

Prof. David Peritz
Fromm Institute, USF
Mondays, 10:00-11:45 am, April 10-June 5, 2017

Optional Discussion Forum
Maraschi Room
12:00-12:40 pm, April 17-June 5

A Newly Re-enchanted World: Beyond Secularism and Fundamentalism in Modern Society

Overview: For the last 300 years, most enlightened thinkers predicted the beginning of humanity's first 'disenchanted' epoch: one in which God and organized religion withdraw from the world, leaving us alone to understand nature scientifically and to create morality and meaning for ourselves. Today, we witness a different reality, a major religious resurgence in many societies. Internationally, religion has replaced ideology as the most important axis of conflict. At home, controversies between religion and science roil our politics. Meanwhile, fundamentalism — forms of faith that deny that sacred texts are always subject to human interpretation — is proving among the most popular and dynamic sources of religious faith. This course tackles issues emerging in the new, multi-disciplinary field of post-secular studies, which endeavors to understand the on-going role played by religion in many modern societies. The course will focus mainly on Judaism, Christianity and Islam and their persistence as a main sources of practical belief in 'secular' societies, religion's reemergence as a major axis of political conflict, and 'secularism and its discontents' within modern cultures and societies. Finally, in charting religions resilience, we'll also examine their reconstitutions, as those that flourish in post-secular social worlds differ profoundly from those that dominated pre-secular societies. Among the big questions to emerge will be following. Are there hidden religious roots and support for many of the most important secular values, from human rights to toleration? Do modern religions represent an advance or a regression relative to their earlier antecedents? Is secularism an inherently Eurocentric construct that cannot be separated from Imperialism and Islamophobia? Is it ever legitimate for religions to seek to influence modern, democratic, pluralistic politics? Is toleration an essential virtue in a pluralistic society or is it an inherently disrespectful way of keeping those we can no longer openly hate in their place? We'll examine these questions from the perspectives of theology/religious studies, philosophy, sociology of religion, anthropology, history, political theory and cultural studies.

Outline of Topics and Suggested Readings:

Week 1: Modernity, Equality and Tolerance: The Religious Foundations of Modern Values?

- John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (available on-line at: <http://www.constitution.org/jl/tolerati.htm>)
- Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought*, Chs. 1-3 & 7-8
- Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment" (available on-line at: www.public.asu.edu/~jacquies/kant.pdf)

Week 2: The Nature and Limits of Secularization I: The Significance and Overconfidence of Enlightenment Humanism

- Charles Taylor, *Dilemmas and Connections*, Chs. 8-9, 11-14

Week 3: Is Post-Secular Religion Bad Religion?

- Ross Douhaut, *Bad Religion: How We Became a Nation of Heretics*

Week 4: The Nature and Limits of Secularization II: Is Humanism Exclusively Protestant?

- Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Introduction, Chs.1, 4-7.

Week 5: Is Political Theology A Lasting Part of the Post-Secular Landscape?

- Jose Casanova, *Public Religion in the Modern World*

Week 6: Religion and Women: Case of the Islamic Revival

- Saba Mahmood, *The Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*

Week 7: Religion and Political Motivation

- Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition*
- Jeffrey Stout, *Blessed are the Organized*

Week 8: Tolerance and Intolerance in the Post-Secular World

- Wendy Brown & Rainer Forst, *The Power of Tolerance*
- Martha Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance*