

Religion and Society: Fundamentalism RLST 3170

In 1920 the editor of a Northern Baptist periodical described a group of Christians that he identified as militant. They opposed evolutionists and those involved in "higher criticism" of the Bible and argued that the "fundamentals" of the Christian faith had to be preserved. The term stuck. So did the idea. Today there are fundamentalist groups in every major world religion, each seeking to preserve and propagate the truth as they see it. This course will explore the characteristics of fundamentalism, examine its historical development, evaluate its interaction with social and political circumstances, and analyze its effect on gender roles.

Course Goals

1. To define fundamentalism, noting how its parameters vary across religious traditions.
2. To understand the causes, ideologies, strategies, growth, and effects of various fundamentalist groups.
3. To engage with contemporary issues of religious fundamentalism through reading online newspapers.
4. To apply four methods of studying religious phenomena: rhetorical, comparative, politico-economic, and feminist analyses.

Texts

The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics. Susan Friend Harding. Princeton University Press, 2001.

The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics. Peter L. Berger, ed. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, July 1999.

Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalisms around the World. Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, and Emmanuel Sivan. University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam. John L. Esposito. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Mixed Blessings: Gender and Religious Fundamentalism Cross Culturally. Judy Brink, ed. Routledge, 1996.

Supplementary Materials

Acts of Faith. Eboo Patel. Beacon Press, 2007. Chapter One emailed.

Fundamentalisms Observed. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Editors). University of Chicago Press, 1991. Library reserve.

Al Jazeera English online.

New York Times online.

Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes. If you miss a class due to illness, family crisis, religious holiday, or Millsaps-sponsored travel, inform me of the reason for your absence. My policy for a class that meets twice a week is that each absence after two will result in the final grade being reduced by one-half point. Since I use a 25 point scale for grades, missing even three classes has the potential to affect your final grade. If, for example, you have a final score of 24.5, which would be rounded up to a 25, or an A, but you missed three classes, your final grade would be 24, or A-. One way to think of it is that for every two absences over the first two, your final grade will be reduced by one point, which is equivalent to a third of a letter grade. However, I understand that there may be legitimate reasons for missing more than two classes. If you need to miss more than two classes for any of the reasons listed above, you may make up for the class by writing a one-page typed paper on the reading for that class. In order for it to count, it must be assessed as at least a B paper. If you miss ten or more classes (about a third of the semester) for any reason, you should withdraw from the course, or you will receive an F. If the absences occur after the final day to withdraw without a grade (March 31), you should make arrangements for a medical withdrawal in order to avoid receiving an F.

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period according to the schedule below. If you must miss class on the day of a test, presentation, or when a paper is due, please notify me ahead of time.

You are expected to arrive to class on time. Role will be taken at the beginning of each class. If you are late, it is your responsibility to sign the late attendance sheet when you arrive and to note the reason for the tardiness. If you do not do this, you will be marked absent. If you must leave class early, see me before class and make a note on the attendance sheet of the reason and the amount of class time missed. Frequent tardiness will also adversely affect your grade.

Grading Scale

25 pt. scale: A (25) A- (24) B+ (23) B (22) B-(21) C+ (20) C (19) C- (18) D+ (17) D (16) F (15 or below)

Disability Accommodations

If you have any needs or require accommodations related to a disability, please contact Patrick Cooper to register for disability services. You can reach him via e-mail at coopeap@millsaps.edu or by calling extension 1228. Accommodations will not be granted until a meeting with Patrick has taken place each semester and letters have been received by your instructor.

Honor Code

The pledge signed by all students upon entering Millsaps College is as follows:

"As a Millsaps College student, I hereby affirm that I understand the Honor Code and am aware of its implication and of my responsibility of the Code. In the interests of

expanding the atmosphere of respect and trust in the College, I promise to uphold the Honor Code and I will not tolerate dishonest behavior in myself or in others."

Please write "Pledged" and sign your name to all papers, tests, quizzes, or other assignments. This indicates that you have not given or received unauthorized aid on the assignment.

Course Evaluation

5% Participation

15% Presentations

10% Test

45% Three four-page essays (15% each)

20% Final research paper; 7-8 pages for freshman and sophomores; 10-11 pages for juniors and seniors

5% Research proposal; preliminary bibliography; annotated bibliography; one-page explanation of methodologies used

Participation: Discussion will form a large part of the course. Your grade will be based on the following criteria: 1) Your comments must show that you have read and thought about the material. 2) You listen actively to others, are courteous in responding to others' comments, and you avoid dominating the conversation. 3) You demonstrate that you feel partly responsible for the success of class discussion rather than passively allowing the professor or fellow students to always take the lead.

