

**THE CHRISTIAN RIGHT IN AMERICA
FALL 2006**

Wednesday 4:30-6:30pm

Professor Erzen

433 Hagerty Hall

Email: erzen.2@osu.edu

Office hours: Tuesday 1-3pm

Course Description:

From poverty to abstinence-only education, intelligent design to gay marriage, religion is by no means separate from contemporary American politics and policy. This course analyzes the relationship between religious values and politics and the role of conservative Christianity in American political life. We will examine several case studies taking place today including the Ohio gubernatorial election in November. The course will include some theoretical models for understanding the relationship between religion and politics as well as background on conservative Christianity and the Christian Right. Within each case study, we will examine larger questions: What is the relationship between the church and state? What is the role of religion in the two major American political parties? What is the connection between religious ideas and political power in contemporary America? In addition to class readings drawn from scholarly, journalistic, religious, and legal perspectives, we will also have occasional guest speakers at our weekly sessions. The Carmen website will be an important resource for articles and other related materials.

Required Readings:

Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (2003)

Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (2006)

Arlene Stein, *The Stranger Next Door* (2001)

(available at SBX Book Store 1806 North High St., Phone: (614) 291-9528 and on reserve at the Main Library)

The packet of articles is available for purchase from Zip Copy at SBX bookstore.

The articles with an asterisk * will also be available on Carmen. The sources listed under "Further Reading" are an indication of other sources available on the topics we will cover in class. They are not required reading

Assignments:

The assignments for this course include: five media analyses, one take-home essay midterm, and a final paper project on an issue of religion and politics.

Five Media Analyses:

A portion of the course will consist of media analyses and reports of contemporary issues of religion and politics in the United States and abroad. The purpose of this assignment is to encourage students to read a variety of news sources on religion, to help students learn to analyze the media, and to enable students to connect the course material to the world outside the classroom.

We will have **five** meetings during the quarter in which to discuss your analyses. For these meetings, you should have on hand:

1. a hard copy of a current article about some issue related to religion and politics related to the United States.
2. a hard copy of an analytical paper that you have written about the article
3. the text of the readings assigned for that class meeting

The articles you select must be current although they may reflect issues of religion and politics either past or present. Articles may be culled from newspapers, magazines, or other online sources as long as they are dated and represent current material. You will turn in these articles and analytical papers at the end of the class meeting.

You must choose at least **4** different sources for your articles.

Only **two** of your articles can be arts or entertainment related.

One of your articles may be a political cartoon, comic, or otherwise.

Each analytical paper should be between 450-500 words- absolutely no longer or shorter.

Include a word count at the end of your paper.

In writing the analytical papers, do not summarize the article. The paper should analyze the article, commenting on it in a way that goes beyond the article, and relates it to issues we have discussed in class. Discuss what the article is doing and how it pertains to the debates in class. Things to consider: who is the intended audience of this article? What is their agenda in writing it? What kind of intervention (political, social, cultural) does the article make?

Take-home Midterm: I will distribute the midterm questions one week prior to the midterm due date.

Final Paper: Students will complete a final 8-10-page paper that reflects the theme of religion and politics in the United States. You may use your media analyses as a basis for the paper.

Attendance and Participation:

I expect students to be active participants in their educations. This means that each student should come to class having carefully read the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them. Because knowing how to articulate your ideas is a crucial part of the learning process, you will be expected, as a member of the seminar, to contribute your own unique perspective to our discussions.

The real action of our seminar takes place in the classroom. Therefore, it is important and expected that you will be at every class session. Inevitably, an occasion may arise when you are unable to attend. Out of fairness to your classmates who do attend every class, chronic lateness and/or more than one unexcused absence will detract from your participation grade. To make up for a missed class, you may turn in a 1-page, single-spaced précis summarizing the reading for the class you missed. Finally, if you have any special needs or concerns with this course, please feel free to talk with me in person.

Grading:

Attentive presence and participation in discussion: 25%

Five Media Analyses: 25%

Take-home Mid-term Exam: 25%

Final Paper (8-10 pages) and Final Paper Presentation: 25%

My computer crashed, and my grandma ate my homework...

All essays should be written in 12-point, double-spaced type, with standard margins, and pages numbered and stapled. I will not accept a paper that is not stapled. *All written work should be thoroughly proofread.* There are no extensions, and all assignments are marked down one-third of a letter grade for every late day. **After 3 days, if you have not turned in your paper, you will automatically receive a "0" for that paper. No exceptions.**

Student Conferences and E-mail Communication: Please stop by office hours or schedule an appointment if necessary. You are also welcome to email me with questions related to the course. However, do not send any information or requests in an email that you would not discuss with me in person. I will not answer any email I deem inappropriate.

