Course Description
In the twentieth century God seemed to be dead – at least politically. Class and nation were the icons of a secular age. But then came rumblings. An Islamic Revolution in Iran. Catholics in Poland denouncing Communist rule. Finally, Sept. 11th and an apparent new era of militant faith. Now we must reconsider: what are the touchstones of modern political identity?

SOC 127a, “Gods and Nations,” examines three identities influential in global affairs -- religion, ethnicity and nationalism -- and the tensions and ties among them.

Learning Goals The class is divided into two sections. In this first section students will read theoretical literature on the social role of religion (considering the ideas of six major sociologists of religion) and on the nature of nationalism (in which we consider the ideas of eight important theorists of nationalism, including Weber, Gellner, Anderson and Greenfeld).

The study of religion’s social role will focus on the "secularization thesis" and its critics. Students will explore the functional role that religion played in medieval Europe and the Ottoman Empire. The class will then read the most influential articulation of the secularization thesis -- Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy* -- and consider how well this thesis accounts for the secularization of Western European politics.

The theoretical section of the class will also examine the nature of nationalism. Did nationalism represent a fundamental break with the medieval "society of orders," or did modern nationalisms gradually grow from the institutions of medieval societies? Are all nationalisms founded on ethnic identity? If not, how do we draw distinctions between ethnic and non-ethnic nationalisms? Are "religious nationalisms" in fact grounded in shared ethnicity rather than shared religious faith? Is a "civic religious nationalism" possible?

In the second half of the class, students will consider societies in which religion, ethnicity and nationalism comprise elements of identity in different ways. Having considered the rise of secular nationalism in Western Europe, students will have the chance to look at examples from
parts of the world where societies are not as decidedly secular.

It is hoped that these examples will give students evidence from the historical record to use in seeking answers to questions raised and sharpened in the first section of the class.

**Course Requirements & Grading**
The course is designed in combination lecture-seminar format. The course design is meant to allow students to master the subject-matter through a combination of lectures, classroom discussion and research for a final paper.

The grade composition of the course is as follows: class participation, including participation in working groups (20%); two take-home tests (25% each); final research paper (30%).

Here are the important dates:

- The first take-home test will be distributed on **Feb. 8** and will be due on **Feb. 14**;
- The second take home test will be distributed on **April 11** and will be due on **April 17**;
- The final paper will be due at my office by 4 pm on **May 3**. Please bring a hard copy.

Please note that the grade for class participation includes both regular and timely attendance, as well as demonstrated preparation of the reading assignments. In other words, the grade for class participation does not simply rely on regular attendance, but is based on the expectation that students will participate regularly in class discussions in order to demonstrate preparation of the readings through the capacity to critically analyze and apply the readings to broader discussions that draw on course readings and contemporary discussions.

Please also note that this class will feature working groups, modeled on research teams in the Department of State, that will present studies of contemporary potential points of conflict over religious and political issues. Policymakers have been surprised time and again by the vehemence of religious sentiment: we hope to learn how to incorporate an understanding of these issues into our understanding of world affairs.

**Final Research Paper**
Students are required to write a final research paper. The paper should be between 15-20 pages in length, using double space, 12-point font, and one-inch margins on top, bottom, left and right of paper. Students are strongly encouraged to expand on one of the case studies considered in class but may also write a comparative paper that brings what they have learned to bear on another topic. Students are expected to describe clearly the relationship among identities of religion, ethnicity and nationalism in their case studies and to analyze how those identities have contributed to the construction of political agendas, especially global agendas.

**Location and Availability of Course Materials**
There are copies of each week’s readings in the course books or on the Latte web site. Students may purchase the course books at the Brandeis bookstore or from an online seller such as Amazon.com. Those books are:


**Absences and Late Work**

Class participation is a large part of the overall grade and students should be fully prepared for each week’s class. Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to submit work on a timely basis, unless documentation is given excusing an absence or late submission for medical, religious or personal reasons, or for official university business. Late assignments will be penalized by a half-letter grade deduction per day late.

**Academic Honesty**

Academic integrity is central to the mission of educational excellence at Brandeis University. Each student is expected to turn in work completed independently, except when assignments specifically authorize collaborative effort. It is not acceptable to use the words or ideas of another person – be it a world-class philosopher or your lab partner – without proper acknowledgement of that source. This means that you must use footnotes and quotation marks to indicate the source of any phrases, sentences, paragraphs or ideas found in published volumes, on the internet, or created by another student.

