



Religion in Human Sciences

2nd Term research seminar

Spring 2018

Olivier Roy

Mondays 3-5pm in seminar room 4 (Badia Fiesolana)

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[Register Online](#)

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

- Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, Harvard University Press, MA, 1983, Tome I, Introduction + Ch. 8
- Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition*, Harvard University Press, MA, 1983, Tome II, Introduction + Ch.1

Session 3: The Wars of Religion

- Olivier Christin, « Making Peace » in R. Po-chia Hsia (ed), *A Companion to the Reformation World*, Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p. 426-439. TBC
- Olivier Christin, « Peace must come from us: friendship pacts between the confessions during the Wars of Religion », in R. Whelan and C. Baxter (eds), *Toleration and Religious Identity. The Edict of Nantes and its implications in France, Britain and Ireland, Dublin*, Four Court Press, 2003, p. 92-103. TBC
- 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 XVIe 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

- Hassan Al Banna, “Toward the Light”, in Roxanne Euben and Mohammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought, Texts and Contexts from Al Banna to Ibn Laden*, Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 49-78.
- Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, “Toward the Light”, in Roxanne Euben and Mohammad Qasim Zaman, *Princeton Readings in Islamist Thought, Texts and Contexts from Al Banna to Ibn Laden*, Princeton University Press, 2009, 79-106
- Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Harvard University Press, 1998, Introduction, Ch.1, Conclusion
- Sayyed Vali Reza Nasr, *Maududi and the Making of Islamism Revivalism*, Oxford University Press, 1997, Part II (optional reading)
- Sayyid Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, ed. Khurshid Ahmad, U.K.I.M Dawah Centre, Karachi (optional reading)

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
- Talal Al Asad, "The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category," in *Genealogies of Religion; Disciplines and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore, MD): Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993 [1982], pp. 27-54.
- Talal Al Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press, 2003, Introduction + Ch.1, pp. 1-66

Session 7: Sociology of Religion

- Emile Durkheim, Introduction, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Ch. 1, pp. 21-39
- Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Part I (The problem), pp.1-39

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

- Olivier Roy, *The Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, Columbia University Press/Hurst, 2010 (the whole book ideally – will serve for Sessions 9-10)
- Charles Chaput, *Strangers in a Strange Land: Living the Catholic Faith in a Post-Christian World*, Henry Holt and Co, 2017, Ch. 1, 9, 12

Session 10: Religion in globalization —Debate