

COLA 1500-042—Religion and the 2016 Elections

University of Virginia, Fall 2016

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Class Meetings: T 12:30-1:45PM

Class Location: Lower West Oval Room, 102

Office Hours: TBA

Appointment by Email

Course Hashtag: #ReligionPolitics2016

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

What role will religious rhetoric, teaching, and practice play in the 2016 elections? Engaging commentary and teachings from diverse traditions, seminar participants will discuss local, national, and international political headlines related to the United States political contests this November. Seminar conversations will respond directly to events, discourses, and debates that emerge during the elections, but will be supplemented with texts on perennial political and ethical issues. In addition to spirited debates, seminar activities will include exchanging articles on religion and politics via social media and developing rhetorical skills through preparation of three speeches. Beyond the immediate concerns of the election, seminar participants will address the enduring intellectual and political difficulties of engaging diverse religious beliefs and practices in a pluralistic democratic context.

N.B: The syllabus is an organic document, subject to change. Adjustments to the reading schedule and assignment details are announced at the beginning of each lecture; each student is responsible for keeping track of updates. Utilize the notation space below each section to record adjustments.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND POLICIES:

- **You are expected to attend every seminar.** You are permitted one (1) absence for any reason (no professor approval necessary). Unexcused absences will result in a reduction of your participation grade.
- **You are expected to arrive on time for seminar, which begins promptly at 12:45pm.** Tardiness disrupts your professor and classmates. The habit of tardiness reflects poorly on your capacity for professionalism in any field that you may choose to pursue.
- **You are expected to switch your cell phone to silent or vibrate prior to every seminar.** Please store your device away from your work surface. Sometimes you will be welcomed to use your phone or another device for seminar activities, but unapproved use of cell phones during class will result in a reduction of your participation grade.
- **Please refrain from using laptops in seminar unless required for a particular activity.** While these devices can be a catalyst for engagement and productivity, they can also distract from the communal interaction and conversation that is the foundation of liberal arts education and this college advising seminar.
- **You are expected to complete the assigned readings.** Please come to class prepared to discuss and engage the *primary arguments, salient points, and possible critiques* of each text.
- **You are expected to submit assignments by their designated deadlines.** Late assignments will not be accepted and thus will receive no credit. Extensions may be granted by Prof. Flores in extraordinary situations (possibly during documented medical or family

emergency, but never due to conflict with another course's requirements).

- **Students with documented disabilities can expect appropriate accommodations whenever necessary.** All students with special needs requiring accommodations should present the appropriate paperwork from the Student Disability Access Center (SDAC). It is the student's responsibility to present this paperwork in a timely fashion and follow up with the instructor about the accommodations being offered. Accommodations for examinations (e.g., extended time, low distraction environment) should be arranged at least one week before an exam. The SDAC is located in the Department of Student Health and can be contacted at (434) 243-5180/5181.
- **Student athletes are expected to present official notification of expected absences as soon as this information is available.**

HONOR CODE:

Prof. Flores trusts every student to comply with all of the provisions of the University's Honor Code. By enrolling in this course, the student has agreed to abide by and uphold the Honor System of the University of Virginia, as well as the following policies specific to this course:

- **All graded assignments must be pledged.** Please record your pledge at the end of each written assignment and examination. Please consult your TA if you have any questions about pledging assignments.
- **Collaboration in the form of discussion and peer review (for annotated newsfeeds and speeches) is permitted for this course.** Discussing essay ideas and consulting other students for help refining arguments, revision feedback, and editing is encouraged in this class. Please consult Prof. Flores if you have any questions about acceptable collaboration.
- **Unattributed use of material is prohibited on all assignments in this course.** Please consult Prof. Flores if you have any questions about citation.
- **Suspected violations will be forwarded to the Honor Committee.** Further, Prof. Flores may decide to assign a score of zero on the assignment in question regardless of any action taken by the Honor Committee.

Please consult Prof. Flores if you have any questions regarding the course honor policy. If you believe you may have committed an Honor offense, you may wish to file a Conscientious Retraction by calling the Honor Offices at (434) 924-7602. For your retraction to be considered valid, it must be filed with the Honor Committee before you are aware that the act in question has come under suspicion by anyone. More information can be found at <http://www.virginia.edu/honor>. Your Honor representatives can be found at: <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/2016-2017-representatives/>.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Course Policy Adherence – 10%

See Course Policies section for details.

Seminar Participation – 20%

General verbal contributions, active listening, and submission of occasional credit/no credit assignments. Also includes small group preparations of a set of readings for one seminar.

