

Issues of Secularism and Diversity in Global Thought

CGTH W4520

930 Schermerhorn
(Alternatively 612 Schermerhorn)

Fall 2007

Instructors:

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Undergraduate Section:

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Wednesdays 2:10 at 501 International Affairs Building
Office Hours: Wednesdays 12 to 2 pm, 857 Schermerhorn Extension

This course is part of a new program at Columbia University under the aegis of the Committee on Global Thought. The Committee organizes courses, lectures, symposia, and other academic activities on themes related to various aspects of globalization.

This course, first offered in Fall 2006, focuses on issues of cultural diversity under conditions of globalization. Weekly topics include secularism in postcolonial contexts, as well as cosmopolitanism, feminism and religion in relation to secularism and “tolerance.”

While the emphasis of the course will be on contemporary debates, we will also look at relevant historical genealogies of some of the controversies. Regional variations across the world in the local framing of many of these debates will be given special consideration. The aim will be to investigate the presuppositions of prevailing common sense on the effects globalization has had, and is having, on cultural diversity.

There are no prerequisites for the course. Enrollment is open to all undergraduates. Graduate students may get full graduate credit if they write a substantial term paper.

Class meetings and format

The course instructors will lead all sessions. Several distinguished invited speakers from a range of disciplines and geographical perspectives will also share their latest works on the topics mentioned above during most class meetings. There will also be a weekly discussion section required for undergraduates taking the class.

Requirements

The main course requirement for graduate students, in addition to attending all lectures, participating in discussions, and keeping up with the reading, will be a research paper due at the end of the semester. Undergraduate course work will be assessed as follows: Participation/Attendance (20%); two Short Papers (6-7 pages each; 25% each); one longer Final Paper (10 pages, 30%).

Course readings:

Students are required to read papers submitted by each invited speaker and articles and book chapters pertaining to the weekly topics. These will be posted on CourseWorks. In addition, the required course books, available at Labyrinth Books, are:

1. Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford University Press. 2003.
2. Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics*. Oxford University Press, 1998.
3. Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: the Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, Princeton University Press. 2007.

Class Schedule:

Please note that on days when there are no outside speakers, the class, led by the Instructors, will discuss the previous set of topics addressed by outside speakers.

Aamir Mufti, September 7, 2007

“The Crisis of Secularism in Postcolonial Culture”

Readings:

Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: the Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture*, Princeton University Press. 2007. Prologue and Chapters 1 & 3.

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Timothy Brennan, September 14, 2007

“Classical Learning and Conventional Wisdom: Giorgio Agamben and the Uses of the Word ‘Political’ in Recent Theory”

Readings:

Timothy Brennan, *Wars of Position: the Cultural Politics of Left and Right*, Columbia University Press. 2006. “Cultures of Belief” (pp. 1-31) and “Cosmo-Theory” (pp. 205-232).

September 21, 2007 (non-public class)

Varieties of liberal secularism

Readings:

Rajeev Bhargava, ed., *Secularism and Its Critics*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

First four essays - by Taylor, Scanlon, Sandel and Bauberon.

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September 28, 2007 (non-public class)

The liberal philosophical justifications of secularism (Locke, Mill, Rawls); Formations of the Secular.

Readings:

Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*. Stanford University Press. 2003.

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Lydia Liu, October 5th, 2007

“Gender, Religion, and Imperial Rivalry in the Nineteenth Century”

Readings:

Lydia Liu, *Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making*. Harvard University Press. 2004. Chapter “The Secret of Her Greatness.”

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James Tully, October 12, 2007

“Imperialism and Global Citizenship”

Readings: TBA

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Craig Calhoun, October 26, 2007

“Religion, Secularism, and Public Reason”

Readings: TBA

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Sanjay Subrahmanyam, November 9, 2007

"Acculturation or Tolerance? Interfaith Relations in Mughal North India, ca. 1750".

Readings:

Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400-1800*, Cambridge University Press. 2007. Chapters 4 and 5.

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John Dunn, November 16, 2007

"Locke on Toleration"

Readings:

John Dunn, *History of Political Theory*. Cambridge University Press. 1996. Chapter "Locke on Toleration."

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Janaki Bakhle, December 7, 2007

Title: Secularism and Indian Feminism

Readings:

"Music as the Sound of the Secular"

"Indian Feminism and the Question of Secularism"

Janaki Bakhle, *Two Men and Music: Nationalism in the Making of an Indian Classical Tradition*, Oxford University Press. 2005. Introduction.

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Orhan Pamuk, date and title TBA.

Abdolkarim Soroush, date and title TBA