Religion and politics:
What justice after secularization?

Course Description:

Secularization, which has gradually identified itself with the project of "European modernity", can be defined as a process which emancipates societies from the constraints that religious institutions exert on them. The secularization of modern societies, which is related to a process of rationalization, would thus make it possible to separate religion from the modern state and to confine religion to the private sphere. This seminar will study how this theory of secularization, which leads to reduce the political scope of religion, has been criticized by intellectuals, believers and non-believers alike, who did not define themselves as anti-modern but thought, according to different approaches, that religion could not be detached from the political desire for justice. We will thus develop our reflection on the borders of religion and politics, paying particular attention to the way in which the process of secularization, as it unfolded in the colonial and post-colonial world, revealed the contingent and non-universal character of this partition and opened the way to political and spiritual projects centered on the pursuit of justice.

This course will be divided into three parts. The first part will aim at understanding the emergence of the concept of secularization at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, and the partition between politics and religion that it implied. In the second part, we will see how Liberation theology, which has been developed in Latin America from the second half of the 20th century, sought, by acknowledging the modern division between state and religion, to revive the prophetic tradition of the Old Testament concerning the liberation of the oppressed people. Finally, in the third part, we will analyze how secularization, as established in the colonial and post-colonial world, has led to a new comprehension of the division between politics and religion, as it has been structured in modernity, and the relevance of the very concept of secularization.

Guidelines

- The goal of the course is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at giving access to the original texts and at trying to grasp them in their historical and theoretical context, whether it be German philosophy, theology or postcolonial theory. Particular attention will thus be paid to the study of the argumentative logic of the texts, which will then allow for a precise debate on them. At each session, a student will present one of the texts to be studied, in order to open the debate between all the participants. On the other hand, the course aims at giving students the means to discuss the issues at stake in the course with specialists of these topics. Several sessions of the course will thus be devoted to live interventions, via Zoom, of philosophers and sociologists with whom the students will discuss the texts studied. A group of students will be responsible, for each session, for leading the debate. In this way, we will work on argumentative skills, both in writing and orally.

- The assigned readings will be sent one week in advance, and are meant to provide a solid basis for our in-class discussions. It is, therefore, important to acquire yourself with the texts before class.

Tentative Course Breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Texts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Werner Sombart</td>
<td><em>Modern Capitalism</em>, vol. 1, K A Nitz, Wellington (Excerpt).</td>
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<td>Karl Marx</td>
<td><em>Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right</em>, Cambridge University Press, Joseph O’Malley (Excerpt)</td>
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<td>Ernst Bloch</td>
<td><em>Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom</em>, Verso Books, United Kingdom (Excerpt)</td>
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<td>Henri Bergson</td>
<td><em>The Two Sources of Morality and Religion</em>, Andesite Press (Excerpt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jacques Maritain</td>
<td><em>Integral Humanism</em>, University of Notre Dame Press (Excerpt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simone Weil</td>
<td><em>The Need for Roots: prelude towards a declaration of duties towards mankind</em>, Routledge (Excerpt)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yves Congar</td>
<td><em>True and False Reform in the Church</em>, Collegeville, MN, Liturgical Press (Excerpt)</td>
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| #4: | **Critique of the concept of secularization from a Catholic point of view.**  
Alasdair MacIntyre  
Scott, Peter and William Cavanaugh, eds. *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing (Excerpt) |
### Part II: Liberation Theology: justice, politics and religion in modernity.

| --- | --- | --- |
| Gustavo Gutierrez  
C. and L. Boff | --- | --- |
| Gustavo Gutierrez  
James H. Cone  
Michael Löwy | --- | --- |
Michael Löwy, *Marxism and Theology Liberation*, Notebooks |
| Gustavo Gutierrez  
Jon Sobrino  
Michael Löwy | --- | --- |
#8 Liberation theology in debate: from controversies with the Roman Catholic Church to the development of new models of liberation.


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Part III: Secularization in the colonial and post-colonial world and the desire for justice.

#9: Extension of the concept of religion: Christianity and Islam

Edward W. Said, Orientalism, Penguin Classics (Excerpt)

Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion, Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam, Johns Hopkins University Press (Excerpt)

Talal Asad, Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity, Stanford University Press (Excerpt)

Saba Mahmood, Politics of Piety – The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject, Princeton University Press (Excerpt)

Mohamed Amer Meziane, Is Orientalism Islamic ?, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 40 (1): 219–222. (Excerpt)

#10: “Abrahamic religions” and desire for justice

Louis Massignon, Testimonies and reflections, University of Notre Dame press (Excerpt)


Joseph A. Massad, Islam in Liberalism, University of Chicago Press (Excerpt)
### #11: Liberation theology and Islam


### #12: Conclusion: What justice after secularization?