Course Description

This course explores ways in which the “religious” is mediated. The Enlightenment expectation that science and democracy would drive religion off the historical stage has so far not been realized. At the same time, religion itself has been restructured, giving rise to new forms of expression, practice, and experience, and new mediated spaces where religious community is to be found. Religion remains a source of social solidarity and conflict, of local bonds and global connections, of shared values and radical politics. Of particular interest is the intersection of the secular and the sacred and how conflicts between the two are mediated. The changing modes of religion’s mediation will be addressed by examining historical controversies over the place of religion, including the Scopes trial in the US, the Salman Rushdie blasphemy debates in the UK, the headscarf controversy in Europe, the Danish cartoon controversy, and debates over al Qaeda’s use of the internet. Key writings on religion by Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Clifford Geertz, and Talal Asad will be drawn on.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will:

- Be able to critically assess contemporary debates on religion and politics
- Understand the ways in which religion is mediated in contemporary societies
- Understand different analytical approaches to the study of religion, secularism, and the media
- Be able to frame and investigate research questions on religion and the media, and to write research papers

Required Texts

All texts will be available as PDF files on NYU Classes.

Course Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classes</th>
<th>Students are expected to do all essential readings in preparation for each class and to participate fully in class discussions.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written work for the class</td>
<td>Mid-term exam (which will be short essay questions).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>A 4,000–5,000-word final paper on an approved topic of the student’s choosing related to the course. A brief proposal with short bibliography will be due March 12th.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Visual research project</td>
<td>On a topic of the students’ choosing in consultation with the instructor. To be formulated early in the semester: a rough draft plan will be due March 12th.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Presentation

Students will apply methods of analysis drawn from class readings to investigate material collected in the visual research project. The student will present findings in class in a 15-minute presentation, and respond to questions.

Evaluation

Final evaluation of students’ performance will be made on the basis of the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In-class participation and discussion</th>
<th>25%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term exam – short essay</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A=Excellent</td>
<td>This work demonstrates a solid understanding of course material, and presents comprehensive, well-focused and well-reasoned analysis. It includes an intelligent use and interpretation of source materials, visual illustrations, interdisciplinary references and no grammar/typing errors. Outstanding work on all levels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B=Good</td>
<td>This work demonstrates an accurate understanding of course material, presents a reasonable degree of analysis. Quotes tend to stay within the predictable domain of assigned course readings, interdisciplinary concepts are not included. Work reflects competence, but remains at a general level of understanding. Images, source materials, references and quotes are aptly used and writing/presentation is clear and direct. The paper has been carefully proofread and is without errors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C=Adequate/Fair</td>
<td>This work shows understanding remains superficial, inaccurate or incomplete, writing is vague or inappropriate, typos are included, and the concept level remains at the assumed. Source materials are used inadequately, and arguments lack correct and specific examples.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D=Unsatisfactory</td>
<td>This work is late, demonstrates a serious lack of understanding, and fails to comprehend the basic aspects of the course. Sources and images may be used entirely inappropriately or not at all, and writing/articulation appears lackluster or inappropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F=Failed</td>
<td>Work not submitted.</td>
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</table>
Plus (+) or minus (-) grades indicate your range within the aforementioned grades:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94–100</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90–93</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87–89</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>84–86</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80–83</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77–79</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>74–76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70–73</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>65–69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60–64</td>
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Late Assignments: All assignments are due by midnight on the date indicated. Late assignments will be marked down a grade for each day late. If you are going to be late with a writing assignment or presentation, notify me before the day the assignment is due and request an extension.

Absences: Two unexcused absences will automatically result in a grade dropped by 5%, an additional 5% for each additional two unexcused absences. Lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence you will be responsible for missed work; excused absences must have a doctor’s note. Travel arrangements do not constitute a valid excuse for rescheduling exams. If you have to miss a class due to an emergency be sure to get a classmate’s notes. Please come to class prepared; collective participation in this class is critical to our success.

Writing help is available through the Writing Center, 411 Lafayette, 3rd Floor. The telephone number is: (212) 998-8866. This is an excellent resource that I encourage you to explore.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: “Academic integrity is the guiding principle for all that you do … you violate the principle when you: cheat on an exam; submit the same work for two different courses without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home test without prior permission from your professors; receive help on a take-home test that calls for independent work; or plagiarize. Plagiarism, whether intended or not, is academic fraud. You plagiarize when, without proper attribution, you do any of the following: copy verbatim from a book, article, or other media; download documents from the Internet; purchase documents; paraphrase or restate someone else’s facts, analysis, and/or conclusions …” (see Steinhardt School Bulletin 2008-2010, pp. 177–8)

Grade Appeals

Please allow three days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment; if you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short and considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either shift your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

Notes on Written Work

All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, in 11-point Times font, and properly cited in a consistent manner. On all written work, include your name, the course number, my name and the date. Please number your
pages, and always include a bibliography. Essays turned in without one will be marked down. Please make sure to keep a hard copy of each assignment you turn in. While computer malfunctions are unfortunate and do happen, they are not an accepted excuse for late papers. If your paper is received after the deadline, it will be marked down as stated above.

**Students With Disabilities**

Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, [http://www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lectures</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jan 29</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<td>Jan 31</td>
<td>History overtakes religion</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Emile Durkheim, The Elementary Forms of Religious Life</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Feb 5</td>
<td>• Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</td>
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<td>Feb 7</td>
<td>• Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System”</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>• Talal Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category”</td>
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<td>Feb 14</td>
<td>The return of the religious</td>
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<td>• Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Feb 19</td>
<td>• Jose Casanova, Public Religions in the Modern World</td>
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<td>Feb 21</td>
<td>Sacred democracy, holy terror</td>
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<td>• Bruce Lincoln, Holy Terrors: thinking about religion after September 11</td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Feb 26</td>
<td>• Klaus Milich, “Fundamentalism hot and cold: George W. Bush and the ‘return of the sacred’”</td>
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<td>Feb 28</td>
<td>• Faisal Devji, “Osama bin Laden’s message to the world”</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Mar 5</td>
<td>• Faisal Devji, “Spectral brothers: al-Qaida’s world wide web”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mar 7</td>
<td>Midterm exam</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Mar 12</td>
<td>Deadline to submit final paper and presentation topics</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>The Scopes trial</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Jeffrey P. Moran, The Scopes Trial: a brief history with documents</td>
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<td>Mar 14</td>
<td>• Edward B. Davis, “Fundamentalism and folk science between the Wars”</td>
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<td>Spring break</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Mar 26</td>
<td>• Marjorie George, “And then God created Kansas? The evolution/creationism debate in America’s public schools”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
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<td>Mar 28</td>
<td>• Watching the new atheism</td>
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<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Apr 2</td>
<td>Covering Islam</td>
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<td>• Edward Said, <em>Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World</em></td>
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<td>Apr 4</td>
<td>The Rushdie affair</td>
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<td>• Talal Asad, “Ethnography, literature, and politics: some readings and uses of Salman Rushdie’s <em>The Satanic Verses</em>”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Apr 9</td>
<td>Final paper strategies</td>
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<td>Apr 11</td>
<td>Presentation strategies</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Apr 16</td>
<td>The headscarf debate in Europe</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Emma Tarlo, “Hijab in London”</td>
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<td>• David Macey, “The hijab and the Republic: headscarves in France”</td>
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<td>Apr 18</td>
<td>• Tanil Bora, “Nationalist discourses in Turkey”</td>
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<td>• Emilie Olson, “Muslim identity and secularism in Turkey: the headscarf dispute”</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Apr 23</td>
<td>The Danish cartoons controversy</td>
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<td>• Francis Fukuyama, “Europe vs. radical Islam”</td>
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<td>• Heiko Henkel, “The journalists of Jyllands-Posten are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs’ – the Danish cartoon controversy and the self-image of Europe”</td>
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<td>Apr 25</td>
<td>• Pernille Ammitzboll and Lorenzo Vidino, “After the Danish cartoon controversy”</td>
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<td>• Faisal Devji, “Back to the future: the cartoons, liberalism, and global Islam”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Apr 30</td>
<td>3 x 15-min presentations</td>
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<td>May 2</td>
<td>3 x 15-min presentations</td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>May 7</td>
<td>3 x 15-min presentations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>May 9</td>
<td>1 x 15-min presentation and course wrap up</td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>Final Paper Deadline</td>
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