University of Toronto  
Department for the Study of Religion  
SYLLABUS - RLG405  
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Capstone Practical  
September – December 2015; Mon 12-2  

INSTRUCTOR:  
Laura Beth Bugg  
Jackman Humanities Building (170 St. George St.)  
laura.bugg@utoronto.ca  
Office Hours: Mondays 10-12  

Course description: RLG405 is a capstone seminar that emphasizes integration of the study of religion with contemporary public life in the development of a research project, locating a research specialization in relation to non-academic contexts, and communicating the process and results of a research project to non-academic audiences. The course will examine the increasingly central role of religion in public life and the influence of religious voices and religious institutions on policy decisions, public debates and public policy.

Requirements:

Class Participation 30%  
Students are evaluated on participation through active engagement during discussion periods, thoughtful and reflective responses to their peers, and evidence of at-home preparation for classroom discussion.

Policy Briefing Note  
Due at the beginning of class  
due Oct 19 30%  
Briefing notes, whether in government or the non-profit sector, are used to keep decision makers informed about issues for which they are responsible. Students will choose an issue of public importance with regard to religion and write a maximum 2 page briefing note following the guidelines set out in class and on Blackboard.

Critical Analysis Paper Proposal  
Due at the beginning of class  
due Nov 16 10%  
Maximum 1000 words. Topic of critical analysis paper, the research problem, your tentative thesis/argument, and an annotated bibliography. The format and guidelines for the proposal will be discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.

Critical Analysis Paper  
Due Dec 11 30%  
Please submit in the essay boxes on the 3rd floor. If you wish to have your paper returned, please submit a stamped, self-addressed envelope with your assignment.  
Maximum 3000 words. Topic to be chosen by student following guidelines discussed in class and posted on Blackboard.
Schedule:

Sept 14  What do we mean by “Religion and the Public Sphere”?  


Sept 21  Secularism and the Political  


Sept 28  The Emergence of Civil Religion  


Choose one of the below articles (or both if you’d like):


Oct 5  Accommodating Religion in the Public Sphere  


**OL** Genevieve Zubrzycki, “Negotiating Pluralism in Quebec: Identity, Religion, and Secularism in the Debate over ‘Reasonable Accommodation’”, in *Religion on the Edge:

Oct 19   Religious Social Movements in the Public Sphere
Policy Briefing Note assignment due


Oct 26   Religion, Gender and the Public Sphere


Nov 2   Religion, Sexuality and the Public Sphere


Nov 16   Religion and Education
Critical Analysis Paper proposal due


Nov 23

**Religion, Healthcare and Bioethics**


Nov 30

**Religion and the “War on Terror”**


Dec 7

**Concluding Thoughts**


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**Assigned texts:**

All readings listed under each topic are required readings and discussion will assume that readings have been completed before class.

All journal articles and books marked “OL” are available through the UofT digital catalogue. Book chapters marked “BB” will be made available on the Blackboard site and will also be on reserve in Robarts.

**Communication:**

As I am part-time, email is by far the best way to reach me. I will do my best to respond within 48 hours of receiving your email. As weekends are family time, I do not respond to emails then. I am always happy to meet with students during office hours. If those hours do not work for you, please contact me and we can arrange an alternate time.
All communication from me will go to your official University of Toronto email. Please check this email even if you use an alternate email address.

**Accommodations for Disability:**
Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services at (416) 978 8060; accessibility.utoronto.ca.

**Classroom culture:**
I want our classroom to be a place where we deeply listen to each other and respect the feelings, experience and wisdom behind what we all say. I want us all to speak the truth as we understand it but to feel safe questioning things we don’t know or understand. We all hold pieces to the puzzle.

It should go without saying at this point in your careers that out of respect for the learning process we should all show up on time, be prepared, refrain from using cellphones and other electronic devices and not pack up and leave early. If you have caring or medical obligations that mean you must arrive late or leave early, please speak to me. I also make a commitment to you that I will be prepared, present and engaged for our time together.

**Website:**
The course will have a Blackboard site on which the syllabus, announcements, information on assignments, relevant media reports, certain readings and other items will be posted. If you would like me to post items of interest regarding our course topic on the site, I am happy to do so. Students are responsible for consulting the web site regularly.

**Late Assignment Policy:**
All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date. I do not accept emailed submissions. Those handed in after the beginning of class will be assessed with a late penalty. Penalties for late assignments are 5% per day unless there is a documented medical or family emergency. Assignments more than a week late will not be accepted unless there is a documented medical or family emergency.

Students are required to keep copies of their essays until their marked essays have been returned.

**Writing:**
Well-organized, and articulate writing is an indispensable feature of the analytical process, and part of this course is an emphasis on the ability to communicate your knowledge to those outside of your field. Please consult the “Writing at U of T” link www.utoronto.ca/writing to access a wide array of university-wide resources. I will also be available during my office hours for consultation on any part of the assignment-writing process.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. Students must read the University’s “How not to Plagiarize” document,
http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize and are encouraged to discuss with me if they are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty.