POLS 4390.001 – Religion and Politics

Spring 2014 Syllabus, Version 1.0

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer L. Epley
Office Location: Bay Hall 3.41
Office Telephone: (361) 825-2554

Office Hours:

- Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays from 12:30pm-1:50pm
- By appointment (in case of class or employment conflicts only)
- 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. Unprofessional emails will result in non-response.
- Please keep copies of e-mails that are sent and received for records purposes.

Required Course Websites:

- Blackboard online (https://iol.tamucc.edu) ➔ Free access

Course Section Details for Registered Students:
POLS 4390.001 – Religion & Politics meets on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00m-12:15pm. The classroom location has not yet been assigned.

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, 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:
• Describe and interpret factual and theoretical knowledge related to religion and politics
• Assess and analyze the usefulness of various theoretical and methodological approaches related to religion and politics
• Collect, evaluate, and present arguments and data for a research project

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…

20% Assignments and Discussion Questions
There are three individual assignments (15%) and six sets of discussion questions (5%) due during the semester.

50% Research Project
This is a group assignment. Guidelines to be determined.

10% Reflective Essay
Students will have the opportunity to write an individual reflective essay connected to the course material and their experiences during the semester.

20% Attendance & Active Participation
Attendance is mandatory, especially since this course is structured as a simulated think tank. Active participation is critical for success in this course. Absences will be registered by a sign-in sheet. Punctuality is also vital. Be on time. When students are on time, the class can finish on time. 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 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.

Excused Absences: Students will be excused from class to facilitate their religious observances. You must provide notice of anticipated religious absences in advance. Absences from class will be excused for other reasons if you can provide written documentation from a doctor, coach, academic advisor, or other professional staff member appropriate to the nature of the absence. Such cases include sickness or other medical reasons, officially-sanctioned trips for members of the university’s academic and athletic teams, and accommodations for students with special needs. At the instructor’s discretion, she may provide alternative means for you to fulfill missed responsibilities.

Late Policy and Make-Up Policy:
No late work is accepted. No exceptions. No make-up work is permitted. No exceptions. Students know the work and deadline schedules in advance and should manage their time and commitments accordingly.

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 in time (especially at the end of the semester).

Grade Appeal Process:
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. Students may be asked to submit a written/typed appeal letter for documentation purposes. 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. Students may be asked to submit a written/typed appeal letter for documentation purposes. 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.

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE UPDATED (11/20/2013) – GRADE APPEALS PROCESS: Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

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 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.

***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.

Please note that the university requires that faculty members formally report all instances of academic misconduct. Here is the form:
http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/assets/Academic%20Misconduct%20Incident%20Form%208-17-11-1.pdf and here are the procedures:
http://studentaffairs.tamucc.edu/assets/procedure_academicmisconductcases.pdf

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.

Classroom Policies:

• **Attendance is mandatory.** There is a strong, positive correlation between high class attendance and high course grades. Students who regularly attend class receive a myriad of benefits from learning in real-time with face-to-face contact with the instructor and peers.
  - *Students must provide their original signature on an attendance sheet at each class meeting.* The university requires that faculty members keep track of student attendance, particularly for the purpose of reporting in the SAIL system any information related to “stopped attending” or “never attended” (including exact dates). **Do not sign in for other people besides yourself.** Please pass the sign-in sheet around the room efficiently to ensure that everyone is documented as needed.

• **Be on time to class.** Please be considerate of your peers and the instructor by being punctual. If you are more than ten minutes late to class without advanced notice or valid documentation, please do not enter the classroom.

• **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 (with advanced notice 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 talk (i.e., have “side conversations”) during lecture.** Students will be concentrating on taking notes, so talking 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 classmates. Talking is permitted at those times. **Questions for the instructor about the presented material are still welcomed and encouraged during lectures. Please raise your hand and the instructor will answer questions as needed.**

- **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.**

- **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 or office hours.

- There will be opportunities for the instructor to answer your questions and for you to discuss important questions with 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 extra 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.** This disciplinary process takes time away from lecture and discussion, so please do not disrupt the entire class by taking such a chance.

- **Lecture slides are not posted online because of…**
  - **Copyright issues:** Academic material such as syllabi and lecture slides are proprietary, and unfortunately some professors have had negative experiences with putting their materials out in the public domain.
  - **Attendance and “crutch” issues:** Some students are prone to missing class if slides are available because they view the slides as a substitute for lecture. Missing class has several potentially negative consequences, so the instructor “helps” these students by providing an incentive to attend class. We also avoid possible misinterpretations of slide material if we can handle questions and concerns in real time in class. In addition, some students might treat lecture slides as a “crutch” (e.g., simply memorizing slides) rather than truly developing their own knowledge base and understanding or using the resources that are already readily available to them (like their own notes).
*** The slides are primarily for visual learners who need to both hear words and see text as they are learning. They are not meant for students to copy as a substitute for prior studying. Also, students should not frantically try to write down everything from the lecture slides. If students come prepared, most of the lecture should not be new. Lecture is simply another time and place to encounter the material again since repeat exposure helps with memory and understanding. As such, your in-class lecture notes do not need to be extremely lengthy. Additionally, please pay attention to what is not on the slides, that is, the extra examples and vocabulary the instructor mentions that are related to the slides. Students should keep track of such examples and terms. If students are too busy trying to write everything from the slides, they may miss other key information from the instructor and their peers.

