

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office Hours: http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/Weekly_schedule_Fall_2006.pdf

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- This course examines the origin, nature, and consequence of religion's influence on politics in the United States. As we shall see, the free exercise of religious beliefs can take a political form that is passive or active, can have results that are positive or negative, and can be motivated by beliefs that are liberal or conservative. We will also observe religion's influence reaching far beyond clearly religious issues -- like the legal status of abortion -- to supposedly secular issues of economic growth, public safety, world peace, and social justice. Religion is relevant to American politics far beyond the contentious church-and-state issues like public-school prayer. Throughout history, religious communities have entered the political arena in organized efforts to shape public policy on a wide range of issues. The United States is no exception.
- A basic assumption of this course is that religion is only one of many competing influences upon political values, institutions, and policies. Thus, a second course objective is to identify the conditions that enhance religious influence upon government and politics. A related goal is to understand those circumstances that limit the political impact of religious forces.
- This course also examines the influence of government and politics on religion in the United States. We will study how the legal status of religious organizations has changed over time in response to changing interpretations of what Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers meant by a "wall of separation" between church and state.
- Another basic assumption of this course is that the study of religion and politics has value to both believers and skeptics, to those who applaud the connections between religion and politics as necessary and proper as well as to those who see this connection as the root of mischief and tragedy. As its fourth objective, this course attempts to identify and analyze both the noble and the unfortunate sides of the religious element in politics. In doing so, the course adopts a social-scientific approach that rejects both the tendency to explain religion only in terms of supernatural forces as well as the opposite tendency to reduce all religious attitudes and behaviors to biological or genetic traits. Instead, the focus is upon those psychological, economic, and social factors that shape religious activity in the political system.
- As part of this course, you will use the Internet to enhance classroom discussions. First, I will introduce you to various web sites that summarize and interpret both survey and aggregate data pertaining to religious attitudes and behavior. Second, I will also point you towards web sites of various religious organizations. Third, we will all use email as a communication tool to share information throughout the course.

Class meetings are intended to blend lecture and discussion. In order for the latter to prove valuable, you will need to complete the assigned readings on time and to come to the class with questions and observations in mind.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- Wald, Kenneth D. 2003. *Religion and Politics in the United States*. 5th edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. **[note: the 5th is a new edition – do not purchase the 4th edition]**
- Barbour, Ian G. 2000. *When Science Meets Religion: Enemies, Strangers, or Partners?* New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.
- eInstruction, *Student Response Keypad*.

STUDENT RESPONSE KEYPADS

Bring your activated *Student Response Keypad* to every class – starting with the first class meeting. You can learn how to activate your keypad by reading the instructions posted at: http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/pls203/Student-response-keypad_instructions.pdf

- You will use the keypad in every class meeting to anonymously respond to true/false or multiple-choice questions that arise during class discussion.
- The aggregated class responses are projected on an overhead screen as full-color bar- or pie-charts, so that the class and I can see and comment upon the distribution of class responses.
- I find that the anonymity and confidentiality of this feedback method encourages all students to enthusiastically participate in this interactive form of active learning. Students who rarely or never raise their hand in response to questions are comfortable in responding with their keypads and are more likely to join the resulting discussion of how and why the class divided in their collective responses.
- The keypad responses also give me immediate feedback regarding the extent to which students understand concepts being discussed. This allows me to make informed decisions about the pace and organization of class discussions.

TESTS AND GRADING

Your course grade will be based on a total of 400 points divided in equal fourths between quizzes, two hourly examinations, and a final examination.

