Dewey’s argument for a new kind of “common faith” for democratic society that is progressive and detached from spiritual dogmas.

The last section focuses on empirical studies of religion and politics in the United States today. We explore trends in Americans’ overall religiosity, religious diversity within the population, and the trends having to do with political preferences and partisan alignments of various religious groups.
**Required Texts (outside readings posted on Blackboard)**

1. *Four Texts on Socrates: Plato's Euthyphro, Apology, and Crito and Aristophanes' Clouds*
   
   Translators West and West
   Cornell University Press
   ISBN: 978-0-8014-8574

2. *King Henry V*
   
   William Shakespeare, ed. Andrew Gurr
   Cambridge University Press
   ISBN: 978-0-521-61264-7

3. *Locke on Toleration*
   
   Editor Richard Vernon
   Cambridge University Press
   ISBN: 978-0-521-13969-4

4. *A Common Faith*
   
   John Dewey
   Yale University Press
   ISBN: 978-0-300-18611-6

**Recommended:**


Course Goals

Generally, we will be working on 3 ASU Core Objectives: Critical Thinking (CT), Communication Skills (CS), and Personal Responsibility (PR). Each of these Core Objectives contains its own Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). More particularly, we also will work on 3 SLOs of the Political Science Program (each set of SLOs is listed on back page). Your progress towards these objectives may be assessed through your performance on the assigned material. In particular, some (but not all) writing assignments may be used for purposes of this assessment.

Course Format and Expectations

Class Discussion. There is typically new reading for each class period. Class time will be devoted to discussing our day’s reading. We will work off of prepared discussion questions, and make every effort to follow the text closely. Students are always expected to have their own copy of the day’s reading with them in class, as well as their own notes on the text.

Short Papers. This class is writing intensive – there are no exams and 4 paper assignments. Students will be provided with a writing prompt for each paper. Papers will be evaluated for clarity in expression and structure, depth of analysis, and presence of properly cited textual evidence. Students are strongly encouraged to write outlines of their papers before beginning the drafting and revising stages of the writing process. Students are also encouraged to take advantage of my availability during my office hours and via email for assistance on these assignments.

Attendance Policy. Attendance is mandatory and roll will be taken each class. You are allowed 2 weeks’ worth of “free” absences (6 absences)—these are for any reason—after which I will subtract two points per absence from your final grade point total. There are no “excused” or “unexcused” types of absences in this course, except in very serious and/or emergency circumstances. Please be present and on time as much as possible.

Assignments and Grading

Grade Distribution

- Paper #1 20%
- Paper #2 25%
- Paper #3 25%
- Paper #4 30%

Grading Scale

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<td>59 &amp; below</td>
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**General Policies related to this course:**
All students are required to follow the policies and procedures presented in these documents:
- Angelo State University Student Handbook
- Angelo State University Catalog

**Student Disability Services:**
ASU is committed to the principle that no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs or activities of the university, or be subjected to discrimination by the university, as provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008 (ADAAA) and subsequent legislation.
Student Disability Services is located in the Office of Student Affairs, and is the designated campus department charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing requests for reasonable accommodations based on a disability. It is the student’s responsibility to initiate such a request by contacting an employee of the Office of Student Affairs, in the Houston Harte University Center, Room 112, or contacting the department via email at ADA@angelo.edu. For more information about the application process and requirements, visit the Student Disability Services website at www.angelo.edu/ADA. The employee charged with the responsibility of reviewing and authorizing accommodation requests is: Ms. Dallas Swafford
Director of Student Disability Services 325-942-2047dallas.swafford@angelo.edu Houston Harte University Center 112

**Title IX**
Angelo State University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from sex discrimination of any kind. In accordance with Title VII, Title IX, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE), and other federal and state laws, the University prohibits discrimination based on sex, which includes pregnancy, and other types of Sexual Misconduct. Sexual Misconduct is a broad term encompassing all forms of gender-based harassment or discrimination and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature. The term includes sexual harassment, nonconsensual sexual contact, nonconsensual sexual intercourse, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, stalking, public indecency, interpersonal violence (domestic violence or dating violence), sexual violence, and any other misconduct based on sex.
You are encouraged to report any incidents involving sexual misconduct to the Office of Title IX Compliance and the Director of Title IX Compliance/Title IX Coordinator, Michelle Boone, J.D.
You may submit reports in the following manner:
Online: www.angelo.edu/incident-form
Face to Face: Mayer Administration Building, Room 210
Phone: 325-942-2022
Email: michelle.boone@angelo.edu

Note, as a faculty member at Angelo State, I am a mandatory reporter and must report incidents involving sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator. Should you wish to speak to someone
in confidence about an issue, you may contact the University Counseling Center (325-942-2371), the 24-Hour Crisis Helpline (325-486-6345), or the University Health Clinic (325-942-2171). For more information about resources related to sexual misconduct, Title IX, or Angelo State’s policy please visit: www.angelo.edu/title-ix.

