

## Religion and the 2020 Elections

University of Virginia, Fall 2019

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

**Class Location:** Lower West Oval Room 102

**Office Location:** Gibson S433

**Office Hours:** Wednesday, 2-4pm



*Pope Francis addresses a joint session of U.S. Congress on 24 September 2015*

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

How does religion influence public life in 2019? What role will it play in the 2020 elections? This seminar engages commentary from a range of Catholic, Protestant (Mainline and Evangelical), Muslim, and Jewish traditions toward examining religion's role in U.S. civic life today. Seminar participants will discuss religious teaching, practice, and rhetoric as they relate to the United States political context. Beyond the immediate concerns of contemporary political discourse, seminar participants will address the enduring intellectual and political difficulties of engaging diverse religious beliefs and practices in a pluralistic democratic context.

### **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 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 reliability and professionalism in any field that you may choose to pursue.

- **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 (during 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. 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.
- **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:**

#### **Seminar Participation – 30%**

- **Class Discussion:** Includes verbal contributions, active listening, and other occasional participation-based assignments. Also includes letting other seminar participants participate in the discussion by offering focused comments and refraining from taking up too much "air time."

- **Twitter Takes:** Students are encouraged to occasionally post relevant news items about the relationship between religion and politics to Twitter. Use #ReligionElection2020 and @nicholemflores to receive credit.

### **Annotated Newsfeed Assignment – 10%**

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. (Submit via Collab on Monday, September 16 by 5pm)

### **Online Reading Quizzes – 20%**

Four (4) quizzes administered on Collab, each worth 5% of the grade. Quizzes measure familiarity with the assigned readings. Quizzes will emphasize vocabulary, quotations, and other specific information. (Quizzes available on Collab site)

### **Speeches – 40%**

- (1) **Famous Speech:** Select and present a 2-minute speech on a theme in religion, morality, and politics. – 10%
- (2) **Issue Speech:** Write and present a 2-minute speech with one issue in religion and politics that is important to you. – 15%
- (3) **Final Speech:** Write and present a 2-minute speech offering your vision offering guidance for citizens pursuing the common good in public life. Please reference some of the materials, conversations, and themes we have covered in the course. – 15%

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

(CR) Course Reader (available from N.K. Print and Design on Elliewood Avenue)  
All other readings available online (Links provided in the syllabus)

### **COURSE OUTLINE:**

#### **Week 1—August 27**

#### **Introduction – Religion, Politics and the Signs of the Times**

#### **Week 2—September 3**

#### **The Challenge of Religion in Public Life I (41 pages)**

(CR) Alan Wolfe, “The Most Appropriate Political Philosophy for Our Times,” pp. 6-29 (24 pages)

(CR) Richard John Neuhaus, “Misreading the Signs of the Times,” pp. 3-18 (17 pages)

#### **Week 3—September 10**

#### **The Challenge of Religion in Public Life II (33 pages)**

(CR) Cathleen Kaveny, “John Rawls: The State of Public Discourse,” pp. 58-74 (17 pages)

(CR) Danielle S. Allen, “Old Myths and New Epiphanies,” pp. 9-24 (16 pages)

**Assignment:** Reading Quiz 1 (covering weeks 1-3, take on Collab by September 9 at 5pm)

#### **Week 4—September 17**

#### **Virtues for Civil Society (12 pages)**

James F. Keenan, *Virtues for Civil Society*, Commonweal Magazine

[Civility](#)

[Tolerance](#)

[Humility](#)

[Justice](#)

[Mercy](#)

[Solidarity](#)

**Assignment:** Annotated Newsfeed (Due September 16 at 5pm via Collab)

### **Week 5—September 24**

#### **Religion and Public Rhetoric (27 pages)**

(CR) Rhetoric Guide (5)

Abraham Lincoln, [“Gettysburg Address”](#) (2)

Abraham Lincoln, [“Second Inaugural Address”](#) (2)

John F. Kennedy, [“Address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association”](#) (4)

Mitt Romney, [“Faith in America”](#) (8)

Barack Obama, [“Eulogy for Rev. Clementa Pickney”](#) –Watch video, take notes on transcript (6)

**Assignment:** Reading Quiz 2 (covering weeks 4 &5, take on Collab by September 23 at 5pm)

*Special Guest:* Dr. Tamika Carey, Associate Professor of English, University of Virginia.

### **Week 6—October 1**

#### **Practicing Public Rhetoric (6 pages)**

Jane Kelly, [“What’s in a Voice? The Debate Over Vocal Fry and What It Means for Women”](#) (6)

**Assignment:** Read 2-minute excerpt of a speech on religion and public life (Post text of speech to Collab by September 30 at 5pm)

### **Week 7—October 8: Fall Break, No Seminar**

### **Week 8—October 15**

#### **Religious Voter Guides I – Catholics Perspectives (38 pages)**

[United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship”](#) (31)

[Nathan Schneider, “How to Survive Trump: End the Cult of the Presidency”](#) (7)

### **Week 9—October 22**

#### **Religious Voter Guides II – Protestant Perspectives (23 pages)**

Evangelical Manifesto Steering Committee, [“An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment”](#) (5)

Episcopal Public Policy Network, [“Vote Faithfully Toolkit”](#) (6)

Rachel Held Evans, [“So you’re thinking of voting for a pro-choice candidate...”](#) (12)

**Assignment:** Reading Quiz 3 (covering weeks 8 & 9, take on Collab by October 21 at 5pm)

### **Week 10—October 29**

#### **Religious Voter Guides III – Religious Minority Groups in the United States (30 pages)**

Council on American-Islamic Relations, [“Congressional Voter Guide 2018,”](#) pp. 2-9 (8)

Jewish Council for Public Affairs, [“Get Out the Vote Guide 2018”](#) (22)

**Activity (in-class):** Denominational endorsement committee meetings

### **Week 11—November 5 (Election Day)**

#### **Issues Speech**

**Assignment:** 2-minute speech on issue in religion and politics that matters to you

**Week 12—November 12****Civil Disobedience (27 pages)**

Henry David Thoreau, [\*Civil Disobedience\*](#) (20)

Nichole M. Flores, [“Theology in the Streets: What is the role of a public theologian today?”](#) (7)

*Special Guest:* Rev. Isaac Collins, Lead Pastor at Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, Charlottesville.

**Week 13—November 19*****E pluribus unum: Oneness and Wholeness in the Life of Democracy* (37 pages)**

**(CR)** Danielle S. Allen, “Sacrifice and Citizenship” (13)

**(CR)** Martha C. Nussbaum, “A Problem in the History of Liberalism” (24)

**Assignment:** Reading Quiz 4 (covering weeks 10, 12, & 13, take on Collab by November 18 by 5pm)

**Week 14—November 26: Thanksgiving Week**

**Seminar Cancelled**

**Week 15—December 3****Envisioning the Common Good: Where Do We Go from Here?**

**Assignment:** 2-minute speech on your vision for the common good