POLS 4390.001 – Religion and Politics

Spring 2012 Syllabus, Version 1.0

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer L. Epley

Office Location: Bay Hall 3.41
Office Telephone: (361) 825-2554

Office Hours:
- Mondays from 12pm-3pm and Wednesdays from 12pm-2pm
- By appointment (in case of class or employment conflicts only)
- During busy periods, a sign-up sheet will be hung on the door to reserve slots.
- Please save detailed conversations for office hours instead of directly before or after a class session.

Email: jennifer.epley@tamucc.edu
- Please consider e-mail as official correspondence.
- Efforts will be made to address your e-mail within 48 hours. If you do not receive an email within 48 hours, please send a follow-up email.
- No email correspondence on weekends.
- No email correspondence on the day before an examination or deadline.
- E-mail communications should be about class business. E-mail is not the place for summaries of lectures, discussions, or readings, however.
- Please use the subject line in a way that indicates the content of the message. Please also use professional language and include your full name, section number, and a complete inquiry in the body of the message.
- Please keep copies of e-mails that are sent and received for records purposes.

Course Website: Blackboard online (https://iol.tamucc.edu/)

Course Section and Location:
POLS 4390.001 – Religion and Politics meets Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11:00am-11:50am in Bay Hall 104.

Course Description & Objectives:
Political Science 4390.001 is a special topics upper-division course in Political Science. The course will focus on the subfield of “Religion and Politics.” In the first part of the semester, we will learn about religious roots around the world (including our own), theoretical and methodological perspectives, debates regarding definitions of “religion,” and debates over public versus private spheres. We will then shift to issues related to public policy debates, ethnic conflicts, majority-minority populations, gender, fundamentalisms, and secularization. Throughout the course we will ask: Who are the actors? What are their preferences? How do they get their preferences? What are the consequences? Through a process of collaboration,
cooperation, and discovery, we will develop our knowledge base and skills. Substantive knowledge, critical thinking and analysis, developing and defending arguments, and the clear and concise articulation of ideas and evidence will be important components of the discussions, writings, and evaluations in this course.

Learning Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes:
Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- Define and recall factual/conceptual knowledge related to religion and politics
- Express and interpret theoretical knowledge related to religion and politics
- Demonstrate and employ facts and data to develop arguments related to religion and politics
- Appraise and analyze the usefulness of the various theoretical approaches related to religion and politics
- Develop appropriate research methodologies
- Analyze primary and secondary sources for key concepts
- Collect and evaluate data and information for a research paper
- Create a theoretically grounded piece of original research

No Required Textbook; Chapter Excerpts and Online Readings are Required Instead:
The instructor will provide the copies and links to students in class, via Blackboard, and/or by email.

Performance Evaluation and Grading:
Your final course grade will consist of the following components:

**10% Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory. Absences will be registered by a sign-in sheet. Compulsive unexcused lateness (meaning three or more times) may be deemed as absences. Once the sign-in sheet is completed, you will be considered absent if you have not yet arrived. Your first absence from class on a non-examination or project day for any reason will be excused (i.e., a “freebie”). It is then course policy to deduct 1 percentage point from your final course grade for each subsequent, unexcused absence from class. See the “Make-Up” section of this syllabus for information related to excused absences on examination and project days. Note: Regular attendance can be an excellent “buffer” or “booster” for grades in this class.

**40% Four Major Examinations** – Each examination is worth 10% of the course grade. The exam format will be a combination of multiple choice, true/false, fill in the blank, and short answer.

**20% Course notebook binder** – Students are expected to maintain a notebook binder of original notes for each set of assigned readings. The course notebook binder will be collected and graded twice during the semester, each counting as 10% of the overall course grade.

**30% Research Project** – In pairs, students will create a research project and present key findings to the class. Guidelines will be provided in March.
Make-Up Policy:

Late submissions of the course notebook binder or the research project are only permitted for students with a documented excused absence for the day of the deadline. Make-up examinations will be given only if you have a documented excused absence. Students are required to provide the instructor with formal written documentation from a doctor, coach, academic advisor, or other professional staff member appropriate to the nature of the excused absence. Examples of excused absences include religious observances, sickness or other serious medical reasons, officially-sanctioned trips for members of the university’s academic and athletic teams, and accommodations for students with special needs.

Students should provide advance written notice, which will in turn be acknowledged in formal writing by the instructor. If you do not have a written response by the instructor, you do not have prior approval. In cases where advance notification is not possible (e.g., sickness or emergency), students need to provide notice by the end of the second working day after the absence. This particular notification should include an explanation as to why the notice could not be provided in advance.

Make-up examinations may be different in content and format from those given in class.

For documented excused absences, students will have a maximum of one week from the original submission deadline to turn in the course notebook binder to the instructor. This policy applies to the research project as well. Students will have a maximum of one week from the date of the original event to complete the make-up examination, or if there is less than one week left in the semester, until the last day of the semester at a time designated by the instructor. Students are responsible for contacting the instructor in sufficient time and making themselves available so that the make-up examination is completed within the allowed time.

Grading Scale:
A = 90 – 100  B = 80 – 89  C = 70 – 79  D = 60 – 69  F = 59 and below

Additional Notes:
No extra credit options are available for this course. No exceptions. Please do not request extra credit from the instructor at any point during the semester.

Grade Appeal Process:
Major Examinations, Course Notebook Binder, and Research Project – Students have one week from the date that a score is posted on Blackboard for each individual component to make a grade appeal. First see the instructor during office hours to discuss the matter. If after the meeting a student wants to file a formal appeal, he/she should then follow the university’s appeal procedures, which are explained at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. Students may also contact the Office of Student Affairs for assistance.

Final Grade – As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the
class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Academic Honor Code:** Students are expected to uphold the Academic Honor Code published in the University Student Handbook. The Academic Honor Code is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility (1) to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity in the student’s own work, (2) to refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community, and (3) to foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community. Violations of the Academic Honor Code will not be tolerated.

**Students with Disabilities:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Disability Services Office at (361) 825-5816 or visit them in CCH 116. Please also contact the instructor as soon as possible if you require assistance.

**Veterans:** If you are a veteran who is experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the instructor and/or the Disability Services Office at (361) 825-5816 or visit them in CCH 116. Veterans can find more information online at http://vets.tamucc.edu/.

**Student Caregivers:** If you have caregiving responsibilities (e.g., parent of a child or care for elderly parents) and you anticipate scheduling difficulties, please discuss this at the beginning of the semester with the instructor to work out an appropriate strategy.

**Academic Advising:** The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and their telephone number is (361) 825-3466.

**Classroom Policies:**
- **Be on time to class.** With the large number of students enrolled in the course, even a few latecomers can be very disruptive. Please be considerate of your peers and the instructor by being punctual. Remember that compulsive unexcused lateness (meaning three or more times) may be deemed as absences.
• **Stay until the end of class.** “End of class” means when the instructor verbally releases students to leave. Please do not start to pack up your belongings too early as this is a distraction to other students and the instructor. If you need to leave early (again with a proper documented excuse), please sit in a seat closest to one of the classroom exits in order to minimize the disruption of your early departure.

• **Please do not have side conversations during lecture. Asking questions by first raising your hand is fine.** Students will be concentrating on taking notes, so too much talking on the side will distract them from doing a good job. There will be designated periods in which students will have the opportunity to discuss course material with the instructor and classmates. **Talking is permitted at those times.**

• Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VII of the Student Code of Conduct. **Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom.** This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, electronic classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

• **The instructor will assume that prior to class you have made an earnest effort to understand the material.** This will allow you to be prepared to engage the material in more detail or address misunderstandings during class. Reviewing “basic facts” will primarily be reserved for examinations, not lectures.

• There will be opportunities for the instructor to answer your questions and for you to engage and discuss important questions with the instructor and your peers. Students are invited to have open discussions and respectful debates during designated periods. Indeed, such debates are essential both for your learning and for progress in political science more generally. To foster an intellectually supportive environment, students should adhere to the dialogue guidelines (see additional handout).

