



PO/RL 375 RELIGION AND MULTICULTURALISM

IES Abroad Vienna

DESCRIPTION: Cultural and religious diversity has become a key challenge for societies and policy makers in Europe. In our modern world of globalization and international migration traditionally homogeneous European societies are facing the blurring of established spheres of cultural identities. Governments attempt to address these shifts through a variety of policy responses. However, growing skepticism about multiculturalism as the answer to Europe's social problems has led some mainstream politicians to publicly denounce its dangers.

Despite predictions about the secularization of modern societies, religion has remained a stubborn presence in the social landscape. How does religious diversity play within multicultural discourse? How might freedom of religion, which often translates into specific community practices, reconcile with the historical values of European liberal societies? What is the place of religious symbols in the public sphere? What is the response of national governments to the demands of religious minorities, often immigrant populations? What are the socio-political implications of multiculturalism with regards to religion? This course explores these and other questions with constant reference to the city of Vienna, its peoples, and their various collective memories. A variety of theoretical approaches, empirical findings, and a selection of case studies will be considered.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

INSTRUCTOR: [REDACTED]

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

- Lectures: The instructor will include short lectures in each class to provide students with theoretical references and empirical data.
- Classroom discussion: Part of each class will consist of discussion of key themes. Students will be provided with the texts to read for each class on Moodle. This will form the basis of the class discussions. Additional weekly readings may be suggested by the instructor in relation to current events.
- Field studies: There will be course-related excursions most weeks to museums and various houses of worship and governance throughout Vienna. The preparation for field trips will include lectures in class and texts on Moodle.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Course participation - 10%
- Excursion reflections – 10%
- Midterm exam - 25%
- Final exam - 25%
- Research paper - 30%

Course Participation

Students are expected to come to class prepared after completing the assigned readings and participate in field trips. Students will receive a small participation grade one week before the midterm exam and a final participation grade just after the final class period.



Excursion Reflections

Most class periods will include an excursion to meet with religious, political, and community leaders, as well as tour other educational and cultural institutions. After each excursion students will write a short reflection on the interaction (one page, double spaced, standard font and font size), due 24 hours after the field trip.

Midterm Exam

The midterm will be short answer and cover course content from the first half of the semester

Final Exam

The final exam will be short answer and cover course content from the second half of the semester.

Essay Paper

An iterative essay will be worth 30%. The essay will be approximately 7-8 pages (20 points) and will involve an early AI generated draft, instructor and peer feedback, and rewriting. A list of subjects—under the form of case-studies to be analyzed through theoretical and empirical frameworks provided by the course, or questions relating different topics discussed in class—will be provided. Students can propose their own themes, as long as they are relevant, and pertinent case-studies. Final version is due the last day of class.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Critically understand the heterogeneity of European societies
2. Analyze major current debates over cultural pluralism in Europe
3. Evaluate the complexity of issues engendered by the presence of different religions in secular European societies
4. Compare various political approaches of national governments in dealing with identity, equality and cohesion of societies
5. Interpret socio-economic tensions directly or indirectly descending from religious diversity in film, literature and media reports.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

IES Abroad Vienna requires attendance at all class sessions. Attendance will be taken every class. Students must attend at least 60% of their class sessions to qualify for a passing grade, regardless of whether their absences have been excused or not. Your attendance is required in-person unless otherwise noted in the syllabus.

Students are highly encouraged to communicate absences as soon as possible to their professors and for excused absences using the processes described in the absence policy.

Please refer to the IES Abroad Vienna Absence Policy for a more precise overview of all attendance policies at IES Abroad Vienna as well as an overview of possible grade penalties.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

At IES Abroad Vienna, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity. Any form of academic dishonesty undermines the principles of trust and fairness essential to a thriving learning community. As such, plagiarism and cheating are considered serious violations of our code of conduct, and students found engaging in such activities will face swift and severe consequences, ranging from a failing grade on an assignment, to an academic review and possible expulsion from the program.

USE OF AI:

You may use AI programs (e.g., ChatGPT) to help generate ideas and brainstorm. However, you should note that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic, and you remain responsible for the accuracy and critical thinking evident in your assignments. Beware that use may also stifle your own independent thinking and creativity. You may not submit any work generated by an AI program as your own. If you include material generated by an AI program, it must be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor), and must additionally include a written explanation of how you used AI in the assignment process.

CONTENT:

Week	Content	Reading Assignment
1 (May 26)	Introduction: Course organization, topics, literature, requirements Excursion: Vienna's religious tapestry walking tour	
1 (May 28)	Diversity in Europe: Minorities and migrations Europe's changing population: Cultural diversity Defining key-terms excursion: Wien Museum	Schellekens and Pasture, "Religious Diversity in Europe," (2022), 15–31. Murphy, <i>Multiculturalism: A Critical Introduction</i> , (2012), 1–11. Sealy, "Multiculturalism and the 'Post-,'" (2025).
2 (June 2)	Religion and culture: Coexistence and the art of balancing cultures. Case study: Protestant Christians in Catholic Habsburg Vienna Excursion: Lutheran city church	Balint and Lenard, "What Is Culture? Why Political Inclusion?" (2022), 33–49. Horel, "Confessional Diversity," in <i>Multicultural Cities of the Habsburg Empire</i> (2023), 107–159.
2 (June 4)	holiday (no class)	
3 (June 9)	Religion and Politics: Freedom of religion and freedom from religion in secular European societies Case study: France: From headscarves to burkinis. "Conspicuous" religious symbols in public schools. Excursion: Islamic Center of Vienna	Ferrari, "The Post-modern European Right to Freedom of Religion through the Prism of the Islamic Veil," (2023), 23–53. Abazović, "Historicizing the Secularization Debate: A Helpful Illustration from Bosnia and Herzegovina," (2023), 74–83 Diallo, "What Has 20 Years of Banning Headscarves Done for France?," <i>The Guardian</i> , (12 April 2024).
3 (June 11)	Finding the "Right" Balance: freedom of religion, freedom of expression, equality of treatment, discrimination, public order. Case study: Quran burning in Sweden Excursion: Department of Islamic Theology, Univ. Vienna	Kuru, "Religious Diversity, Secularisms, and Ideologies: Comparing Western and Muslim Countries," (2023) 155–169. Larsson et al., "A Burning Affair: Introducing a Special Issue on the Burning of the Quran," (2024), 5–26.
4 (June 16)	Midterm Exam	
4 (June 18)	Antisemitism and Human Rights in Europe and European policy Case Study: Nie wieder ist jetzt. Germany and the Israel Gaza conflict Excursion: Jewish museum of Vienna	Tarant, "Contemporary Visual Antisemitism in the Czech Republic," (2021), 251–270. Tschiggerl, "The Commendable Antisemite? Vienna's Mnemonic Struggle with Karl Lueger," (2024), 1–19. Dahl, "Saint Joseph, the Turks, and the Jews," (2024), 140–154.
4 (June 19)	Religious Fundamentalism. Excursion: Welt Museum	Limacher, "The New Christian Right in Austria," (2023), 358–375 Lohlker, "Beyond Islamism, Extremism, and Political Islam," (2023), 341–357. Neutel and Kartzow, "Neighbours Near and Far: How a Biblical Figure Is Used in Recent European Anti-Migration Politics," (2020): 358–380.
5 (June 23)	Religious education in the European Union and European youth radicalization Excursion: Faculty of Protestant Theology, University of Vienna	Lehner-Hartmann, "The Question of Truth within the Context of (Religious) Plurality: A Challenge for Religious Education," (2023), 289–307 Sejdini, "Pluralistic Society as a Challenge for Islamic Education: An Example from Austria," (2023), 308–18.
5 (June 25)	The crisis of "national identity" in European societies Heritagization of Christianity, Philosemitism, and the muslimization of the immigrant excursion: meeting with SPÖ representative	Cohen, "Good Jews. Philosemitism in Post-Holocaust Europe," (2020): 118–127. Kartzow and Neutel, "Recent Scandinavian Bible Translations and the Heritagization of Christianity," (2023), 163–178.
6 June 30	Religious minority experiences in Europe Excursion: Karl Leuger Monument	Gidley, "Muslim-Jewish Encounter in Urban Europe," (2025): 235–254. Zhao, "The Grandchildren of Immigrants in Western Europe," (2024): 463–491.
6 (July 2)	review session Final Exam	

COURSE-RELATED TRIPS:

- Religious tapestry of Vienna walking tour
- Social democratic party of Austria headquarters
- Jewish Museum Vienna
- Vienna Museum
- Institute for Islamic Theology, University of Vienna
- Lutheran City Church
- Vienna Islamic Center
- Karl Leuger Memorial
- Faculty of Protestant Theology, University of Vienna
- Welt Museum