**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 early 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. Veterans can find more information online at [http://vets.tamucc.edu/](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 phone number is (361) 825-3466.

**S.A.I.L. System:** S.A.I.L. is a secure online student portal where you can access your student, academic, and financial aid records at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. Students can find information related to registration, class schedules, course catalogs, tuition and fees, grades, etc. at [http://sail.tamucc.edu/](http://sail.tamucc.edu/).

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spring 2014</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 20, Monday</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 22, Wednesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 29, Wednesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 10-14, Monday-Friday</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11, Friday</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 5, Monday</td>
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May 6, Tuesday  
Last day of classes  
Last day to apply for August 2014 graduation

May 7, Wednesday  
Reading Day

May 8-9, Thursday-Friday  
May 12-14, Monday-Wednesday  
Final examinations

May 15-16, Thursday-Friday  
Grading days

May 17, Saturday  
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.

Course Schedule: All dates, assignments, and evaluations are subject to change with advanced notice. Please pay attention to Blackboard (https://iol.tamu.edu/) for updates.

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<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Course Topics</th>
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| Week 1:  
January 23rd | **Before Class:**  
* Submit course syllabus contract page via email to instructor by 10am

**In Class:**  
* Course Introduction: Syllabus, Dialogue Guidelines, Professor-Student Relations, Professor Background, and Student Introductions

Week 2:  
January 28th & 30th | **28th In Class:**  
(1) Political Science as a discipline

- Explore American Political Science Association (APSA) website: http://apsanet.org/

→ Bring three questions for class discussion.

(2) Reflections on Religion & Politics in the United States and Beyond

**Assignment 1:** 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 Asia?

**30th**

**In Class:**  

Week 3:  
February 4th & 6th | **4th and 6th In Class:**  
Religious Roots:
**Week 4:** February 11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>  
11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> In Class:  
**Religion and Politics: Theoretical Perspectives & Research Designs**
- Bring three questions for class discussion.

**Week 5:** February 18<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>  
18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> In Class:  
**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).  
**Assignment 3:** Essay – Based on the assigned readings from Weeks 4 and 5, what is one core political debate (i.e., main research question/issue/puzzle) in the field of religion and politics from a researcher’s perspective? What is the significance of that debate?

**Week 6:** February 25<sup>th</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup>  
25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> In Class:  
**Religion and the State: Public Policy Debates**
- Bring three questions for class discussion.

**Week 7:** March 4<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>  
4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> In Class:  
**Religion and Majority-Minority Populations**

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- Read [http://www.religionfacts.com/about.htm](http://www.religionfacts.com/about.htm), and  
  **Assignment 2:** Bring a comparative table about the pros and cons of this site from a political science researcher’s perspective.
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<tr>
<th>Week 8:  March 11th &amp; 13th</th>
<th>No Classes – Spring Break</th>
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| **Week 9:**  March 18th & 20th | 18th and 20th In Class:  
  *Religion and Gender*  
  → Bring three questions for class discussion. |
| **Week 10:**  March 25th & 27th | 25th and 27th In Class:  
  *Religious Fundamentalisms*  
  → Bring three questions for class discussion. |
| **Week 11:**  April 1st & 3rd | 1st and 3rd In Class:  
  *Secularization Debates*  
  → Bring three questions for class discussion. |
| **Week 12:**  April 8th & 10th | 8th and 10th In Class:  
  Research Project |
| **Week 13:**  April 15th & 17th | 15th and 17th In Class:  
  Research Project |
| **Week 14:**  April 22nd & 24th | 22nd and 24th In Class:  
  Research Project |
| **Week 15:**  April 29th & May 1st | 29th and 1st In Class:  
  Research Project |
| **Week 16:**  May 6th | 6th In Class:  
  Research Project |
GUIDELINES FOR DIALOGUE

1. Confidentiality. We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange.

2. Our primary commitment is to learn from each other. We will listen to each other and not talk at each other. We acknowledge differences amongst us in backgrounds, skills, interests, and values. We realize that it is these very differences that will increase our awareness and understanding through this process.

3. We will not demean, devalue, or “put down” people for their experiences, lack of experiences, or difference in interpretation of those experiences.

4. We will trust that people are always doing the best they can.

5. Challenge the idea and not the person. If we wish to challenge something that has been said, we will challenge the idea or the practice referred to, not the individual sharing this idea or practice.

6. Speak your discomfort. If something is bothering you, please share this with the group. Often our emotional reactions to this process offer the most valuable learning opportunities.

7. Step Up, Step Back. Be mindful of taking up much more space than others. On the same note, empower yourself to speak up when others are dominating the conversation.

8. Maintain a safe atmosphere.

Source: The Program on Intergroup Relations, University of Michigan, CRLT Handout (page 8), August 26, 2008.

Please note that the emergency phone number in the classroom is 4444 to reach the police. If the class phone is blinking red (no ringing), please let the instructor know immediately so she can obtain important safety information.
I, ________________________________, have read all of the pages of Dr. Epley’s Spring 2014 syllabus for Political Science 4390.001 – Religion and Politics. I fully understand the expectations, rules, regulations, resources, and schedule explained in that syllabus. I agree to abide by its conditions as well.

_________________________________________
(Signature)

_________________________________________
(Student Number)

_________________________________________
(Date)

_________________________________________
(Course Number & Section)