• ***Unless directed by the instructor for specific course activities, the use of laptops, mobile phones, texting devices, entertainment gadgets, music devices, headphones, personal digital assistants (PDAs), etc. is prohibited.** Phones in particular should be set to “vibrate” if you must have a phone to receive emergency calls. Phones should not be visible to other students or the instructor. In other words, keep your phone in a bag, backpack, pocket, etc. The abovementioned items limit a student’s active participation, can disturb other students, and distracts the instructor. **If a student is found to be using any of the aforementioned technological devices without permission, the instructor will politely request that the student stop using the device. A student will be asked to leave the class if found using the device again,** which will cause the student to miss out on taking complete notes for his/her course notebook/binder that day, thereby limiting the
number of points he/she will receive. This disciplinary process also takes time away from lecture and discussion, so please do not disrupt the entire class by taking such a chance.***

**Academic Dishonesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism:**
Academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism of any kind are unacceptable. There are no exceptions. Consequences for academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism include, but are not limited to, a failing grade for an assignment, a failing grade for the course, noncredit for an assignment, additional work, and/or direct referral to university officials.

**Academic dishonesty** includes, but is not limited to, the use of unauthorized information during a quiz or exam, plagiarism, submitting the same paper for multiple courses without permission, or depriving another student of the ability to perform his or her work. The term **cheating** includes, but is not limited to: (1) use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; (2) dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments, plagiarism; or (3) the acquisition, without permission, of tests or other academic material belonging to a member of the university faculty or staff. The term **plagiarism** includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment. Plagiarism also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling or distribution of term papers or other academic materials. If you have questions about the university’s policy on academic dishonesty, please see the Student Code of Conduct at [http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/StudentCofC.html](http://judicialaffairs.tamucc.edu/StudentCofC.html).

**Dropping a Class:**
The instructor hopes that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with the instructor before you decide to drop to be sure it is the best thing to do. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class. Please refer to the academic calendar online for information about the last day to drop a class with an automatic grade of “W” this term.

**Academic Calendar Reminders from [http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/academic_cal.html](http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/academic_cal.html):**

- Wednesday, January 11, 2012: Classes begin
- Monday, January 16, 2012: Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- Thursday, January 19, 2012: Last day to register or add a class
- Monday-Friday, March 12-16, 2012: Spring Break
- Friday, March 30, 2012: Last day to drop a class
- Monday, April 30, 2012: Last day to withdraw from the University
- Tuesday, May 1, 2012: Last day of classes and last day to apply for August 2012 graduation
• Thursday-Friday, May 3-4, 2012 and Monday-Wednesday, May 7-9: Final examinations period
• Saturday, May 12, 2012: Spring Commencement

For the latest information on dates and deadlines, please inquire at the appropriate university office (e.g., Academic Affairs Office, Office of the Registrar, Dean’s Office of your major, main department of your major, etc.), with your academic advisor, and your professors.

