Overview

● **Course Organizer:** Teije Hidde Donker, td402@cam.ac.uk

● **Lecturers:**
  ○ Teije H. Donker, td402@cam.ac.uk
  ○ Guest lecturer: Katie Gaddini, kg393@cam.ac.uk
  ○ Guest lecturer: Lea Taragin-Zeller, lz378@cam.ac.uk
  ○ Guest lecturer: Rashmi Singh, rs845@cam.ac.uk
  ○ Guest lecturer: Rin Ushiyama, ru210@cam.ac.uk

● **Aims and objectives of the paper:**
  At the end of this paper students have the ability to critically
  ○ differentiate, compare and assess key debates and core concepts in A) studies on the sociology of religion and B) social movements and contentious politics. These include concepts and debates around the formation of religion in public life, (post-)secularization and the secular; and the use of religion in social movements and contentious politics.
  ○ assess how the use of religion in social movements and contentious politics intersects with issues related to gender, media, revolution and populism by exploring contemporary cases in the US, Europe, Middle East and Asia.

● **Course content:** From Narendra Modi’s use of Hinduism in nationalist mobilization, Jihadist movements in the Syrian civil war and European right wing movements referring to a Christian heritage: religion is a divisive topic in contemporary societies today and a crucial component of contentious mobilization around the globe. In this course we explore the ways in which religious beliefs, practices and objects intersect with, and are shaped by, these episodes of contentious mobilization and social conflict.

  The first series of lectures provides the conceptual and theoretical background for thinking about how religion intersects with social conflict. We start by critically assessing classic sociological debates on ‘secularization’ ‘the secular’ and ‘(de-)privatization of religion’, followed by a discussion on the conceptual genealogy of religion. We then discuss how these approaches have been taken up in studies on social movements and contentious politics. In the second part of the paper we critically
assess the utility of these debates by applying them to contemporary cases of mobilized religion in Poland, Japan, United States, UK, India and Syria. In doing so, we also assess how the mobilization of religion intersects with issues of gender, media and technology, revolution, and populism.

Structure of the paper: The paper is split into two lecture series.

○ Series I: The Sociology of Religion and Social Movement Studies
  ● 6 two-hour lectures in Michaelmas.
  ● Lecturer: Teije H. Donker

○ Series II: Case Studies of Mobilized Religion
  ● 7 two-hour lectures in Lent.

○ Revision session
  ● 1 two-hour lecture in Easter.
  ● Lecturer: Teije H. Donker.

● Mode of teaching and supervision arrangements: This course is taught in thirteen two-hour lectures in Michaelmas and Lent (a total of 26 hours). There is an additional revision lecture in the Easter term. Required readings are starred.

● Mode of assessment: This paper will be examined by one three-hour examination paper, divided into two sections. Candidates will be required to answer at least one question from each part. All questions are of equal value.

Reading List

Series I: The Sociology of Religion and Social Movement Studies (Michaelmas)
The first series of lectures provides the conceptual and theoretical background for thinking about how religion intersects with social conflict. First, we explore the sociology of religion: starting out with classic structuralist debates around ‘secularization’, moving on to explore how conceptual divisions have faced increasing criticism through debates on ‘post-secularism’, and ending with an outline of the conceptual genealogy of religion. Second, we review studies on social movements and contentious politics; exploring how these engaged with religion in various ways. The series ends with a topic on relational sociology as an avenue to integrate insights from the sociology of religion with studies on social movements. In each topic, part I provides conceptual and theoretical readings, while part II provides practical examples of conceptual and theoretical approaches.

Topic 1: The Sociology of Religion and Secularization: Concepts and Realities - 16 October
Part I


5. * Karel Dobbelare, *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2002). Esp. Part I, Ch 1; Part II.


Part II


Essay questions

1. Are views on modernity and secularization in sociology related?

2. Is the ‘secularization thesis’ applicable to non-western countries? Support your argument with an empirical case.

**Topic 2: The Religious Awakening: ‘Post-secularisms’ compared - 23 October**

Part I


Part II


Essay questions
1. Do we live in a postsecular world?

2. Does the ‘resurgence of religion’ in public life mean that societies have become more religious?

**Topic 3: Power, the Genealogy of Religion and Articulations of the Self - 30 October**

Part I


Part II


Essay questions
1. How do conflicts about the position of religion in ‘public’ life put into question boundaries between what is public and private? Support your argument with an empirical case.
2. How can the construction of ‘religion’ in contemporary societies have political implications?

Topic 4: Religion and Social Movement Studies - 6 November

Part I

Part II
Essay questions
1. Are concepts from social movement studies useful in the analysis of religious movements? Support your argument with an empirical case.
2. How do studies on social movements reflect understandings of what religion is in public life?

Topic 5: Religion and Contentious Politics in the 21st Century - 13 November
Part I

Part II

Essay questions
1. Can strategic interactionism be used to analyze the use of religion in contentious episodes?
2. Does the Dynamics of Contention take religion seriously?

Topic 6: Relational Sociology: Intersectionality, Fields and Mobilized Religion - 20 November
Part I


Part II


Essay questions

1. Does religion facilitate the reproduction of social inequalities?

2. Is religion a type of symbolic capital?

**Series II: Case Studies of Mobilized Religion (Lent)**

In this second series of lectures we explore seven contemporary case studies of social and political mobilization of religion. We use these cases to critically assess how religion intersects with social conflicts in practice; and how approaches discussed in series I can be applied to empirical cases. We assess the role of religion at different levels of analysis (transnational, national and local) different regions (US, Europe, Asia, Middle East) and different religions (Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism and Islam).

**Topic 7: Catholicism and Far Right Mobilization in Poland - Teije Donker - 5 February**

Part I


**Part II**


**Essay question**

1. Does religion facilitate xenophobia? Support your argument in reference to contemporary Poland.

2. Does Catholicism unite or fragment the Polish nation?

**Topic 8: The Politics of Religion in Modern Japan - Rin Ushiyama - 29 January**

**Part I**


Part II


Essay question

1. Was State Shinto a religion or a political ideology?

2. Does Japan support or discredit the case for secularization theory? Discuss with examples.

**Topic 9: Evangelical Populism in the United States - Teije Donker - 22 January**

Part I


Part II


Essay question

1. Why did the AKP emerge as a hegemonic party in Turkey?

2. How does the mobilization of Islam in Turkey force us to reconsider the conceptual boundaries between the state, civil society and politics?

**Topic 10: Gender, Religion and Social Movements: Jewish-Muslim Feminist Alliances in the UK**

Lea Taragin-Zeller - 12 February

Part I


Part II


Essay question

1. TBC

**Topic 11: Hinduism and Ethno-Nationalism in India - Rashmi Singh - 19 February**

Part I


Part II


Essay question
1. What are the reasons for Hindu nationalism's success in India?
2. How is masculinity inscribed in Hindu nationalism?

**Topic 12: Evangelical Populism in the United States - Katie Gaddini - 26 February**

**Part I**

**Part II**

Essay question
1. Why did the evangelical right emerge as a powerful political movement in the US?
2. How do religion, race and nationalism intersect within the evangelical Christian right? Take at least two of these categories and support your argument with reference to specific policies or political events.

**Topic 13: Sunnism and Jihadism in the Syrian Uprising - Teije Donker - 4 March**

**Part I**


**Part II**


**Essay question**

1. Is the Syrian uprising ‘Islamic’?
2. Has sectarianism influenced the dynamics of the Syrian uprising?