Course Description:
The United States was founded on the ideals of religious liberty. What do the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution say about the proper relations between religion and politics in the United States? How does religion influence electoral politics during an election year?

This course will expose students to theories about religion and politics. Definitions will be discussed and applied to different specific examples. Students will be exposed to and learn how to apply several distinct methods of investigation that are employed in the academic study of religion, and they will learn about a range of different perspectives on how religious views should influence public policies. Through this exposure, the class will investigate hot-button issues like health care policy, abortion and contraception, educational policies concerning the teaching of creationism, whether the religious identity of the major party candidates should matter, religious code language, and other timely themes. Students will engage in group projects relating to the ongoing election campaigns, assessing the religious outreach of political campaigns, the political activities of faith communities, and the religious content of political speech.

Students will also learn how to write a paper, participate in classroom discussions, manage their time, select classes, choose a major, plan their academic career, and access resources at ECU. The course is intended to provide students with a set of tools and an array of information directed to student success. Unlike most other classes students will take at ECU, this one is designed to attend explicitly to helping students learn how to do the things that will be required to thrive in university.

This course was designed as an alternative to the COAD 1000, Introduction to College course. Like that other course, it will introduce students to skills, methods, and resources which are known to promote student success. Unlike the other course, it does so through academic course content that is taught by a faculty member. This course will also make use of peer-teaching, experience-based learning, and other innovative methods of instruction.

Course Objectives:
By way of these inquiries, the student should be able to:

- Identify and describe foundational views on religion and politics from the founding documents of the US and among other notable participants in the conversation about religion and politics in the United States,
- Critically analyze religiously charged political rhetoric, and
- Apply those to contemporary questions of how religion and politics relate.

Students in this course will also:

- Become familiar with various methodologies employed in the academic study of religion,
- Cultivate critical thinking and reading comprehension skills,
- Learn to communicate more effectively, verbally and in writing, and
- Be exposed to the skills and resources that foster student success.

These objectives will be attained through lectures, classroom discussions, media presentations, and assignments. Challenging readings will supplement these strategies.

**Grading: (500 possible points)**
- Participation – 50 points
- Co-Curricular Learning Experiences – 15 points each = 120 points
- Group Project and Paper – 200 points (150 points for the individual paper and 50 points for the group paper)
- Reading Quizzes – 40 points each = 80 points
- Final evaluation exercise – 50 points

A (100-93%) 500-465; A- (down to 90%) 464-450; B+ (down to 87%) 449-435; B (down to 83%) 434-415; B- (down to 80%) 414-400; C+ (down to 77%) 399-385; C (down to 73%) 384-365; C- (down to 70%) 364-350; D+ (down to 67%) 349-335; D (down to 63%) 334-315; D- (down to 60%) 314-300; F (below 60%) 299-0.

**Participation** – It is imperative that each student actively engage the course by attending each class meeting, being prepared, participating in class discussions and other activities, and actively engaging in the group project activities. Twice during the semester, the professor will provide each student with a written assessment of how well the student is doing in the participation grade so that they can make adjustments to achieve their highest potential. Each student will meet with the professor at least twice during office hours to review the assessment and to check in on the student’s progress.

**Co-Curricular Learning Experiences** – Throughout the semester, each student will be required to attend eight modules or workshops on skills and information leading to student success. This component of the course parallels what is taught in COAD 1000. Specific topics include: study skills, note-taking, time management, critical thinking, critical reading, writing, speaking, library-based, laboratory-based, or field-based research, etc. Throughout the course, the co-curricular experiences will be woven into the course content.

**Group Project and Paper** – During the semester, students will undertake a group project on one of the following five themes:
1. Investigate how presidential campaigns engage in outreach to religious communities on a local and national level.
2. Study how particular local, national, and international religious communities advocate for political outcomes.
3. Compile and analyze examples of religious code language in political campaigns.
4. Identify and assess particular issues in depth as they emerge in the campaign season.
5. Explore presidential candidates, past and present, with non-standard religious identities.

Students will collaborate on gathering information, organizing it, and presenting it to the group. At the same time, each student will write a 3000 word thesis and defense research paper on some theme relating to their group project, using the information collected by their group. The steps of the individual paper are as follows:
1. Students will work closely with the faculty member to develop and write their paper.
2. Each student will peer-review two papers written by peers in their group.
3. Students will revise their papers and submit them to me.
4. I will return them with comments.
5. Each group will meet with me to get advice on how to edit the papers together into one piece.
6. Each group will collaborate on formulating the group paper.
7. Write it and submit the final result.

The grade earned by each student will reflect how well they have engaged each stage in the process of working with the group (50 points) and writing their own paper (150 points): researching the subject matter, formulating a thesis, writing the paper, peer-reviewing, editing and revising, and finalizing the paper. **Due dates will be announced.**

**Quizzes and Final Evaluation Exercise** – Two times during the course, there will be in-class quizzes on assigned readings. Students will need to come to class prepared, having read and digested assigned material. There will be a final take-home exercise that will require that students synthesize the material of the course. Our last day of regular classes, we will have a group conversation about the effectiveness of the course.

**Required readings:**

**Videos and Websites:**
- Documentary: *Jesus Politics: Religion in the 2008 Election*

**Additional Readings will be made available on Blackboard.**

**Classroom participation and attendance:** Students are expected to attend all classes, read all assignments on time, and demonstrate that they are capable of being fully involved in all class discussions. An absence for a legitimate university-sanctioned reason will be excused. Students should consult the following site to become familiar with the relevant ECU policies: [http://core.ecu.edu/psyc/wuenschk/docs00/University-Excused-Absence.htm](http://core.ecu.edu/psyc/wuenschk/docs00/University-Excused-Absence.htm)

Quizzes, exams, and other assignments may be made-up only if the absence is officially excused by the University or is medically related (See Student Health for a note). **Documentation is required.**

Students who must be absent—excused or not—are responsible for obtaining notes from a peer. After they have done so, they may ask me for further clarification, but they should not ask me first.

