

PO383-30 The Politics of Religion

24/25

Department

Politics & International Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Steven Kettell

Credit value

30

Assessment

50% coursework, 50% exam

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Religion is at the root of some of the most contentious and controversial issues in contemporary politics. Debates around security and violence, the role of faith schools, public policy issues such as same-sex marriage and abortion, clashes over freedom of expression, gender rights, advances in medical technologies, and tensions around multiculturalism are just some of the ways in which religion and politics have intermixed. This module explores the political context of religion through an interdisciplinary approach that draws on a variety of research agendas in fields such as political science, sociology, cognitive science, psychology and history. It examines a wide range of issues, including the nature of religious belief, the historical and social development of religion (and non-religion), debates around secularism, the rise of fundamentalism, morality, and religious violence.

[Module web page](#)

Module aims

The aims of this module are as follows:

- To introduce students to the key themes and issues relating to the relationship between politics and religion in the modern world.
- To facilitate an inter-disciplinary, scholarly analysis of religio-politics in theoretical, conceptual and empirical terms.
- To encourage critical thinking about the impact of religious belief on contemporary political

issues and institutions.

- To consolidate and enhance student research skills through the collection and analysis of information from a wide range of sources.
- To develop student abilities to present and communicate a well made, coherent and logically consistent argument

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Lectures cover the following topics:

1. Introductory material
2. God is back: the 'return of religion'.
3. Studying religion: key theories.
4. Faith and science: conflict or consensus?
5. The moral of the story: is religion a force for good?
6. From memes to genes: origins and expansion
7. The secularisation thesis: religion in retreat?
8. Non-religion: the rise of the unbelievers
9. Religion and global capitalism: friend or foe?
10. Religion and the state: the politics of myth
11. Secularism and its critics: religion in the public sphere
12. Identity and democracy: a post-secular world?
13. Parties and voting: Christian democracy, political Islam, and the Christian Right
14. Religion and the law: human rights and wrongs
15. God in the classroom: is there a role for faith schools?
16. I, me, mine: the politics of bodily autonomy
17. Fundamentalism and violence: twins or distant relatives?
18. Continuity or change? the future of religion

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate advanced and applied knowledge of the theoretical issues and debates surrounding the relationship between politics and religion.
- Demonstrate detailed and critical awareness of the key processes and dynamics through which religion has shaped, and continues to shape, contemporary politics and political institutions.
- Relate contemporary issues surrounding religion and politics to conceptual and theoretical frameworks of understanding.

Indicative reading list

Key texts include:

- What you don't know about religion (but should) - Ryan T. Cragun, 2013
- An introduction to religion and politics: theory and practice - Jonathan Fox, 2018
- Big gods: how religion transformed cooperation and conflict - Ara Norenzayan, 2015
- Sacred and secular: religion and politics worldwide - Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart, 2011
- The Wiley Blackwell companion to the study of religion - 2021

[View reading list on Talis Aspire](#)

Interdisciplinary

The module draws on research themes and debates in various fields, including: political science, sociology, history, philosophy, and cognitive science.

Subject specific skills

Upon completion of this module, students will have the ability to:

- Demonstrate comprehension of key theories and ideas relating to religion and its involvement in political life. These conceptual frameworks are drawn from a variety of disciplines, including political science, sociology, economics, and cognitive science.
- Use this conceptual and theoretical toolkit to analyse the influence of religion in our conception of the political world. This includes processes of imperialism and state formation, the dynamics of global capitalism, and the constitution of the political as comprising discrete public and private spheres.
- Apply core theories and concepts of religion to an understanding of complex historical and contemporary political developments. These include themes of sexual autonomy, freedom of expression, patterns of voting behaviour, and issues of religious violence.
- Demonstrate an understanding of how these complex relationships between religion and politics are expressed in different parts of the world.

Transferable skills

The module will provide students with the opportunity to build and develop the following transferable skills:

- Analytical and critical thinking skills. These involve synthesising theoretical and empirical material to assess competing claims and alternative sources of information.
- Academic and research skills. This involves the ability to find and evaluate on information from a range of sources in order to develop complex, evidence-based arguments. Students will also be able to develop skills around planning and time management for the production of assessed work.
- Communication skills. Class discussions and debates will provide students with the opportunity to develop their skills in oral communication, to present their viewpoints and to

respond to the views and ideas of others. Written work will provide the opportunity to distil and present complex arguments, drawing on a wide range of conceptual and empirical material.

Study

Study time

Type	Required	Optional
Lectures	18 sessions of 1 hour (50%)	
Seminars	18 sessions of 1 hour (50%)	2 sessions of
Total	36 hours	

Private study description

Students are expected to spend the following time on private study:

- 6 hours per week reading for seminars during term times (120 hours).
- 9 hours on reading and studying during reading weeks (x2 = 18 hours).
- 6 hours of studying per week during the Christmas holiday (24 hours)
- A total of 50 hours on study for the assessed essay (based on 1 hour each for 30 sources + 5 hours of planning time + 15 hours of writing and editing)
- A total of 50 hours on study for the examination (the exam equates to a similar amount of work for the essay).

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group C2

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Written Assignment 3000 word essay	50%		Yes (extension)
Online Examination	50%		No

- Online examination: No Answerbook required

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback shall be provided on essays and exams.

[Past exam papers for PO383](#)

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 4 of UECA-4 Undergraduate Economics 4 Year Variants
- Year 3 of UECA-LM1D Undergraduate Economics, Politics and International Studies
- UHIA-VM14 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
 - Year 3 of VM14 History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
 - Year 4 of VM14 History and Politics (with Year Abroad and a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 3 of UPOA-M100 Undergraduate Politics
- Year 4 of UPOA-M101 Undergraduate Politics (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 4 of UPOA-M168 Undergraduate Politics and International Studies with Chinese
- Year 3 of UPOA-M169 Undergraduate Politics and International Studies with Chinese (3 year)
- Year 4 of UPOA-M165 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Italian
- Year 3 of UPOA-M162 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods
- Year 4 of UPOA-M167 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Quantitative Methods (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 3 of UPHA-V7MW Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law
- Year 4 of UPHA-V7MX Undergraduate Politics, Philosophy and Law (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 3 of UPOA-M16A Undergraduate Politics and International Studies
- Year 4 of UPOA-M16B Undergraduate Politics and International Studies (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 3 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology
- Year 4 of UPOA-ML14 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology (with Intercalated year)

- Year 4 of UPOA-M163 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and French
- Year 4 of UPOA-M164 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and German
- Year 4 of UPOA-M166 Undergraduate Politics, International Studies and Hispanic Studies

This module is Option list C for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)
- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 3 of V7MP Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite)
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)
- UPHA-V7MM Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics (with Intercalated year)
 - Year 4 of V7MS Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite with Economics Major) (with Intercalated Year)
 - Year 4 of V7MQ Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Bipartite) with Intercalated Year
 - Year 4 of V7MM Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite) (with Intercalated year)

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 4 of UHIA-VM12 Undergraduate History and Politics (with Year Abroad)
- Year 3 of UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics