The World Disenchanted: The Origins and Impact of Secularization

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Introduction: For most of human civilization, people thought the world was filled with the spirits of gods that directly affected their lives. This "enchantment" took the form of beliefs in magic, angels, demons, and miracles. Such a conception of an enchanted world thrived in the Christian society of pre-modern Europe as well and continues to characterize many societies or sub-cultures throughout the contemporary world. The process of secularization—that is, the shift away from thinking of the world as enchanted—should be studied systematically. Moreover, the impact of the process of secularization needs careful study as well. The disenchantment of the world affected many aspects of European society in the early modern period, including attitudes towards tolerance, nature, human identity, authority and government. In many ways, our contemporary debates about the nature of secular societies grow out of these medieval and early modern ideas about the enchantment or disenchantment of the world.

Week 1: Ideas of Secularization

Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007)
Gabriel Vahanian, *Praise of the Secular* (University of Virginia Press, 2008)
Robert Coles, *Secular Mind* (Princeton University Press, 2001)
Steve Bruce, *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Wiley-Blackwell 2002)
Owen Chadwick, *Secularization of the European mind in the 19th century* (Cambridge University Press, 2008)

The introduction to the course will survey attempts to understand what secularization means. Does it happen to different societies at different times? Is there one definition of secularization? Is it purely a post-Enlightenment European phenomenon? Are there secular or religious ways of thinking? Can we really divide society into sacred and secular?
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Week 2: Christianity and the Miraculous
Augustine, *Confessions* and *City of God*

Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianity and Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries* (Yale University Press, 1999).
Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (Penguin, 2006)
Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton University Press, 1994)

Week 3: Supernatural Beliefs in Medieval Europe

Cuming and Baker eds., *Popular Belief and Practice: Papers Read at the Ninth Summer Meeting and the Tenth Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society (Studies in Church History)* (Cambridge University Press, 2009)
John Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (Hodder Arnold, 2005)
Michael Bailey, *Magic and Superstition in Europe: A Concise History from Antiquity to the Present (Critical Issues in History)* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2006)
John Van Engen, "The Christian Middle Ages as a Historiographical Problem," *American Historical Review* 91 (1986)
C.S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge 2008)

Week 4: Miracles and Skepticism in the Middle Ages

Susan Reynolds, "Social Mentalities and the Case of Medieval Skepticism" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* Ser. 6, 1 (1991), 21-41
John Edwards, "Religious Faith and Doubt in Late Medieval Spain: Soria, circa 1450-1500" *Past and Present* no. 120 (August 1988), 3-25
Stephen Justice, "Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?" *Representations* 103 (2008) 1 -29
Benedicta Ward, M*iracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record, and Event, 1000-1215* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987)
Michael Goodich, *Miracles and Wonders: Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West* (Ashgate, 2007)
Gabrielle de Nie, *Word, Image and Experience: Dynamics of Miracle and Self-Perception in Sixth-Century Gaul* (Ashgate, 2003)
Deirdre Jackson, *Marvellous to Behold, Miracles in Illuminated Manuscripts* (British Library, 2007)

This part of the course will survey the nature of religious belief in the ancient and medieval worlds. It is crucial here to note that the readings will introduce the problem of the extent and nature of belief in the miraculous in these societies. In other words, we will study the complicated reality of religious belief and challenge the idea of a uniformly religious medieval or pre-modern world. Secularization happened to societies that had been grappling with different levels and kinds of religious belief for centuries. The vocabulary of skepticism and un-belief had its origins in religious societies.

