

Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University
Self, Sacred, and the Secular
Instructor: Jerome Baggett

Course Description: Despite the oft-voiced conceit that religious traditions are largely immutable, it is now abundantly clear that religious believers today do not access and live out those traditions as did their forebears of even a generation or two earlier. At the same time, despite the continuing popularity of unduly confident versions of the so-called “secularization thesis,” it is also clear that modern societies remain overwhelmingly (albeit differently) religious. The purpose of this course is assist students in analytically surmounting such “either/or” conceptualizations and thus arrive at a more nuanced understanding of how the sacred and secular are inextricably entwined within everyday life, especially in terms of the ongoing project of identity construction.

Course Goals:

- To introduce students to some of the most important contemporary texts attending to the nexus of religion and modernity within Western societies.
- To provide students – both orally and in writing – with opportunities for critiquing and employing that analytical and methodological tools to which they will be introduced.
- To introduce students to important (primarily sociological) research methods – in-depth interviewing, survey, historical, etc. – that will enable them to craft their own investigations of lived religion.
- To enable students to think through key concepts – especially “self,” “sacred,” and “secular” – in a manner that then allows them to conceptualize and deploy these in analytically nuanced ways.
- To contribute to students’ understanding of the great diversity of not only religion per se, but also of the diverse ways that people are actually religious, the diverse reasons for being religious, the diverse consequences of their being religious, and so forth.
- Students will recognize the interplay between faith and culture in addressing theological and / or pastoral issues that emerge in diverse cultural contexts. [NB: This is Goal III for each of programs offered at the Jesuit School of Theology.]

Required Texts:

Hubert Dreyfus and Sean Dorrance Kelly, *All Things Shining: Reading the Western*

Classics in a Secular Age (New York: Free Press, 2011).

Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*
(Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1991).

Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*
(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Robert Wuthnow, *The God Problem: Expressing Faith and Being Reasonable*
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).

Phil Zuckerman, *Society Without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment* (New York: New York University Press, 2008).

Course Structure: This class will be conducted as a seminar. In other words, after some opening comments from me (and, of course, I'm happy to answer questions and so forth), the first half of each class session will consist of an in-depth discussion of the week's text and then the second half will be devoted to student-led and -facilitated class discussion.

Course Requirements:

- **Class Participation (40%).** Rather than this being construed as my class, I'm asking that you contribute to making this *our* class by keeping abreast of the readings, meticulously preparing for each class session and, very importantly, sharing your informed insights within class discussions on a regular basis.
- **Facilitating Class Discussion (10%).** This basically involves five things: a. sign up for a week for which the topic or readings are particularly interesting to you; b. coordinate your work with the other student also signed up for that week (if there is one); c. write no more than a two-page critical reflection on some aspect of that week's readings of interest to you; d. come up with no more than 3-4 incisive discussion questions; and e. read your paper to the class and, with the other student signed up for that day (if there is one), facilitate the group discussion of your questions.

- Written Work (50%):
 - Pass / Fail Option: Simply do the two things listed above and, with respect to your final grade, double each of the percentages listed.
 - Written Option A: Not including the week you facilitate class discussion, write an approximately two-page explanation of what you found to be interesting (and why) vis-à-vis the week's readings for any ten weeks. I will simply give full credit (denoted by a check mark) to any paper that is well-organized, -written, and -thought out. These papers will be due in class for each given week.
 - Written Option B: This course is divided into three parts. Students who select this option will write a 5-7-page critical analysis paper attending to some theme addressed, implied, etc. in the readings for each of these three sections. These papers will be due the day of the last class session for each section or, if it would be helpful to students, within just a few days afterward.
 - Written Option C: One 20-30-page final paper. Students – particularly those doctoral students hoping to meet the GTU's "research readiness" requirements – may also write a longer paper that addresses some theme or question that has emerged from the course. This can rely solely on texts from the class or incorporate some modest research. In either case, students should run paper ideas by me sometime before November 7th and final papers are due in my JST box by 5pm on December 19th.

Course Schedule:

The Immanent Frame:

September 8: Problematizing Secularization as a Simple Narrative

*José Casanova, "Secularization, Enlightenment, and Modern Religion" in *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp. 11-39.

*Steve Bruce, "Explaining Secularization" in *Secularization: In Defense of an Unfashionable Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 24-56.

September 15: Groundwork

Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Introduction, Part I.

*Optional – Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Craig Calhoun, "Editors' Introduction" in Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen and Craig Calhoun, eds.,

Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 1-31.

September 22: The Nova Effect

Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Parts II and III.

September 29: Narratives

Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Part IV.

*James Turner, "A New Age" in *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in*

America (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 7-34.

*Robert Wuthnow, "From Dwelling to Seeking" in *After Heaven: Spirituality in America*

Since the 1950s (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 1-18.

*Wade Clark Roof, "The Making of a Quest Culture" in *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby*

Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton

University

Press, 1999), 46-76.

October 6: New Conditions

Taylor, *A Secular Age*, Part V, Epilogue.

October 13: Alternative Accounts

*Robert N. Bellah, et al., "Culture and Character" in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism*

and Commitment in American Life (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp.

27-51.

*Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, "Secularization, R.I.P." in *Acts of Faith: Explaining the*

Human Side of Religion (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 57-79.

*Christian Smith, "Introduction: Rethinking the Secularization of American Public Life"

in *The Secular Revolution: Power, Interests, and Conflict in the Secularization of American Public Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 1-96.

*Roy F. Baumeister, "How the Self Became a Problem: A Psychological Review of Historical Research" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 52, no. 1,

pp.

163-76.

*Gavin Hyman, "Atheism in Modern History" in Michael Martin, ed., *The Cambridge*

Companion to Atheism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 27-

46.

October 20: Reading Week

II. Sociological Explorations:

October 27: Secularization, Security and Politics
Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*.

November 3: Paying Attention to the Trends
Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, Appendix 1, chapters 1-8.

November 10: Paying Attention to the Trends (cont.)
Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, chapters 9-15.

November 17: Paying Attention to Language
Wuthnow, *The God Problem*.

III. Disparate Interrogations:

November 24: Problematizing (and Debunking?) the Secular
Zuckerman, *Society Without God*.

December 1: Problematizing (and Re-Constituting?) the Self
Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*.

December 8: Problematizing (and Re-Casting?) the Sacred
Dreyfus and Kelly, *All Things Shining*.

Inclusive Language Policy: The academic community of the Jesuit School of Theology recognizes that the language and images used in daily communication both form and reflect the way persons perceive, regard, and treat one another. The school affirms the usage of unbiased and inclusive language in written, oral, and visual communication.