**Religious Holidays:**
A student who intends to observe a religious holy day should make that intention known in writing to the instructor prior to the absence. See ASU Operating Policy 10.19 Student Absence for Observance of Religious Holy Day for more information. It is policy that incomplete grades be reserved for student illness or personal misfortune. Please contact faculty if you have serious illness or a personal misfortune that would keep you from completing course work. Documentation may be required. See ASU Operating Policy 10.11 Grading Procedures for more information.

**Student Conduct Policies:**
**Academic Integrity**
Students are expected to maintain complete honesty and integrity in all work. Any student found guilty of any form of dishonesty in academic work is subject of disciplinary action and possible expulsion from ASU.

**Plagiarism**
Plagiarism is a serious topic covered in ASU’s Academic Integrity policy in the Student Handbook. Plagiarism is the action or practice of taking someone else’s work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one’s own. Plagiarism is literary theft.

In your discussions and/or your papers, it is unacceptable to copy word-for-word without quotation marks and the source of the quotation. It is expected that you will summarize or paraphrase ideas giving appropriate credit to the source both in the body of your paper and the reference list.

Papers are subject to be evaluated for originality via Turnitin. Resources to help you understand this policy better are available at the ASU Writing Center.

**Copyright Policy**
Students officially enrolled in this course should make only one printed copy of the given articles and/or chapters. You are expressly prohibited from distributing or reproducing any portion of course readings in printed or electronic form without written permission from the copyright holders or publishers.
Readings, Assignments, and Due Dates

Unit 1: Platonic Piety

Section summary: We explore why ancient Athens executes Socrates for impiety, and whether it was just to do so.

Week 1: Aristophanes’ *Clouds*
Week 2: Plato’s *Euthyphro*
Week 3: Plato’s *Apology*
Week 4: Plato’s *Crito*

*Short Paper due the following Monday (3 pages)*

Unit 2: Lockean Liberal Toleration

Section summary: We explore landmark reasons behind separating church and state in early modernity.

Week 5: Shakespeare’s *King Henry V*
Week 6: Locke’s *A Letter Concerning Toleration*
Week 7: Proast’s Response (1690)
Week 8: Locke’s *Second Letter* (excerpts); Proast’s Response (1691) (excerpts)

*Short paper due the following Monday (3 pages)*

Unit 3: Tensions between Religion and Secularism (outside readings on BB)

Section summary: Post-separation of church and state, we explore compelling views on how the major historical religions function in Western (primarily American) political society.

Week 9: Judaism, Christianity, and the Secular State
Sandel’s “Mastery and Hubris in Judaism”; Dreher’s *Benedict Option*, Chapter 4
Week 10: Islam and the Secular State

Nasr’s *Traditional Islam in the Modern World*, Chapter 6
An-Na’im’s *Islam and the Secular State*, Chapter 1

Weeks 11 and 12: Progressive Secularism

Dewey’s *A Common Faith*

*Short paper due the following Monday (3-4 pages)*

Unit 4: Empirical Trends in Religion and Politics in the United States Today

Section summary: We end with two observational studies on empirical relationships between religion, trust in science, and support for democracy.


Week 15: Review

*Final paper due Wednesday, December 8th, noon (4-5 pages)*
ASU Student Learning Objectives

Critical Thinking Skills (CT)

CT1. Gather, analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information relevant to a question or issue.

CT2. Develop and demonstrate a logical position (i.e. perspective, thesis, hypothesis) that acknowledges ambiguities or contradictions.

Communication Skills (CS)

CS1. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective written communication.

CS2. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through effective oral communication.

Personal Responsibility (PR)

PR1. Demonstrate the ability to evaluate choices, actions and consequences as related to ethical decision-making.

Political Science Program Learning Objectives

(SLO 1) Students will demonstrate critical reading and critical writing skills relating to Political Science subjects.

(SLO 3) Student will demonstrate awareness of ethical and moral dilemmas relating to Political Science.

(SLO 4) To demonstrate comprehension of significant political phenomena at either the sub-national, national, or inter-national level.