

## Political Theory and Religion

### IEP entry on Religion and Politics, Christopher Callaway

- Key issues
  - Establishment and separation of church and state
    - A religious body may be a 'state' church
    - A church may be supported through taxes
    - Particular religious officials may have a role in politics
    - A church may have a privileged role in public
    - A state could enshrine a particular creed
  - Toleration and accommodation of religious belief and practice
    - “Despite the agreement of the liberty of *belief*, modern states nevertheless face challenging questions of toleration and accommodation pertaining to religious *practice*, and those questions are made more difficult by the fact that they often involve multiple ideals which pull in different directions.”
      - Jehovah's witnesses, blood transfusions, and the ethics of treating children
      - Quakers, pacifism, and the draft
      - Education, children's autonomy, and religious parents
  - Liberalism and its demands on private self-understanding
    - Rawls' *Political Liberalism* and the overlapping consensus: “the conception of justice offered is “political” rather than “metaphysical””
    - The case of *Antigone*
  - Religious reasons in public deliberation
    - “When reasonable citizens engage in public deliberation on constitutional essentials, they must do so by offering reasons that do not appeal to any comprehensive doctrine...For example, if the rationale for a law that outlawed work on Sunday was simply that it displeases the Christian God, non-Christians could not reasonably accept it.

### NYT Opinionator - “Should Religion Play a Role in Politics?”, Gary Gutting

- “One view, attractive to many Americans, holds that religion has no place at all. Roughly, the idea is that religion concerns the private sphere...Political life, by contrast, concerns the public sphere...should religious viewpoints, even on moral issues, have any role in our political debate? Some say no, on the grounds that effective arguments require premises that virtually everyone taking part in the discussion accepts...But this line of thought misunderstands the point of political debate. The goal is to reach consensus about conclusions, but not necessarily about the reasons for the conclusions.” (the case of **overlapping consensus**)
- “Many conservative religious groups endorse a wide range of political and economic positions that have no religious basis.” Such as?

### Foreign Affairs, “Whither Political Islam?”, Mahmood Mamdani

- “Ascribing the violence of one's adversaries to their culture is self-serving: it goes a long way toward absolving oneself of any responsibility...[on taking] the debate about the rise of political Islam beyond culture talk...Not only does culturalism treat Islam “as a discrete entity” and “a coherent and closed set of beliefs,”...but it turns Islam into “an explanatory concept for almost everything involving Muslims.”
- On “two radically different strands of Islamic thought: the ultra-strict, quietist Salafist, or Wahhabi, school and the more political thinking of the Muslim Brotherhood. These two schools later merged, producing the more hybrid ideology now identified with Osama bin Laden.”
- This “account of neofundamentalism...cannot fully explain the nature of Islamism, a political construct; the first seeks salvation, the second liberation.”