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Week 5: Sacred and Secular in the Early Modern World

Lawrence Besserman, *Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: New Essays* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)
Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford University Press, 1997)
Hill, *English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Penguin 1995)
Lucien Febvre, *The Problem of Unbelief in the Sixteenth Century: The Religion of Rabelais* (Harvard University Press, 1985)
John Somerville, *Secularization of early modern England: from religious culture to religious faith* (Oxford University Press, 1992)
Alan Charles Kors, *Atheism in France, 1650-1729: The Orthodox Sources of Disbelief* (Princeton University Press, 1990)

Week 6: Science and Secularism

Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution* (University of Chicago Press, 1998)
Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and Its Ambitions, 1500-1700* (Princeton University Press, 2001)
Lorraine Daston, Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (Zone Books, 2001)

This section of the course will study the development of secular thinking in the early modern period, with a particular focus on the evolution of critical attitudes towards the biblical text and the appearance of scientific modes of thought. In both cases, however, we will try to see these developments as arising out of a religious context rather than appearing as an alternative to religious mentalities.

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Week 7: Secularism and Tolerance

Perez Zagorin, *How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West* (Princeton University Press, 2005)
Jan Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2005)

Week 8: Tolerance in the Medieval World

Cary Nederman, *Worlds of Difference: European Discourses of Toleration* (Penn State Press, 2000)

Cary Nederman, *Beyond the Persecuting Society: Religious Toleration Before the Enlightenment (*Penn State Press, 1997)
Gervers and Powell, *Tolerance and Intolerance: Social Conflict in the Age of the Crusades (*Syracuse University Press, 2001)
Laursen and Nederman, eds., *Difference and Dissent: Theories of Toleration in Medieval and Early Modern Europe (*Rowman and Littlefield, 1996)
Sophia Menocal, *Ornament of the World: How Muslims, Jews and Christians Created a Culture of Tolerance in Medieval Spain* (Back Bay Books 2003)
Stroumsa and Stanton, eds., *Tolerance and Intolerance in early Judaism and Christianity Cambridge* (Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Week 9: Tolerance in Early Modern Europe

Benjamin Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe* (Harvard University Press, 2007)
Stuart Schwartz, *All Can Be Saved: Religious Tolerance and Salvation in the Iberian Atlantic World (*Yale University Press, 2008)
Grell and Scribner, *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation (*Cambridge University Press, 2002)
Hans Bödeker, Clorinda Donato, and Peter Hanns Reill, eds., *Discourses of Tolerance and Intolerance in the Enlightenment* (University of Toronto Press, Center/Clark Series**,** 2009)
Alan Levine, ed., *Early Modern Skepticism and the Origins of Toleration* (Lexington Books, 1999)
B. J. Skopol, *Shakespeare and Tolerance* (Cambridge University Press, 2009)

Secularization is often thought to have created the possibility of a new kind of tolerance. Human beings were no longer trapped in the religious mind-set of absolute truth that promoted or facilitated persecution of one faith by another. Recent scholarship on the nature of medieval and early modern religious relations has challenged that narrative. This section of the course will attempt to assess this new historiographical challenge to the narrative of secularization and tolerance.

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Week 10: Whither Secularism?

Adam Sutcliffe, *Judaism and Enlightenment (*Cambridge University Press, 2005)
Graham, *The Re-enchantment of the World: Art versus Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2007)
Ziolkowski, *Modes of Faith: Secular Surrogates for Lost Religious Belief* (University of Chicago, 2007)

Week 11: Science Fiction or The Survival of Religion in Secular Forms
Benjamin Plotinsky, "How Science Fiction Found Religion," *City Journal* 19:1
(2009)
Kraemer, et.al. *The Religions of Star Trek* (Basic Books, 2008)
Readings of selected science fiction novels, including Frank Herbert, *Dune*
Screening of selected science fiction films, including *The Matrix.*

Week 12: Return of Religion

G. Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the
Modern World* (Penn State Press, 1994)
Stephen Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford
University Press, 2007)
Stephen Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*
(Oxford University Press, 2006)
Mark Taylor, *After God* (University of Chicago Press, 2009)

Week 13: Conclusion

The final weeks of the seminar will study the resurgence of religion in the
modern world and the creation of alternative modes of enchantment. Is religion
or religious mentalities being preserved in art or science fiction? Can true
secularism survive? How will new religious cultures in the developing world
and in some western societies interact with modern secular ideology?