- A series of 10 quizzes keyed to the assigned readings will contribute a possible 100 points toward your course grade. A 10-point quiz will be given before class discussion of each of the 10 reading assignments. Your total quiz score will be computed by first deleting the lowest quiz score and then averaging the remaining quiz scores and multiplying that quiz average times 10.
- The two hourly and one final examination will each contribute a possible 100 points toward your course grade. Each exam will be one-half essay (optional) and one-half multiple choice. Essay review guides are available on the course web page. If you choose not to do the essay, the multiple-choice portion of the exam will be worth 100 points. Prior to each exam, a list of essay topics will be provided on the course website. Prior to each assigned reading and class discussion, a chapter outline will be provided on the course website that includes material that relates to one of the essay topics.
- Bonus points can be added to your course average, if you are the first to report (by email) any typographical or substantive errors in either of your textbooks or in any course materials available on the course web site or discussed or handed out in class. If you are the first to report it, each *typographical error* (spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, etc.) adds 1 % to your final course average. Each report of a *substantive error* of fact or interpretation adds 5 % to your final course average. Any misstatements by me in class are fair game for a bonus-point award (if you are the first to question the validity of the misstatement). **The purpose of these bonus points is to encourage and reward critical listening, reading, and thinking – three of the most important skills that you can acquire in your undergraduate career.** A basic tenant of the founding fathers of the United States was to question authority. Those in authority (whether political leaders or professors) are not always right in what they think or do.

All components of the final course grade are combined before a course letter grade is determined, using the following scale:

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| • A = 90–100% of total possible points | • D = 60– 69% of total possible points |
| • B = 80– 89% of total possible points | • F = 00– 59% of total possible points |
| • C = 70– 79% of total possible points | |

Any form of cheating on any graded work will result in an automatic grade of F for the course, no matter what the quality of all other course work.

REQUIRED ATTENDANCE

If you are a full-time, in-state student, the tuition and fees that you pay (\$3625.50 per year) account for *less than one-fourth* of the annual cost of your education at UNCW (approximately \$15,600).¹ The taxpayers of North Carolina pay much of the difference. This public assistance amounts to almost \$12,000 per year (think of it as tuition stamps) for each in-state, full-time student.² Out-of-state students pay \$13,335.50 per year in tuition and fees, so even they are paying only about 85% of the annual cost of their education at UNCW. **NC taxpayers (over three-fourths of whom are not college graduates) have a right to expect that you attend classes -- their money pays for a significant portion of your public-university education.**

PENALIZED ABSENCES

- In the real (job) world, unforeseen circumstances (alarm clock doesn't go off, car trouble) are accepted as legitimate excuses for *short and infrequent* absences from work. **Similarly, in this course two un-penalized absences will be allowed. For each additional absence, your final course grade will be reduced by one letter grade.**
- **No makeup quizzes or exams will be given for un-excused absences. An un-excused absence will result in a grade of zero for any quiz or exam.**
- If late to class, it is your responsibility to ensure (*immediately after class*) that you are recorded present on the class attendance roll. Should you fail to ask to be marked present after class, you will have used up one of any remaining unpenalized absences. Your being late to class is not a problem *as long as this happens infrequently*. **If you are tardy, see me immediately after class to make sure that your name was counted on the roll — otherwise, you will be marked absent.**
- Once in class, it is expected that you will stay until dismissed or unless some foreseen or unforeseen emergency occurs. In the former case, please advise me ahead of class; in the latter case, leave class as quietly as possible and inform me as soon as possible of the circumstances that led to your unexpected departure. **Otherwise, you will be marked absent for that day.**

EXCUSED ABSENCES

- In the real (job) world, frequent or lengthy absences are excused only in cases of serious illness or injury, death in the immediate family, or other catastrophic events. **Similarly, in this course, truly extraordinary circumstances that rarely occur may warrant special arrangements that will be made on a case-by-case basis. Requests for excused absences must be submitted in writing with supporting documentation.**
- **The following circumstances do not constitute an excused absence: job conflicts, car trouble, or an alarm clock that doesn't go off; save your two "free cuts" for situations like these.**

¹ \$155,000,000 UNCW 2004-2005 operating budget (estimated) divided by 9935 student FTEs (projected). Revenue sources for the University include tuition and fees (20 percent), state funds (41 percent), federal contracts and grants (10 percent), auxiliary enterprises (25 percent) and others (4 percent). See also <http://www.uncw.edu/ba> and http://www.uncw.edu/oir/FactSheet_Folder

² This public assistance is actually greatly understated because it does not reflect the cost of the state's capital investment in UNCW's buildings and grounds – currently valued at approximately \$210,000,000.