Presentations

1) Group presentations: The first presentation will center on a "hot topic" in contemporary Christianity: It can be one of those covered in class - creationism, right to life, women's roles, eschatology - or another topic of your choice. You will incorporate the rhetorical analyses of your first essays into the presentation. The second group presentation will be based on the final book for the course, *Mixed Blessings*.

2) Individual presentation: This will be an informative talk on the religious group you explored for your second essay.

3) Newspaper presentations: You will each be responsible for reporting on one relevant New York Times (www.nytimes.com) article. In addition, small groups will report on Al Jazeera online during Unit Three. The presentations will include leading a short discussion on interesting questions the articles raise.

Test: This will be a class-generated exam on Islamic fundamentalism.

Short essays: The first essay will be a rhetorical analysis of the words (written, spoken, or both) of a prominent Christian leader who is fundamentalist in his or her approach. The second essay will analyze a particular fundamentalism from the book *Fundamentalisms Observed*, using some of the definitions and parameters described in *Strong Religion*. The third essay will analyze the theory that fundamentalism is

sometimes good and at other times bad for women, using examples from *Mixed Blessings*.

Final research paper: This will be on a topic of your choice. Freshmen and sophomores must draw on at least four sources, including one book and one peer-reviewed journal article. Juniors and seniors must use at least six sources, including two books and two peer-reviewed journal articles.

Class Schedule

Note that the schedule may need to be adjusted during the course of the semester.

Unit One: Christian Fundamentalism (rhetorical analysis)

Week 1

Jan. 15 Overview of course; rhetorical analysis; sign up for newspaper presentations

Jan. 17 Rhetorical Devices: *Jerry Falwell*, Ch. 1 & 3

Week 2

Jan. 22 Creationism: *Jerry Falwell*, Ch. 2 & 8 (sign up for topic)

Jan. 24 Right to Life: *Jerry Falwell*, Ch. 7

Week 3

Jan. 29 Women's Roles: *Jerry Falwell*, Ch. 6

Jan. 31 Eschatology: *Jerry Falwell*, Ch. 9

Week 4

Feb. 5 CNN special: *God's Warriors*; group time

Feb. 7 Essay One due; *God's Warriors*; group time

Week 5

Feb. 12 Group Presentations

Feb. 14 Group Presentations

Unit Two: Parameters of Fundamentalism (comparative analysis)

Week 6

Feb. 19 *Desecularization*: Ch. 1 & 2

Feb. 21 *Desecularization*: Ch. 3 & 4

Week 7

Feb. 26 *Desecularization*: Ch. 5 & 6

Feb. 28 *Strong Religion*: Ch. 2

(Feb. 29: Midterm grades reported)

Week 8

Mar. 4 *Strong Religion*, Ch. 3

Research paper topic due: one page that describes the general topic, poses questions you want to explore, and discusses the methodology(s) you intend to use.

Mar. 6 *Fundamentalism Observed*, on reserve in library.

Presentations on a fundamentalist movement not covered in this class

Week 9

Mar. 11 Presentations continued

Mar. 13 Film: *Two Friends* (drama: explores gender issues during Iranian Revolution)

Essay Two due

Mar. 18 & 20: Spring Break

Unit Three: Islamic Fundamentalism (politico-economic analysis)

Week 10

Mar. 25 *Unholy War*, Preface and Ch. 1; PDF file emailed: "The Crossroads of the Identity Crisis" by Eboo Patel

Preliminary bibliography for research paper due

Mar. 27 *Unholy War*, Ch. 2

(Mar. 31: Last day to withdraw with grade of W)

Week 11 Comps week

Apr. 1 Class replaced by weekend viewing of *Bombay* (drama: Hindu and Muslim fundamentalisms); begin reading *Unholy War*, Ch. 3

Apr. 3 Same as above; continue reading *Unholy War*, Ch. 3 (Long chapter!)

Week 12

Apr. 8 *Unholy War*, Ch. 4 (form groups for feminist analysis)

Apr. 10 Exam

Unit Four: Women and Fundamentalism (feminist analysis)

Week 13

Apr. 15 *Mixed Blessings*, Intro and Ch. 13 (everyone); Group 1 presentation (Ch. 1 and 2)

Apr. 17 *Mixed Blessings*, Ch. 3 (everyone); Group 2 presentation (Ch. 4 and 5)

Hand in annotated bibliography for research paper; each source described with a paragraph

Week 14

Apr. 22 *Mixed Blessings*, Ch. 6 (everyone); Group 2 presentation (Ch. 7 and 8)

Apr. 24 *Mixed Blessings*, Ch. 9 (everyone); Group 2 presentation (Ch. 10, 11 and 12)

Essay Three due

Wed. Apr. 30 **Final Research Paper** (and one-page Methods Paper) due by 4:00