

HIS 532 - Religion & The State
M 3:30-6:20pm
SBS N-303
Prof. Sara Lipton

Although in 1999 several prominent social theorists announced that “Religion is dead,” in the twenty-first century religion has come roaring back as a political, social, and cultural force. From Christian nationalism in the U.S., Russia, and Europe; to sectarian violence in various regions; to the so-called “Clash of Civilizations” pronounced in the wake of 9/11; and the imposition of faith-based restrictions on reproduction and gender identity, religion has been used to mobilize state and military power. This course provides essential historical background to the claims advanced by proponents of religiously-motivated political actions. We shall examine how governments, polities, and states have interacted with religious authorities and communities in a range of periods, confessions, and geographical regions. We will start by examining ancient, late antique, and medieval theory, and then look at selected historical episodes relating to four issues: 1) civil or state religion; 2) church-state relations; 3) state power and religious minorities; 4) political expressions of faith-based approaches to gender and sex.

Requirements: Each student will lead discussion of one of the course readings. In addition, you will write two reaction papers to assigned readings, and a final essay discussing how the course readings can be applied to your own field of study. **Prerequisite: Enrollment in MA/PhD Program or Permission of Instructor.**