What is religion’s role in the wealth and poverty of nations? In the past three centuries or so, historians and social scientists have developed a rich variety of methods of answering this question, a question that is acquiring new attention in the age of globalization.

The present course has three purposes. The first is to survey early treatments of the relationship between religion and prosperity. During the Enlightenment, when political economy first emerged, authors such as Montesquieu, Adam Smith and Tocqueville pioneered the attempt to study the economic effects of religious belief and practice. Our aim will be to rediscover their efforts, some of which are informing research agendas today.

Second, we will focus on the Weber thesis and its critics. In responding to Karl Marx’s materialist theory of economic development, Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905) offered a cultural theory of development rooted in religion; it became a popular cliché as well as a classic in the sociology of religion. What are the strengths and weaknesses of his theory? And how is it regarded today by historians and social scientists trying to understand economic development and its religious dimension, past and present?

Third, we will direct our general question to the contemporary world at large. Is there a Confucian ethic in East Asia that is comparable to Weber’s “Protestant ethic” in its economic impact? Is there a religious dimension to the economic development of the Islamic world? What effects has the explosive rise of Pentecostalism had on the economic experience of Africans and Latin Americans? These are among the topics we will address in the third part of the course.

There will be a midterm examination, consisting of essay questions drawn from a pool that will be available in advance. The final examination will be partially cumulative and will also be based on a pool of essays posted ahead of time on Canvas.

Each student will be asked to write one research paper of 15-18 pages, and report to the class about it toward the end of the term.

*COURSE GOAL:* By combining selective study of some classics of modern social theory---Montesquieu, Adam Smith, Tocqueville, Marx and especially Max Weber---with a review of current sociological literature, this course will introduce students to some of the biggest but most overlooked questions of our time: What is the relationship between religion and economic development? Are some religious cultures more conducive to economic development than others? If so, what are the options for governments that are seeking the economic modernization of their peoples?

*LEARNING OBJECTIVES:* By the end of this course, students will be better able to analyze the historical roots of the correlation between religion and political economy, examine a range of evidence for and against the most important theory (the Weber thesis) concerning that correlation, and extend its findings beyond its original European focus to include the world at large today.
COURSE SYLLABUS

Week 1: Mar. 30---Introduction and Orientation: What is political economy? What might religion’s role be in it?
   Apr. 1--- Montesquieu, *The Persian Letters*, letters 112-22 on religion, wealth, and population (Canvas)
   Apr. 3--- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, bk. 5, pp. 788-814 of Glasgow ed. (Canvas)

Week 2: Apr. 6--- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1, ch. 9, sects. 4-6, pp. 467-88 (Nolla ed.) (Canvas)
   Apr. 10 --- Marx, *Das Kapital*, vol. 1, ch. 1, sect. 4, toward the end (https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch01.htm#219) (Canvas) and Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Author’s Introduction and ch. 1

Week 3: Apr. 13 --- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ch. 2
   Apr. 15 --- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ch. 3
   Apr. 17--- Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ch. 4

   Apr. 22 --- Critics of the Weber Thesis (Norton critical ed.)
   Apr. 24--- Critics of the Weber Thesis (Norton critical ed.), con’t

Week 5: Apr. 27 --- MIDTERM EXAMINATION
   Apr. 29--- The “Economics of Religion”: Alternative to the Weber Thesis?
   Witham, *Marketplace of the gods*, ch. 1
   May 1 --- Witham, *Marketplace of the gods*, chs. 4-5

Week 6: May 4 --- Witham, *Marketplace of the gods*, chs. 7-8
   May 6 --- Witham, *Marketplace of the gods*, chs. 9-10

Week 7: May 11 --- Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, ch. 2 (North America and Europe)
   May 13--- Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, ch. 3 (Latin America) and ch. 4, selections (Latin America
   May 15 --- Martin, *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*, ch. 6 (Africa)

Week 8: May 18 --- CLASS PRESENTATIONS
   May 20 --- CLASS PRESENTATIONS
   May 22--- CLASS PRESENTATIONS

Week 9: May 25 --- NO CLASSES (MEMORIAL DAY)
   May 27--- From Theory to Action?: Harrison, *Jews, Confucians, and Protestants*, introduction-ch. 1
   May 29 --- Harrison, *Jews, Confucians, and Protestants*, chs. 2-3
Week 10: June 1 --- Harrison, *Jews, Confucians, and Protestants*, chs. 4, 5, 11
(PAPERS DUE)

FINAL EXAMINATION: Date TBD

REQUIRED BOOKS:

(http://www.amazon.com/gp/offer-listing/1442219637/ref=tmm_hrd_new_olp_srh?ie=UTF8&condition=new&sr=8-1&qid=1422644000)

(http://www.amazon.com/Pentecostalism-World-Parish-David-Martin/dp/0631231218/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1422644156&sr=8-1&keywords=martin+pentecostalism)