Annotated Newsfeed Assignment and Newsfeed Contributions – 30%

- (1) **Annotated Newsfeed:** Develop a list of news sources that will inform your view of the 2016 Elections, with a brief explanation of the strengths and limitations of these sources. List should include at least 10 different sources. – 15%

- (2) **Weekly Newsfeed Contributions:** Tweeting articles to our course hashtag in order to offer material for our conversations. Failure to contribute will result in a reduction of the grade. – 15%

Speeches – 40%

- (1) **Famous Speech:** Select and present a 2-minute speech on a theme in religion, morality, and politics – 10%
- (2) **Election Day Speech:** Write and present a 2-minute speech with one central message you would like your fellow voters to keep in mind on Election Day 2016 – 10%
- (3) **Final Speech:** Write and present a 5-minute speech offering your vision offering guidance for citizens pursuing the common good in public life. Please make reference to some of the materials, conversations, and themes we have covered in the course. – 20%

REQUIRED TEXTS:

(CR) Course Reader (available from N.K. Print and Design on Elliewood Avenue)

(CO) Collab (Documents will be posted to under the “Resources” tab)

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1—August 23

Introduction

Week 2—August 30

Virtues for Civil Society

(CR) James Keenan, “Virtues for Civil Society” (Civility, tolerance, humility, justice, mercy, and solidarity)

Seminar Discussion:

What virtues guide participation in public life across religious, cultural, political, and economic difference?

Week 3—September 6

Media and Politics

(OR) Newsfeed

Seminar Activity:

Presentation of Annotated Newsfeeds

Assignment for Next Week:

Personal Presidential Cabinet Form

Week 4—September 13

Religion and Public Life I – Political Rhetoric

(OR) Newsfeed

(CR) Rhetoric Guide

(CR) Abraham Lincoln, “Gettysburg Address”

(CR) Abraham Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address”

(CR) John F. Kennedy, “Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association”

(CR) Mario Cuomo, “Religious Belief and Public Morality: A Catholic Governor’s Perspective”

(CR) Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union”

(CR) Barack Obama, “2006 Speech on Faith and Politics”

(CR) Mitt Romney, “Faith in America”

Seminar Discussion:

What has been the role of religion in public life? What ought to be the role of religion in public life?

Week 5—September 20

Religion and Public Life II – Developing Rhetorical Skills

(OR) Newsfeed

Seminar Activity:

Speech Presentations and Feedback

Week 6—September 27

Religious Traditions in Public Life I: Religious Voter Guides

(OR) Newsfeed

(CR) United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship”

(CR) An Evangelical Manifesto Steering Committee, “An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment”

(CR) Council on American-Islamic Relations, “Civic Guide 2008”

(CR) Episcopal Public Policy Network, “Election Engagement Toolkit”

(CR) Jewish Council for Public Affairs, et. al. “Get Out the Vote Guide 2016”

Seminar Discussion:

How does the theological position in each document influence the suggested political program?

Week 7—October 4: Fall Break

No Seminar Meeting

Week 8—October 11

Religious Traditions in Public Life II: Frameworks for Interpreting Religion in Public Life

(OR) Newsfeed

(CO) H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (excerpt)

(CO) Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square* (excerpt)

(CO) Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions* (excerpt)

Seminar Discussion:

Which of these methods do you find most compelling? Least compelling?

Week 9—October 18

Republicans and Religion in 2016

(OR) Newsfeeds

Articles on Trump and Pence as related to faith (Selected by Small Group)

Seminar Discussion:

How did their religion/faith influence their lives and political careers? How does this faith/religion direct their policies?

Week 10—October 25

Democrats and Religion in 2016

(OR) Newsfeeds

Articles on Clinton and Kaine as related to faith (Selected by Small Group)

Seminar Discussion:

How did their religion/faith influence their lives and political careers? How does this faith/religion direct their policies?

Week 11—November 1

Third (and Forth!) Party Candidates and Religion in 2016

(OR) Newsfeeds

Articles on Johnson/Weld and Stein/Baraka as related to faith (Selected by small group)

Seminar Discussion:

How did their religion/faith influence their lives and political careers? How does this faith/religion direct their policies?

Week 12—November 8: An Election Day Message
(OR) Newsfeeds

Seminar Activity:
Election Day Speeches (2 minute speeches)

Week 13—November 15
Civil Disobedience
(OR) Newsfeeds
(CO) Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*

Seminar Discussion:
What are the public responsibilities of citizens in a society constituted by pluralism and difference?

Week 14—November 22: Thanksgiving Week
Seminar Cancelled

Week 15—November 29
Where Do We Go from Here?
(OR) Newsfeeds

Seminar Activity:
Final Speeches – Religion, Politics and the Common Good

Week 16—December 6
Conclusion
(OR) Newsfeeds

Seminar Discussion:
What comes next for our conversations? How do we apply this material beyond this seminar?