Student Rights and Conduct

Any student with a documented disability who may require special accommodations should identify him or herself to the instructor as early in the quarter as possible to receive effective and timely accommodations. You may also wish to contact the Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall, 292-3307).

Students are expected to know and understand the rules regarding academic misconduct, particularly the rules regarding plagiarism, as stated in the University's Code of Student Conduct. Plagiarism is the representation of another's works or ideas as one's own: it includes the unacknowledged word for word use and/or paraphrasing of another's work, and/or the inappropriate unacknowledged use of another person's ideas. All cases of plagiarism will be treated very seriously according to the University's guidelines.

*** Readings available on Carmen**

COURSE SCHEDULE:**Week 1: Introduction to Religion and Politics in America**

Sept. 20

Case Study: The Abortion Controversy

READ BEFORE THE FIRST CLASS: *Cynthia Gorney, "Reversing Roe: Is mainstream right-to-life ready for an abortion ban?" *The New Yorker*, June 26, 2006.

Further Reading: Cynthia Gorney, *Articles of Faith: A Frontline History of the Abortion Wars* (2000), Faye Ginsburg, *Contested Lives: The Abortion Debate in an American Community* (1998); Eyal Press, *Absolute Convictions: My Father, a City, and the Conflict That Divided America* (2006)

Week 2: Background on Religion, Politics and the Rise of the Christian Right

Sept. 27

Kenneth D. Wald, *Religion and Politics in the United States* (2003)

Jose Casanova, "Evangelical Protestantism: From Civil Religion to Fundamentalist Sect to New Christian Right" in *Public Religions in the Modern World*

Film clips: *With God on Our Side*

Further Reading:

Kevin Phillips, *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil, and Borrowed Money in the Twenty-first Century* (2006); Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (2002); Nancy Ammerman, "North American Protestant Fundamentalism" in *Fundamentalisms. Observed*, ed. Martin Marty and Scott Appleby

Week 3: Christianity and Politics Today

Oct. 4

Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (2006)

Film clips: *The Jesus Factor* and *Faith in the White House*

Further Reading: David Domke, *God Willing? Political Fundamentalism in the White House, the "War on Terror," and the Echoing Press* (2005)

Week 4: The New Megachurches: Businesses, Churches and Political Machines?

Oct. 11

*Jeff Sharlet, "Soldiers of Christ: Inside America's most powerful megachurch"

May 26, 2005. *Harpers Magazine*

*Jonathon Mahler, "The Soul of the New Exurb" *New York Times Magazine*, March 27, 2005

*Malcolm Gladwell, "The Cellular Church" in *The New Yorker*

Further Reading:

Thumma, Scott; Dave Travis & Warren Bird (February 2006) "[Megachurches Today 2005: Summary of Research Findings](#)". Hartford Institute for Religious Research. Hartford Seminary,

Week 5: Religion and Politics in the Ohio Gubernatorial Race

Oct. 18

Guest Speaker Frances Fitzgerald, Pulitzer Prize winner and journalist

*Frances Fitzgerald, "Holy Toledo: Ohio's gubernatorial race tests the power of the Christian right." *New Yorker* 2006-07-31

*Sarah Posner, "With God on His Side: Meet Rod Parsley: rising star of the religious right" *The American Prospect*, 11.10.05

Tanya Erzen, "Warriors for Christ: The Electoral Politics of the Christian Right," *New Labor Forum* Vol. 14, Issue 3, September, 2005.

*******MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED*******

Week 6: Religion and Politics in the Abstinence Debate

Oct. 25

*Bearman, Peter, and Hannah Brückner, "Promising the Future: Abstinence Pledges and the Transition to First Intercourse" *American Journal of Sociology* 106: 859–912

*Esther Kaplan, "The Purity Brigades" in *With God on their Side*

Film: *The Education of Shelby Knox*

*****MIDTERM DUE*****

Week 7: Poverty, Religion, and Faith-Based Initiatives

Nov. 1

Esther Kaplan, "Christian Nation" in *With God on their Side*

Robert Wuthnow, "Why Faith-Based, Why Now?" in *Saving America*

Samantha Shapiro, "Jails for Jesus" *Mother Jones Magazine*, November/December 2003

Case Study: Lawtey Correctional Facility, the first religious-based prison in the United States

Film Clips from Lawtey Prison

Further Reading: Robert Wuthnow, *Saving America? Faith-Based Services and the Future of Civil Society* (2004); Jo Renee Formicola & Hubert Morken, Eds., *Religious Leaders and Faith-Based Politics* (2001).