**Unexcused absences will result in grade reduction.** After the 2nd unexcused absence, 2% will be deducted from the final grade. Each additional absence will result in a deduction of a further 2%. For example, a student with seven unexcused absences will not be penalized for the first two, but will have a deduction of 10% from their final calculated grade average. **Please plan on attending our class! If you arrive late, you must sign the attendance sheet on the day in question.**

**Academic integrity:** All students are expected to comply with the principles of Academic Integrity embodied in the **ECU Honor Code**. Since violations can result in expulsion from the University, suspension, or a grade of "F" for the course, students should become familiar with what constitutes plagiarism, cheating, falsification, and other violations. Note also that according to ECU policy mere attempts to plagiarize, cheat, or falsify qualify as violations. Consult the Clue Book for details. [http://core.ecu.edu/econ/zinnig/Academic%20Integrity.htm](http://core.ecu.edu/econ/zinnig/Academic%20Integrity.htm)
Classroom conduct: Education depends upon the free exchange of ideas and the creative exploration of diverse lines of thought. As such, it is necessary that everyone in the educational setting communicates in a respectful and civil fashion. Personal attacks or aggressive conduct have no place in the classroom, and these considerations are especially important in a class like this one, which will inevitably touch on sensitive topics frequently. See ECU’s Policy on Disruptive Students, posted on our Blackboard website.

University resources: The Writing Center offers students in-person and on-line assistance in learning writing skills. Contact the Writing Center for hours and locations at Bate (GCB) 2026 (328-2820). http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/writing/writingcenter/index.cfm

In addition to providing students with personal counseling, the Center for Counseling and Student Development in Wright Building 316 (328-6661) offers various resources to assist students in their academic development. These include training in time management, test taking, overcoming test anxiety, and academic motivation. http://www.ecu.edu/studentlife/counselingcenter/

The First Year Center has resources specifically tailored to students during the crucial first year of their education: http://www.ecu.edu/fyc/

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 (252) 737-1016 (Voice/TTY).

Weather and emergency disruption: In the event some emergency makes it impossible for us to conduct classes on campus in the normal fashion, the university will issue official statements guiding us. Likely, we would continue the course using Blackboard. http://www.ecu.edu/cs-ecu/alert/EmergencyProcedures.cfm

Meeting with your faculty member: Students are urged to meet with their professors in their offices or after class. There is a very high correlation between such visits and student success in class. Each faculty member has at least 5 hours of scheduled office hours a week. Aside from those hours, they can often be found in their offices. If regular offices times are not practical, students are encouraged to request alternate times. As part of the process of writing the paper, each student must meet with the professor to discuss their thesis and their research.

Weekly Schedule:
Week 1
Read Syllabus
College Rules, chapters 1 and 14

Week 2 – Declaration and Constitution
Monday: Religion and Politics in the United States, Chapter 1
Wednesday: Stephen Prothero, “Declaration” and the “Constitution” from The American Bible: How Our Words Unite, Divide, and Define a Nation
Friday: College Rules, chapter 2 – Where can I find help?

Week 3 – Thomas Jefferson
Monday: Religion and Politics in the United States, Chapter 2
Wednesday: Stephen Prothero, “Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address” from The American Bible and “Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom”
Friday: College Rules, chapter 18 – How can I read more effectively?
Week 4 – Church and State
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 3
Wednesday: “Church and State in the Courts”
Friday: *College Rules*, chapters 3 and 19 – How can I study better?

Week 5 – Religion and the Law
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 4
Wednesday: READING QUIZ
Friday: *College Rules*, chapters 6 and 7 – How can I manage my time better?

Week 6 – Mobilizing Religious Groups
Friday: *College Rules*, chapter 8 – How can I stay motivated?

Week 7 – Political Action among Religious Groups
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 6
Wednesday: “Elusive Protestant Unity”
Friday: *College Rules*, chapter 9 – How can I learn better?

Week 8 – Public Opinion among Religious Groups
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 7
Wednesday: “Evangelical Conservatives ad Domestic Politics”
Friday: *College Rules*, chapter 22 – How can I do research? How do I write a paper?

Week 9 – Religious Right
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 8
Wednesday: MOVIE: *Jesus Politics*
Friday: *College Rules*, chapters 4 and 5 – How do I choose classes and select a major?

Week 10 – Religious Middle
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 9
Wednesday: READING QUIZ
Friday: *College Rules*, chapters 10 and 15 – How can I handle the stress? How can I talk to my professor?

Week 11 – Religious Left
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 10
Wednesday: Presentations from Groups 1 and 2
Friday: *College Rules*, chapters 12 and 13 – How can I concentrate?

Week 12 – ELECTION WEEK
Monday: Presentations from Groups 3 and 4
Wednesday: Election Wrap-up: So what happened last night?
Friday: *College Rules*, chapters 16 and 17 – How can I take better notes?

Week 13 – Other Religious Group Identities
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 11
Wednesday: Discussion of group papers
Friday: *College Rules*, chapter 23 – How can I succeed on objective tests?

Week 14 – What Relationship should prevail between Religion and Politics
Monday: *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Chapter 12
Wednesday: *College Rules*, chapters 20 and 24 – How can I succeed on essay exams?
Friday: Reflection on this class – How can I improve it?