In contrast to the expectations of the secularization thesis’ proponents, the evidence for a decline in religion’s contemporary political salience is extremely equivocal. Indeed, multiple indicators suggest religious belief and belonging are currently experiencing a marked political resurgence; even among the most developed countries of the world partisan fault lines often appear drawn along religious dimensions. Why might this be the case today, when by the middle of the 20th century a great many social scientists were predicting that the influence of faith over the public square would eventually fade into obscurity and irrelevance as modernity advanced?

This course begins by examining the broad theoretical contours of the role religion plays in shaping political processes, then applies these insights to an analysis of how religion has influenced political realities in the United States (frequently considered “exceptional” in its religiosity) and Europe (widely understood to be a “secularized” continent). It concludes by considering what the implications are for democratic governance when religion stakes an overtly political claim.

GOVT E-1071 is designed with three goals in mind: a) to provide students with the tools necessary to think critically about religion’s role in politics and the tensions that accompany it in pluralistic societies; b) to introduce students to the relevant literatures and discourses in the field; and c) to survey political trends involving a substantive religious component across the United States and the European Union.

Course Requirements:
1. Class Participation (35%): As this is a discussion-based course, students are expected to attend all class meetings (obviously, emergencies do occur; if you find yourself in this situation, contact me as soon as you are able), keep up with weekly readings, and actively participate in discussion.

2. Written Assignments (50%): Students will have the option of writing either a) two mid-length papers
(10-12 pages each, double-spaced) addressing pre-assigned prompts or b) a longer research paper (25-30 pages, double-spaced) on a topic selected in consultation with me. *All students must inform me of their choice in writing (email is fine) by the second week of class.*

3. Internet Postings (15%): Beginning the second week of class all students will be required to make short (approx. 1-2 paragraph) weekly postings to the Govt E-1071 discussion blog. These may take the form of reflections concerning the assigned readings, analyses of news items which relate to the role of religion in contemporary U.S. or EU politics, or thoughtful responses to material posted by others. *Postings are to be made no later than midnight Sunday each week, beginning with the second week of class.*

**Academic Integrity/Collaboration Statement:**
You are responsible for understanding and obeying Extension School policies on academic integrity ([https://extension.harvard.edu/for-students/student-policies-conduct/academic-integrity/](https://extension.harvard.edu/for-students/student-policies-conduct/academic-integrity/)). Not knowing the rules, running out of time, submitting the wrong draft, or being overwhelmed with multiple demands are not acceptable excuses. To support your learning about academic citation rules, please visit Harvard’s Guide to Using Sources ([https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu](https://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu)).

**Accommodation for Students with Disabilities:**
The Extension School is committed to providing an accessible academic community. The Accessibility Services Office (ASO) offers a variety of accommodations and services to students with documented disabilities.

**Publishing or Distributing Course Materials:**
Students may not post, publish, sell, or otherwise publicly distribute course materials without the written permission of the course instructor. Such materials include, but are not limited to, the following: lecture notes, lecture slides, video, or audio recordings, assignments, problems sets, examinations, other students’ work, and answer keys. Student who sell, post, publish, or distribute course materials without written permission, whether for the purposes of soliciting answers or otherwise, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including requirement to withdraw from the Summer School. Further, students may not make video or audio recordings of class sessions for their own use without written permission of the instructor.

**Late Paper Policy:**
Students must turn in assignments on time in order to receive full credit. In exceptional circumstances extensions may be granted at my discretion, *but these must be approved beforehand*. Unexcused late papers will be marked down two-thirds of a letter grade (e.g., A to B+) for each full day they are late.

**Course materials:**
The following books are required (make sure you get the correct edition):
In addition, during certain weeks you will be provided with “case study” portfolios consisting of recent news articles and similar materials. These readings allow us to apply the theories we have studied to real-life events and afford us the flexibility to evaluate interesting happenings (e.g., the response of religious groups to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 U.S. presidential campaign) as they unfold.

Finally, we will also be making use of two databases:
- Pew U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (http://religions.pewforum.org/)
- The World Values Survey (WVS) (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/)

Online data analysis is free and does not require registration

**Discussion Topics and Readings:**

**Meeting 1: Introduction**

**Meeting 2: The Secularization Thesis Revisited, Part I**

**Meeting 2: Secularization Reconsidered, Part II**

**Meeting 3: The American Case**
Pew U.S. Religious Landscape Survey (http://religions.pewforum.org/)
(Review the findings, paying close attention to the dimensions of inter-group variation)
World Values Survey (WVS) (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/)
(At a minimum, look at religious attitudes in the U.S. and compare them to five European countries in the latest WVS round)


**Meeting 4: How “Exceptional” is America?**

*Case Study Portfolio #1 (distributed no later than the prior class)*


Samuel Huntington *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (Simon & Schuster, 2005), pp. 81-106.


**Meeting 5: The Rise of the Religious Right in U.S. Politics**

*Case Study Portfolio #2 (distributed no later than the prior class)*


**Meeting 6: The United States and the “Culture Wars”**

*Case Study Portfolio #3 (distributed no later than the prior class)*

Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Strangers in Their Own Land* (New Press, 2016), parts I-III.


**Recommended:**


**VIEW:**

Patrick Buchanan’s Speech to 1992 GOP Convention: 

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iO5_1ps5CAC (Part I)  
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pICypNXHKbg&feature=related (Part II)
Meeting 7: Europe as a Historical and Religious Concept

Meeting 8: Is European Secularism Overstated?
Case Study Portfolio #4 (distributed no later than the prior class)
World Values Survey (WVS) (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/)
(Compare religious attitudes among at least five European countries of your own choosing, utilizing both the aggregated four-wave dataset and the latest stand-alone dataset)

Meeting 9: The European Union and Religion
Case Study Portfolio #5 (distributed no later than the prior class)
José Casanova, “Religion, European Secular Identities, and European Integration,” in Byrnes & Katzenstein (eds.) Religion in an Expanding Europe (Cambridge UP, 2006), ch. 3.

Meeting 10: Muslims in Europe
Case Study Portfolio #6 (distributed no later than the prior class)


Meeting 11: Democracy, Liberalism, and Religion

Meeting 12: The Challenges of Pluralism
Robert Wuthnow, America and the Challenges of Religious Diversity (Princeton UP, 2007), ch. 3.

VIEW:
Religion in the Age of Pluralism: Diana Eck
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkgSuuUWdPE
Meeting 13: Tying Things Together