Course description

Human sciences have great difficulties in addressing religion for what it is. Various disciplines have shown a great deal of interest in religion or religious affairs — Anthropology, Sociology, History, Political science, International relations. Nevertheless, they systematically approach religion for what it actually is not: religion is often dealt with as culture, as a social category, as ethnicity, or as theology or mere belief. Law and Cognitive psychology are among rare disciplines that consider religion for what it practically is. In Law, religion is defined as a practice, and thus taken into account as such. Cognitivists do take “illusions” and thus religious belief seriously. Beyond these two fields, religion is rarely studied in its totality, in its essence. But can we consider that there is anything like an essence of religion or the religious? This question will be at the heart of our debate. In this course, we thus aim at filling this gap by addressing the relation of religion to politics and culture —taking into account monotheistic religions. We will question how religion founded politics, the process of secularization in Europe, and whether Europe can be Christian and secular at the same time. We will also approach Islam as politics and open the debate on globalization, culture and religion.

Course outline:

Session 1: Religion with Augustine
- Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, Book IV – Ch. 28-34; Book XV – Ch. 4-8; Book XXII – Ch. 30

Session 2: The Pope and the Emperor
Session 3: The Wars of Religion

- Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, Book I (Ch. LVI—Of Prayer); Book II (Ch.XI—Of Cruelty, Ch. XIX—Of Liberty of Conscience, Ch. XXVII—Cowardice the mother of Cruelty, Ch. XXXI—Of Anger)
- Olivier Chistin, *La paix de religion: l'autonomisation de la raison politique au XVe siècle*, Seuil, 1997 (optional, in French, TBC)

Session 4: Religion and the Crises of Modernity and Modernism

- *Syllabus of Error*, Annexe to the *Quanta Cura* Encyclical of Pope Pius 9
- *Rerum Novarum*, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on Capital and Labor

Session 5: Political Islam


Session 6: Anthropology and the Study of Religion

- Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a cultural system”, In *The interpretation of cultures: selected essays*, Geertz, Clifford, Fontana Press, 1993, pp.87-125
Session 7: Sociology of Religion


Session 8: Religion and Culture

- Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*
- Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, Part I, Ch. V, Part II, Ch. VII
- Olivier Roy, “‘Enigma of the Uprising’ Foucault and Iran”, in *Vacarme*, N°29, July 2009

Session 9: The Deculturation of Religion


Session 10: Religion in globalization —Debate