**Tentative Course Schedule:**

*All dates, assignments, and evaluations are subject to change with advance notice. Please pay attention to Blackboard ([https://iol.tamucc.edu/](https://iol.tamucc.edu/)) for updates.*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Course Topics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1:</td>
<td><strong>Course Introduction:</strong> Syllabus, Dialogue Guidelines, Professor-Student Relations, Professor Background, Student Introductions, and Academic Advice (e.g., how to study and take notes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 11, 13</td>
<td>Week 2: (No Class, MLK Day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 16</td>
<td><strong>(1) Political Science as a discipline</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>January 18, 20</td>
<td>• Explore American Political Science Association (APSA) website: <a href="http://apsanet.org/">http://apsanet.org/</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Excerpts from APSA’s <a href="http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/467721/political-science/247901/Fields-and-subfields">Careers and the Study of Political Science: A Guide for Undergraduates</a></td>
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<td><strong>(2) Reflections on Religion &amp; Politics in the United States and Beyond</strong></td>
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<td>• <strong>Assignment 1:</strong> 01/18/2012 – Bring a typed-written response to the following questions: What is your personal religion if you have one? How have you been socialized into that religion? Are there any tensions or conflicts for you within that religion? What stereotypes exist about your religion? What stereotypes do you have of other religions? What would you like to learn more about regarding religion and politics in the United States and/or other countries?</td>
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<td>Week 3:</td>
<td><strong>Religious Roots:</strong></td>
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<td>January 23, 25</td>
<td>• Read <a href="http://www.religionfacts.com/about.htm">http://www.religionfacts.com/about.htm</a>, and take notes about the pros and cons of this site from a researcher’s perspective.</td>
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| Week 4: January 30 and February 1, 3 | (1) Religious Roots continued…  
| | (2) FIRST MAJOR EXAMINATION on February 3, 2012 in class: Covers all material from Weeks 1-4 |
| Week 5: February 6, 8, 10 | Religion and Politics: Theoretical Perspectives & Research Designs  
| Week 6: February 13, 15, 17 | Definitional Issues and the Question of Public, Private, or “Other” Spheres?  
| | - Read John Locke’s “A Letter Concerning Toleration” (1689).  
| | - Read Alexis de Tocqueville’s “Chapters 2 and 5” in *Democracy in America* (1833). |
| Week 7: February 20, 22, 24 | Religion and the State: Public Policy Debates  
| SECOND MAJOR EXAMINATION on February 24, 2012 in class: Covers all material from Weeks 5-7 |
| Week 8: February 27, 29 and March 2 | Submit COURSE NOTEBOOK/BINDER on February 27, 2012 at start of class: Covers all material from Weeks 1-7  
| | Religion and Ethnic Conflict  
| Week 9: March 5, 7, 9 | **Religion and Majority-Minority Populations**  
- Country Case Studies: England, Nigeria, Thailand, and the Philippines (readings to be determined) |
| Week 10: March 12, 14, 16 | **No Meetings: Spring Break** |
| Week 11: March 19, 21, 23 | **Religion and Gender**  
- Additional readings to be determined based on current events in the mass media during Spring 2012.  
**THIRD MAJOR EXAMINATION on March 23, 2012**: Covers all material from Weeks 8-11 |
| Week 12: March 26, 28, 30 | **Religious Fundamentalisms**  
| Week 13: April 2, 4, 6 | **Religious Fundamentalisms Continued…**  
- Readings to be determined based on contemporary events in the mass media during Spring 2012. |
| Week 14: April 9, 11, 13 | **Secularization Debates**  
**FOURTH MAJOR EXAMINATION on April 13, 2012**: Covers all material from Weeks 12-14 |
| Week 15: April 16, 18, 20 | Submit **COURSE NOTEBOOK/BINDER on April 16, 2012 at start of class**: Covers all material from Weeks 8-14  
**Research Project** |
| Week 16: April 23, 25, 27 | **Research Project** |
| Week 17: April 30 (Last Class) | **Research Project** |
| Final Exam Period | **Final Research Project due on Friday, May 4, 2012 at 11:00am.**  
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COURSE NOTEBOOK BINDER GUIDELINES:

➔ See syllabus for two deadlines.
➔ On the front of your notebook binder, please include your full name, student identification number (A number), the class title and section number, the instructor’s name (Dr. Jennifer Epley), and your preferred email address.
➔ On the top of each page of notes, please indicate the set of readings.
➔ Please avoid loose or missing pages. No late or missing pages will be graded. No exceptions.
➔ Binders with pages that you can add or remover are preferred over standard bound notebooks.

(1) Quantity
   • Your notebook/binder must include notes for set of assigned readings
   • Length:
     o Minimum: 1 page of notes for each set of assigned readings.
     o Maximum: 5 pages of notes for each set of assigned readings.

(2) Quality
   • Notes may be typed or handwritten. Please write legibly. Scores cannot be provided if the writing is unclear.
   • Your notes must follow the “metacognitive note-taking” format that your instructor taught you (see handout).
   • The best notes answer the following questions completely and accurately:
     o Who are the actors?
     o What are their preferences/interests?
     o How do they get their preferences/interests?
     o What are the consequences?
   • Students are responsible for creating original notes. Do not copy notes from other students. To repeat an earlier section of the syllabus: Academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism of any kind are unacceptable. There are no exceptions. Consequences for academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism include, but are not limited to, a failing grade for an assignment, a failing grade for the course, noncredit for an assignment, additional work, and/or direct referral to university officials. The aforementioned consequences are dependent upon the severity of the infraction.