Violations of University policies on academic integrity, described in Section 3 of “Rights and Responsibilities,” may result in failure in the course or on the assignment, and could end in suspension from the University. If you are in doubt about the instructions for any assignment in this course, you must ask for clarification.

**University Policy on Academic Accommodations**

If you are a student who has academic accommodations because of a documented disability, please contact me and give me a copy of your letter of accommodation in the first two weeks of the semester. If you have questions about documenting a disability, please contact Beth Rodgers-Kay in the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Office (x63470, brodgers@brandeis.edu). Accommodations cannot be granted retroactively.
COURSE OF STUDY AND READINGS

Week One: Religious Nationalism: A New Cold War?

Jan 14 Introduction


Jan 18 Essays of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri (Latte)

Week Two: Religion and the Social Order

Jan 21 Clifford Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” (pp. 87-125 in Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, Harper Books, 1973). (Latte)


Week Three: Religion and the Medieval Social Order

Jan 28 Hans Kohn, The Idea of Nationalism, pp. 78-85; 104-115. (Latte)


Jan 30 Max Weber, “The Nation,” (pp. 21-25 in Hutchinson and Smith, Nationalism). Walker Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group...” (pp. 36-46 in Hutchinson and Smith, Nationalism).

Elie Kedourie, “Nationalism and Self-Determination,” (pp. 49-55 in Hutchinson and Smith, Nationalism).

Jan 31 Anthony D. Smith, “The Origins of Nations,” (pp. 147-154 in Hutchinson and Smith, Nationalism).

Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism and Modernization” and “Nationalism and High Cultures”) (pp. 55-70 in Hutchinson and Smith, Nationalism).
Week Four: Theories of Secularization


Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, Chapters 5 & 6 (pp. 105-153).


First take home distributed.

Week Five: Doubts about the Secularization Theory


Feb. 14: Discussion. First take home collected.

Feb 18-22 FEBRUARY BREAK

SECTION TWO. Testing Theories: Historical Examples

Week Six: Catholicism and Polish Nationalism

Feb. 25 S. Prothero, *God Is Not One: "Christianity"


Feb. 28 Zubrzycki. *The Crosses of Auschwitz*. Chapters 3 & 4, conclusion
**Week Seven: The Ottoman Empire, Serbia and Turkey**

March 4  
Prothero, "Islam."  

March 6  
Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923.* (Pearson, 1997). Ch. 6, "Imperialism and Nationalism." (Latte).


March 7  

**Week Eight: Serbia and Turkey, Cont.**

March 11  
Kemalism. (Latte).

March 13  


March 14  
First Presentation by Working Groups

**Week Nine: Iran**

March 18  
Nasr, The Shia Revival, Ch. 1 & 2.

March 20:  
The Pahlavis and the Creation of Iranian Nationalism

Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr, *Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty,* (Oxford, 2006), Ch. 1 (Latte)

March 21  

March 25-April 2     SECOND BREAK

Week Ten: Iran Continued

April 3     The Islamic Revolution in Iran


Nasr, Ch. 8.

Selected readings from Ayatollah Montazeri (Latte)

Week Eleven: Religion and Nationalism in India and Pakistan

April 8     Hinduism and Indian Nationalism

Prothero, "Hinduism."


April 10    The Partition of Pakistan

Husain Haqqani, Pakistan Between Mosque and Military (Carnegie Endowment, 2005). Ch. 1 & 3

April 11    Second Presentation of Working Groups

Second Take Home Distributed

Week Twelve: Religion and Nationalism in India and Pakistan

April 15:    Pakistan as Islamic Republic

Husain Haqqani, Pakistan Between Mosque and Military, Ch. 4 & 5

April 16:    Pakistan as Magnet for Extremists

Haqqani, Pakistan Between Mosque and Military 7, 8
April 17 Hindu Nationalism?

Maria Mirsa, *Vishnu’s Crowded Temple: India Since the Great Rebellion.* (Yale 2007). Ch. 8 (Latte)

Second Take Home Collected.

**Week Thirteen: Buddhism and Nationalism in Sri Lanka and Burma**

April 22 Prothero, Buddhism.

April 24 Burma


**Week Fourteen Buddhism, cont.**

April 29 Sri Lanka


May 1 Final Discussions

**May 5 Final Paper Due, 4 pm**