

Goal:

How, if at all, should public officials draw from religion in arguing for their policy positions? Should respect for religious diversity induce them to exercise restraint in making their own views known? Or do religious views play a legitimate role in public decision-making? In specific, what sorts of religious language are the current presidential candidates using, and is it appropriate? At the end of this seminar, you will have earned *responsible opinions* on these questions. A responsible opinion is:

- based on an extensive knowledge of the complexities of the world—e.g., the varied appeals candidates are actually making, the varied tasks we actually expect of our Presidents, and the varied beliefs about God (etc.) Americans actually possess;
- grounded in your own deepest beliefs about religion, politics, society and rhetoric;
- capable of being expressed and defended with sound reasons among your fellow citizens, many of whom may possess quite different views.

Please note that this course is limited to the question of *candidates' religious talk*. Important questions we will NOT be asking include:

- when, if ever, is a decision with conspicuous religious content (e.g., to pray in school) appropriate? Instead, we will focus on decisions with no apparent religious content (e.g., on welfare, school or foreign policy) that are being argued by reference to religion.
- when, if ever, should religious arguments be *censored*--subject to legal penalty? Instead, we will be considering whether religious arguments should be *censored* or criticized, even as racist speech, negative campaigning and fake campaign promises should be criticized. Another way to put this is that we are seeking principles not of legal restraint, but of *self-restraint*; or that we are interested in the ethics, not the law, of civic speech.
- when are religious arguments persuasive? For that, I'd recommend one of our courses in social psychology, campaign rhetoric or persuasion!

What you can expect:

We'll start with a month of general discussion to get to know each other, the topic, and how we'll be interacting. After that, we'll spend the middle of the semester in student-lead discussions exploring the views of some who have written about the subject. At the end of the semester, we'll turn to analyzing and evaluating the talk of the current round of presidential candidates.

Each of you is expected:

1. To **participate** every class session. This is a discussion class: your fellow students will only learn if you are in your seat and interacting with them, and you will only learn if your fellow students do likewise.
2. To **defend** in writing your final view on the central question.
3. Working in a group of 2-3, to **lead** the class one day, and to file a report afterwards on the *topoi* (standard lines of argument) that were discovered.
4. Possibly working in a group, to **publish** a report on and evaluation of a candidate's religious talk.

Schedule

Week	Prepare in advance (all readings on WebCT)	Topic
1 20 Aug	Read: Religion and Politics	Introductions: Who are we? What is our question? Where are we going?
2 27 Aug	Read: Greenawalt Read: On Topoi Read: How to read, how to lead Write: your answer to the reading	A first discussion of our question. The concept of topoi (standard lines of argument). Assignment of class leadership groups.
3 3 Sep	Read: Kennedy Read: Kerry	How in fact do candidates speak, religiously?
4 10 Sep	Write: Initial opinion paper	Planning for the rest of the semester: How will we publish our results? Who will do what? Ground rules for discussion.
5 17 Sep	Read: Rorty	Group 1 leads discussion and files a report afterwards on the topoi discovered.
6 24 Sep	Read: Smolin	Group 2—same.
7 1 Oct	Read: Audi	Group 3—same.
8 8 Oct	Write: Interim individual/group report on candidate's religious talk Read: Others' reports	What's happening on the campaign trail? Interim reports from individuals/groups watching candidates.
9 15 Oct	Read: Garver	Group 4—same.
10 22 Oct	Read: Teitel	Group 5—same.
11 29 Oct	Read: Neuhaus	Group 6—same.
12 5 Nov	TBA	Begin process of publishing our reports on and evaluations of candidates' religious discourse, as decided in week 4.
13 12 Nov	TBA	(more)
19 Nov	---	NO CLASS--THANKSGIVING
14 26 Nov	TBA	(more)
15 3 Dec	Write: Final Opinion paper	Review of what we've learned, and final decisions.