Week 8: Anti-Gay Politics and the Marriage Debate

Nov. 8

Arlene Stein, *The Stranger Next Door*

Russell Shorto, "What's Their Real Problem with Gay Marriage?" *New York Times Magazine*, June 19, 2005

Lisa Duggan and Richard Kim, "Holy Matrimony!" *The Nation* (March 15, 2004)

Further Reading: Tanya Erzen, *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement* (2006); Dawn Moon, *God, Sex and Politics* (2004); Didi Herman, *The Anti-Gay Agenda* (1998);

*****FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE*****

Week 9: The Debate over the Origins of Life: Intelligent Design and Stem Cell Research

Nov. 15

Esther Kaplan, "Weird Science" in *With God on their Side*

Margaret Talbot, "Darwin in the Dock: Intelligent Design has its Day in Court" *The New Yorker*, 12.05.2005

Read the website of the Discovery Institute: <http://www.discovery.org/>

Michael Specter, "Political science: The Bush Administration's war on the laboratory" *The New Yorker*, 2006-03-13

Further Reading: Edward Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion*; Edward Larson, *Evolution: The Remarkable History of a Scientific Theory* (2004), H. Allen Orr, "Devolution: Why Intelligent Design Isn't" *The New Yorker* May 30, 2005 http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/050530fa_fact; *Time Magazine* special on Intelligent Design:

<http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1142625,00.html>;

Jim Holt, "THE WAY WE LIVE NOW: Unintelligent Design," *The New York Times Magazine*, February 20, 2005

http://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/20/magazine/20WWLN.html?ex=1266642000&en=dc8de961f4e932be&ei=5090&partner=rssuserland?NYT_REG_SUCKS_ROCKS

Week 10: The Global Reach of American Religion and Politics

Nov. 22

Esther Kaplan, "The Global Crusade" in *With God on their Side*

Further Reading: Didi Herman, *Globalizing Family Values: The Christian Right in International Politics*

Week 11: Final Presentations and Where do we go from here?

Nov. 29

Further Reading:

Michael Lerner, *The Left Hand of God: Taking Back our Country from the Religious Right* (2006)

Randall Balmer, *Thy Kingdom Come: How the Religious Right Distorts the Faith and Threatens America: An Evangelical's Lament* (2006)

Bill McKibben, "The Christian Paradox: How a Faithful Nation Gets Jesus Wrong" *Harpers Magazine*, August, 2005

Jim Wallis, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* (2005)

Final Papers due Friday Dec. 1

Media Sources on Religion and Politics

Films:

The Jesus Factor

Faith in the White House

With God on Our Side: George W. Bush and the Rise of the Religious Right in America

"Earth to America" comedy special with RFK Jr., Tom Hanks, Steve Martin, etc that aired on TBS last fall. You can view the whole thing on-line at AOL's video site

Flock of Dodos' and the Debate over Intelligent Design

Talk 2 Action

Crimes Against Nature: How George W. Bush and His Corporate Pals Are Plundering the Country and Hijacking Our Democracy

by [Robert F. Kennedy Jr.](#)

<http://www.commondreams.org/views05/0223-25.htm>

Published in the Winter 2005 issue of [EarthLight](#)

For the Sake of Our Children

by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.

*Melani McAllister “Making Israel Matter: Hal Lindsey and the Politics of Prophecy Talk”

*Erin Runions, "Biblical Promise and Threat in U.S. Imperialist Rhetoric before and After 9/11"

*Paul Boyer, “When U.S. Foreign Policy Meets Biblical Prophecy”

(Use Tim Weber article, book of revelations, Curse of Cain?)

Robert Booth Fowler et. al., **Religion** and **Politics** in **America**, *Second Edition*. Westview Press, 1999.

Michael Corbett & Julia Mitchell Corbet, **Politics** and **Religion** in the United States. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999.

Jo Renee Formicola & Hubert Morken, Eds., *Religious Leaders and Faith-Based **Politics***. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.

Kenneth D. Wald, **Religion** and **Politics** in the United States. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, Inc., 2003

God Willing? Political Fundamentalism in the White House, the “War on Terror,” and the Echoing

Press, by David Domke