



## *Religion in Social Sciences*

### **Foundations Seminar**

*Olivier Roy*

**First Term (October-December 2015) – Mondays 3-5 pm – Room 4**

Registration with Maureen Lechleitner ([maureen.lechleitner@eui.eu](mailto:maureen.lechleitner@eui.eu)) or [online](#)

The course will study how social sciences construct or deconstruct the concept of religion. We will concentrate on the triangle religion/culture/secularism, looking at the way religion has been constructed as a separate object by the process of secularization, while being reduced to culture by anthropology.

1) Is there a universal concept of religion?

- defined as a pattern of human behaviour (the “need” to believe)
- defined by its object (sacred)
- defined by its practices (rites)
- defined as a set of beliefs among others (culture)

2) The construction of religion by early sociologists, Durkheim and Weber.

The construction of religion as a specific category has been done in the perspective of the paradigm of “modernization”: modernity goes along with secularisation.

3) Religion and anthropology.

Anthropologists tend to consider religion as part of a specific culture. We will look at the debate.

4) Secularisation as the way to approach religion: the autonomisation (disembedding) of religion.

The modernization theory, disenchantment, religion restricted to rites, and incidentally to private, because most of its traditional tasks are performed by other professionals (care).

We will study the political dimension of the secularization movement (separation, laïcité etc).

5) The “return of the sacred”: the great misunderstanding.

Why believers don’t buy the social science approach to religion.

6) Religion as identity and values

The civil religion, religion as culture, the connexion between religion and the theory of “the clash of civilization”; religion and multiculturalism; religion and populist movements.

7) Law and religion. The paradox of the separation paradigm: how religion has to be defined by secular courts.

8) The contemporary debate on religious freedom: individual freedom or minority rights? Is there a universal paradigm of Human Rights?

9) Religion in international relations.

10) Conclusion and debate.

Indicative bibliography:

Max Weber, *The Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism* (any edition)

Peter Berger, *The sacred canopy*.

Olivier Roy, *Holy Ignorance*, Columbia University Press, 2010.

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

Elizabeth Shakman-Hurd, *The Politics of Secularism*, in *International Relations* (Princeton, 2008);

Consult on the website of ReligioWest (look also at the links to Religare website):

Ran Hirschl, *The Secularist appeal of constitutional law and courts:*

a comparative account,

<http://www.eui.eu/Projects/ReligioWest/Documents/conferencePapers/Hirschl.pdf>

[Emergent Patterns in Global Religious Governance](#)

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd

[Law and Religion Issues in Strasbourg and Luxembourg: The Virtues of European Courts](#)

Marco Ventura

M.Heimbach-Steins, [Religious Freedom and the German Circumcision Debate](#), EUI Working Paper, March 2013

L. Zucca, [Prince or Pariah? The Place of Freedom of Religion in a System of International Human Rights](#),

EUI Working Paper, April 2013

Consult also the website “The Immanent Frame”.