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Abazović, D. (2023). Historicizing the Secularization Debate: A Helpful Illustration from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In J. Marco (Hrsg.), *Religious Diversity, State, and Law: National, Transnational and International Challenges* (S. 74–83). Brill.
- Balint, P., & Lenard, P. T. (2022). What Is Culture? Why Political Inclusion? In *Debating Multiculturalism: Should There be Minority Rights?* (33–49). Oxford University Press.
- Bjelland Kartzow, M. (2023). “God Speaks Our Language”: Recent Scandinavian Bible Translations and the Heritagization of Christianity. In *The Nordic Bible* (163–178).
- Cohen, G. D. (2020). Good Jews. Philosemitism in Post-Holocaust Europe. *S: I.M.O.N.*, 7(1), 118–127.
- Dahl, D. L. (2024). Saint Joseph, the Turks, and the Jews: The Path to Antisemitism of Josef Deckert, Priest in Vienna, 1869–1901. *Austrian history yearbook*, 55(55), 140–154.
- Diallo, R. (2024, April 12). What Has 20 Years of Banning Headscarves Done for France? *The Guardian*.
- Ferrari, A. (2023). Human Rights and the Osmosis between Secular and Religious Legal Systems: The Post-modern European Right to Freedom of Religion through the Prism of the Islamic Veil. In *Religious Diversity, State, and Law: National, Transnational and International Challenges* (23–53). Brill.
- Gidley, B. (2025). Off and On Stage Interactions: Muslim-Jewish Encounter in Urban Europe. *Ethnicities*, 25(2), 235–254.
- Horel, C. (2023). Bells and Towers: The Confessional Diversity. In *Multicultural Cities of the Habsburg Empire, 1880–1914: Imagined Communities and Conflictual Encounters* (S. 107–159). Central European University Press.
- Kuru, A. T. (2023). Religious Diversity, Secularisms, and Ideologies: Comparing Western and Muslim Countries. In J. Marco (ed.), *Religious Diversity, State, and Law: National, Transnational and International Challenges* (155–169). Brill.
- Larsson, G., Frydenlund, I., & Brekke, T. (2024). A Burning Affair: Introducing a Special Issue on the Burning of the Quran. *Temenos: Nordic Journal for the Study of Religion*, 60(1).
- Lehner-Hartmann, A. (2023). The Question of Truth within the Context of (Religious) Plurality: A Challenge for Religious Education. In *Religious Diversity, State, and Law: National, Transnational and International Challenges* (289–307). Brill.
- Limacher, K. (2023). Fundamentalisms Old and New? Intra-religious Developments and Inter-denominational Alliances in the New Christian Right in Austria. In J. Marko (ed.), *Religious Diversity, State, and Law: National, Transnational and International Challenges* (358–375). Brill.
- Lohlker, R. (2023). Islamic Fundamentalism: Beyond Islamism, Extremism, and Political Islam. In *Religious Diversity, State, and Law: National, Transnational and International Challenges* (341–357). Brill.
- Murphy, M. (2012). Introduction. In *Multiculturalism: A Critical Introduction* (1–11). Routledge.
- Neutel, K., & Kartzow, M. B. (2020). Neighbours Near and Far: How a Biblical Figure is Used in Recent European Anti-Migration Politics. *Biblical Interpretation*, 29, 358–380.
- Schellekens, C., & Pasture, P. (2022). *Introduction: Religious Diversity in Europe: Mediating the Past to the Young: Bd. Religious Diversity in Europe: Mediating the Past to the Young* (15–31). Bloomsbury.
- Sealy, T. (2025). Introduction: Multiculturalism and the „Post-“. In *Post-Multiculturalism, Religion and Recognition*. Bristol University Press.
- Sejdini, Z. (2023). Pluralistic Society as a Challenge for Islamic Education: An Example from Austria. In J. Marko (ed.), *Religious Diversity, State, and Law: National, Transnational and International Challenges* (308–318). Brill.
- Taran, Z. (2021). Contemporary Visual Antisemitism in the Czech Republic. In J. Hauser & E. Janáčková (eds.), *Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe: Imagery of Hatred* (251–270). de Gruyter.
- Tschiggerl, M. (2024). The Commendable Antisemite? Vienna’s Mnemonic Struggle with Karl Lueger. *Memory Studies*, 1–19.
- Zhao, L. (2024). The Grandchildren of Immigrants in Western Europe: Patterns of Assimilation Among the Emerging Third Generation. *Demography*, 61, 463–491.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Altnurme, R., Arigita, A., & Pasture, P. (eds.). (2022). *Religious Diversity in Europe: Mediating the Past to the Young*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Balint, P., & Lenard, P. T. (2022). *Debating Multiculturalism: Should There be Minority Rights?* Oxford University Press Inc.
- Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion. (2025). Conflicts within and between European and American churches over populism, shifts in foreign policy. *Religion watch*, 40(4), 1–3.
- Bobrowicz, R. (2025). *The Politics of Multifaith: The Limits of Legible Religion in Europe*. Brill.
- Feichtinger, J., & Cohen, G. B. (2014). *Understanding Multiculturalism: The Habsburg Central European Experience*. De Gruyter.
- Hauser, J., & Janáčková, E. (eds.). (2021). *Visual Antisemitism in Central Europe: Imagery of Hatred*. de Gruyter.
- Horel, C. (2023). *Multicultural Cities of the Habsburg Empire, 1880–1914: Imagined Communities and Conflictual Encounters*. Central European University Press.
- Indelicato, A. (2025). Exploring the Interplay between Religion, Tolerance, Fundamentalism, and Attitudes towards Immigrants: A Semi-Automatic Literature Review. *Social identities*, 1–23.
- Latif, M. A. (2024). The Identity of Religion Always Comes up: The War, the Mass Media and the Reproduction of Muslim Identity in the West. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 14(1), 1–17.
- Marko, J. (2023). *Religious Diversity, State, and Law: National, Transnational and International Challenges*. Brill.
- Sealy, T. (2025). *Post-Multiculturalism, Religion and Recognition*. Bristol University Press.
- Tanzer, F. (2024). *Vanishing Vienna: Modernism, Philosemitism, and Jews in a Postwar City*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Uitz, S. (2025). Counter-Monument Practices in Vienna, Austria: Multidirectional Memory and Transnationality in Contemporary Struggles Against Antisemitism, Racism and Anti-Romaism. *Filozofski vestnik*, 45(2), 57–78.

